

Democracy & Education

The Foot and the Flag

Patriotism, Place, and the Teaching of War in a Military Town

Brian Gibbs (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

Abstract

This manuscript describes the patriotism taught and not taught by nine teachers to the children of soldiers near a military base in the American South. The nine teachers, all participants in a qualitative study, detail the pressures endured and the pedagogical and curricular decisions made as result. The teachers experienced social and political pressure from the broader community to avoid controversial or complex issues, fear that complicated teaching troubling more simple notions of patriotism would stress or possibly traumatize their students (the children of soldiers), and pressure to teach within the district-assigned curriculum map. The teachers responded in different ways. However, each path taken by teachers led to uncomplicated and uninterrupted notions of patriotism.

Submit a response to this article

Submit online at democracyeducationjournal.org/home

Read responses to this article online

<http://democracyeducationjournal.org/home/vol28/iss1/2>

THE PURPOSE OF this article is to describe and analyze the patriotism taught by teachers of the children of soldiers while teaching the content of war. Data for this research was collected during and just after the 2016 presidential election. The political, social, and ideological storm that emerged during this time is important context to the pedagogical and curricular decisions made by the teachers at the heart of this study. The tremendous pressure these teachers already felt was made substantially worse when a new teacher in his third week removed the classroom American flag from the wall, placed it on the floor, and proceeded to step on it as an example of the *Texas v. Johnson Supreme Court* decision that provides First Amendment protections for flag burning. The new teacher was removed from his position, his contract not renewed. This had a chilling effect, even more dampening than might be expected in the rural conservative community serving what was repeatedly described as a “vulnerable population,” the children of soldiers.

The message received by teachers was that one should teach creatively, push beyond the standards assigned, ask critical questions, grow critical consciousness among students (Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Freire, 1970; Ross & Vinson, 2010), and teach a critical patriotism (McLaren, 1998; Ross, 2014; Ross & Vinson, 2010) at one’s own risk. Fear was the main ingredient in the ether of the school contexts in this study. Teachers feared teaching too critically (Parkhouse, 2017; Ross, 2014; Ross & Vinson, 2010), feared teaching out of sequence of course guides (Au, 2008; Segall, 2013), and feared causing emotional trauma to their students. This fear impacted teacher pedagogy, content selection, assessments, and engagement in current events. This manuscript details why and how that fear impacted teaching and what impact this had on student understanding of patriotism. The specific research

BRIAN GIBBS is an assistant professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

questions driving this manuscript are: What curricular and pedagogical choices did teachers make while teaching patriotism through war to the children of soldiers? What pressures impacted these choices?

In this polarized and pressured context, teachers engaged three general pedagogies: *a pedagogy of patriotism*, *a pedagogy of facts*, and *a pedagogy of tension*. Each of these pedagogies, while approaching the teaching of war differently, had similar ramifications for the teaching of patriotism. An authoritarian or blind patriotism (Kahne & Middaugh, 2010; Westheimer, 2007) was either taught directly or left undisturbed, uncomplicated. Students were taught to follow, to trust, and to not critique the choices of the country that was sending their parents to war. This is incredibly problematic for a healthy and full-throated democracy.

Citizenship and Democracy

The development of citizens is a common mission applied to schools (Reese, 2011; Tyack, 2007). Citizenship and patriotism are often considered inseparable. If you are a good citizen, then you are patriotic. If you are connected to this country (*citizen*), you defend it (*patriotism*). However, being both a *good citizen* and *patriotic* are contested terms. According to Tyack (2007), the Founding Fathers were hoping schools would produce a “homogenized citizen” (p. 2) and more recently, school reformers have argued that “too much democracy . . . throws sand into the gears of the education system” (p. 4). So, the citizens will become all the same in thinking and understanding, and the patriotism will be internally quiet and externally fierce.

Patriotism has to be focused on the needs of all and engaged in righting the wrongs of the present and the past (Westheimer, 2007). In schools, this translates to guiding students to a deeper understanding of their own agency (Gillen, 2014) and learning how to effectively use it (Apple, 2006; Noguera, Tuck, & Yang, 2014), both of which are central to the development of students as dangerous citizens (Ross & Vinson, 2010). To achieve this, teachers need to engage an interruptive and disruptive pedagogy (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006; Mills, 1997) that provides space for discussion and inquiry (Hess, 2009) focused on complicating dominant historical narratives (Epstein, 2009) and engaging students in a full examination of what it means to be patriotic (Kahne & Middaugh, 2010). In base country, the county where the foot hit the flag, teaching in this way was incredibly difficult, if not dangerous to do. For too long, patriotism had been assumed to be a common good with no room for nor need of critique or closer examination. The public pedagogy (Sandlin, Schultz, & Burdick, 2010) of patriotism is clear and endemic in the broader society as well in schools. Having a “soldier of the game” has become common at sporting stadiums around the country as well as the singing of the national anthem and parking spaces reserved for veterans at local grocery stores (Noddings, 2012). This, combined with military recruiters’ access to classrooms and the ritualized pledging of allegiance that greets most students each morning, sends a direct message of compliance, following, and obedience (Oakes & Rogers, 2006). Most teaching of war includes the places, events, dates, and

dramatic stories of heroics (Gibbs, 2019). It typically does not include the horror, complication, and bloody aftermath of war that might lead students to question or thoroughly examine the motives and arguments given for war, why and how war was executed, and its larger social, economic, and political ramifications (Gibbs, 2019). Even if a teacher does not teach patriotism directly or even explain what patriotism is, because of the circumstance and situation of public pedagogy within the school and outside of it, the message is sent. In order for students to develop an awareness of this and for them to make their own decision about what patriotism to enact, if any, students must be taught a more critical form of patriotism.

Theoretical Framework

Critical civic literacy serves as the theoretical framework for this paper. Civic education has long been the responsibility of the social studies teacher but has typically amounted to memorizing the three branches of government, understanding that voting is important and to be a good rule following citizen (Ross, 2017; Ross & Vinson, 2010). To live a more civically, politically, and socially engaged life is the purpose of civic literacy. *Critical civic literacy* seeks to grow critical consciousness (Apple, 2014; Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Freire, 1970) by focusing on examinations of inequity and the dynamics of race, gender, class, and sexuality in schools. Rather than teaching students to obey and conform (Westheimer, 2007), critical civic literacy teaches students and encourages them to be politically and socially active in their communities. Expanding from critical pedagogy, critical civic literacy develops student critical sensibilities, examining societal constraints and ways to intercede on behalf of the oppressed. Students are intentionally taught to analyze oppressive systems and look for weaknesses in the system where resistance enact the most effective change. Seeking to disrupt long-held and assumed social constructs and ideologies (Mulcahy, 2011, p. 2), critical civic literacy works to develop new possibilities for the world (Apple, 2014). Critical civic literacy seeks then to have students learn how to read the world, the political and social systems at work in their community and the world (Macedo & Freire, 1987), while learning to read the word, the content of social studies courses, using a critical analytical lens. Extending the boundaries, critical civic literacy pushes the civic mission of high schools, allowing students to graduate not only knowing how the larger government systems work but how to actively engage that system toward change, improvement, and betterment.

Methodology

Data for this manuscript was taken from a qualitative multi-case study in which each of nine teachers represented a case (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009). A multi-case study entails the collection of individual cases, which share a common concern, in this case how conceptions of patriotism are taught through instruction about war to the children of soldiers. As Stake (2006) argued, the main purpose of a multi-case study is to illuminate how a phenomenon (the teaching of patriotism through the teaching of war) is performed in multiple contexts.

Nine participants were interviewed with five of these nine agreeing to have their instruction observed. Each of the nine participants was interviewed twice in a semi-structured format for between 90 and 120 minutes each time (Yin, 1989, 2003). The first interview focused on teacher biography, curricular and pedagogical choices of teaching war, pressures teachers felt, where these pressures came from, and how teachers responded to them. The second interview used an elicitation technique called a “think aloud read aloud” (Barton, 2015; Creswell, 2008; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Patton, 2002). This elicitation device was four descriptions of teachers teaching war to the children of soldiers. The elicitation device was a “think aloud read aloud” (Barton, 2015). Participants were asked to “think aloud read aloud” each of the four, offering critique (see appendix). Five¹ of the nine teachers agreed to be observed and were observed between 7 and 15 times when they taught war over one academic year. During classroom observations, I used running record note-taking to capture as much of the classroom discourse and activity as possible (Wright-Maley, 2015), allowing me to record multiple layers of teacher and student activity (Hubbard & Power, 2003). Detailed descriptions of classroom events were recorded in field notes made later in the day but soon after classroom observations (Emerson et al., 2011). Descriptive case memos were written weekly, member checks engaged, and participant feedback was added to findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Additionally, three classrooms of students were engaged in focus group interviews twice for 90 minutes each (Leedy & Ormond, 2005; Morgan, 2002). These group interviews focused on student notions of patriotism, how it should be taught in schools, as well as how war should be taught in schools and classrooms. Students were asked to complete journal writings on the focus group questions prior to the interviews and were then engaged in group dialogue about their answers during the interview time.

Participants

All nine participants are social studies teachers who teach at least one section of United States history, and are all “military connected.” I define “military connected” as having a direct familial connection to a person currently serving in the armed forces or recently retired. All nine teachers are the child of, married to, sibling of, or the parent of a soldier. Several of them are more than one. The teachers range in experience from 7 years to 22. Four of these teachers identify as female, five male. Two of the participants identify as African American, one Latinx, and the six remaining as White. Two were recruited through an email solicitation, three through professional contacts, and four through a departmental presentation of the research project. All nine volunteered to be formally interviewed twice, with five agreeing to be observed when

1 The district in which this study took place did not allow students to be interviewed individually but did allow focus group interviews done in student classes with the teacher present. Two schools allowed the focus groups to be done, with the principal of the third school not allowing the focus group interviews to occur, though she initially indicated she would allow them.

teaching about war. These five teachers were observed teaching about war between 11 and 15 times over the course of one academic year. Each of the students involved in the focus group interviews self-identify as “a child of an active duty or retired soldier,” many indicating that more than one relative is a current or former member of the armed forces.²

Limitations

This study has several limitations. The study originally planned to engage seven high schools, but only three were willing to participate. Out of the three schools, only nine of seventeen teachers contacted agreed to be interviewed for the study, and of those nine only five agreed to be observed multiple times. Teachers were recruited through department presentation and email solicitation. The teachers who participated all teach social studies and teach war to the children of soldiers but are not distinguished by other factors. Participants were not chosen because they are considered to be particularly strong at teaching war to the children of soldiers but because they were willing to participate. There may well be stronger teachers who chose not to participate. Additionally, this study is a small study offering insights and ideas as to the choices teachers made under political and social pressure as well as the impact the pedagogical choices of how they taught war impacted student sense and understanding of patriotism.

Data Analysis

All interviews, classroom observations, and field notes were transcribed and coded twice. Open coding was used first (Saldana, 2013) to allow themes to emerge organically from the data. Codes that emerged included “pressure,” “fear,” “emotional needs of students,” and “instructional obligations.” The second round of coding explicitly used the theoretical framework of critical civic literacy to develop axial codes that expanded on the original open codes, in some cases combining them. Axial codes included “professional responsibility,” “academic and pedagogy autonomy/lack of,” “political pressure,” “desire for social justice teaching,” and “student needs.” Various artifacts including class readings, assignments, and tests and quizzes were also collected in order to triangulate findings (Marshall, 2016). Analytical memos about my reaction to the data after each coding session were written focusing interpretations of data through the lens of critical civic literacy. While I was in the field collecting data, my use of field notes was to reflect on my own point of view and positionality as a former teacher and scholar to keep myself aware of my shifting perspective (Creswell, 2013).

Positionality

I was a social studies teacher for 16 years in an urban school context. I emerged from a teacher education program focused on

2 Not all students at any of the three schools were completely military affiliated. I observed the classrooms from each of the five teachers willing to be observed that had the highest level of military connected students. For the focus group interviews, only students who were military affiliated were used for this article.

developing critical educators. During my years as a teacher, I taught war with a justice-oriented perspective through a lens of anti-war and resistance. From my perspective, this is necessary for a robust democracy and for students to wrestle with the horror and difficulties of war and conflict. I do not enter into this research without a perspective. Though many members of my family have served in the military and my grandfather was a career soldier, I have never served in any branch of the military.

Patriotism and Pressure(s) with a Vulnerable Population

During the 2016–2017 school year, I studied how nine teachers in three different high schools taught war to the children of soldiers. I observed their instruction, interviewed them multiple times, observed five of them teach about war, and interviewed the students of three of the teachers. The fear observed and reported by these teachers is reminiscent of the last line in an essay by Walsh (Westheimer, 2007), which reads, in part, “. . . these lessons will not be learned when critical thinking plays second fiddle to fear” (p. 46). The fear Walsh was referring to was her students’ fear that existed in the years after 9/11. The fear of teachers teaching the children of soldiers is multifaceted and manifests itself in several forms. The first, most palpable, and most obvious is fear of reprisal. Teachers are concerned that by asking the wrong question, or leading students in a complex discussion, or teaching something the community thinks should be left alone, there will be trouble, exposure, and loss of position. Teachers are also concerned that their students whose parents are soldiers will be overburdened and possibly traumatized by an overly critical examination of war and patriotism. As one teacher explained, “I’m teaching a vulnerable population. I mean being critical of war . . . questioning other than full notions of patriotism . . . That’s going to cause these students nothing but stress . . . Why should I do that?” Lastly, teachers fear teaching outside the curriculum standards and possible reprimand from the district for doing so. As one teacher indicated, “Show me in the standards where I’m supposed to teach war and patriotism *critically*?” These fears arrest teachers, keeping them from teaching and students from learning a more complex understanding of patriotism.

Students and Patriotism

Students have complex notions of citizenship. In her long-ranging analysis of adolescent civic identities, Flanagan (2013) found that students felt that America is the “most powerful,” the “strongest,” and “the best country on earth where truth and liberty reign supreme” (p. 60), and “to be an American . . . you must love and respect your country in all means” (p. 61). The students revealed a narrow sense of patriotism and patriotic duty, one that is conforming and that leans toward blind following. As Flanagan wrote, “To be an American meant *not* to raise any challenges to the status quo” (p. 61). Patriotism seems, in short, to be “our country right or wrong,” which is quite troubling and further evidence of the need for more civic education and one with a more critical lens.

In another study, Kahne and Middaugh (2010) gave the California Survey of Civic Education survey to 2,366 high school seniors in 12 diverse California high schools and found a more

nuanced sense of patriotism. Responses described two general categories of patriotism: *blind patriotism*, an unequivocal acceptance of government decisions, similar to Flanagan’s (2013) findings; and *constructive patriotism*, which celebrates critiques of the nation. Seventy-three percent of students surveyed agreed with the statement that “America is a great country,” with 10% disagreeing and 17% expressing neutrality (p. 97). Forty-one percent of students agreed with the statement “To be truly patriotic, one has to be involved in the civic and political life of the community” (p. 97), indicating that patriotism doesn’t involve work, nor does it involve civic engagement. This passivity is what Kahne and Middaugh (2010) found most troubling because it could quite easily lead to uncritical, thoughtless patriotism (p. 97). Similar to Kahne and Middaugh (2010), Westheimer (2007) divided patriotism into two types, *authoritarian* and *democratic*. Though their titles reveal the definitions, authoritarian patriotism means following leaders blindly, while a democratic form of patriotism encourages more questioning, critique and activism. Westheimer (2007) and Kahne and Middaugh (2010) argue that most schools teach a blind patriotism through lack of engagement and discussion of patriotism and its forms.

The literature indicates that, generally speaking, students are developing into blind and passive patriots not from intentional choice or understanding of options, but rather they are pulled into a slipstream of conformity that solidifies because schools do little to disrupt these notions. Rather than engaging students in robust discussions, investigations, and explorations of patriotism, what it is, how it has changed, how it has impacted moments of history, and historical decision-making, schools leave patriotism alone. Leaving patriotism alone and undisturbed, however, leaves it embedded in the minds of the students through the rituals of the day, the pledge of allegiance recited every morning, an American flag in each classroom, recruiters invited into classrooms, and the national anthem performed at sporting events. Students must think about, understand, and be permitted to choose a form of patriotism if they want to. Otherwise, their decision about patriotism is made without them.

Teaching in Base Country Tension and Its Consequences

All nine teachers indicated that strong tensions impact their teaching. The tensions teachers described include concern over the socioemotional states of their students while teaching about war, the pressure to earn high test scores on end-of-course exams, and the fear of public shaming and pushback from conservative ideological and political forces within the school community and the larger national mood.

The teachers fully understand where they teach and who their students are. They are reminded of this constantly through the bulletin boards and murals adorning their school hallways with the unit insignia of the combat brigades housed on the nearby base. Each of the schools has a military relations person who is an active-duty noncommissioned officer who works with the school to maintain clear lines of communication between base and school. Each teacher considers their military students to be members of a “vulnerable population” and understands the unique

needs of their students. One teacher shared a late-night email from a student who explained that she wouldn't have her homework done because she and her family spent four hours on a Skype call with their father who was extending his tour overseas in order to gain rank. It meant that the family may have to relocate to the Middle East. As one participant argued, "Any teacher who tells you their teaching isn't impacted by the fact that there's a military base over there"—he gestured with a thumb over his shoulder—"and that many of their students are the children of soldiers . . . is just lying. It impacts how most of us teach war . . . more gently, and how we teach everything. We cut corners and round off the edges." In other words, difficult, controversial, and a more critical examination of history is often avoided (Costello, 2017; Hess, 2009; Parkhouse, 2017). In initial interviews, all nine teachers indicated they created their instructional units with their students, particularly the children of soldiers in mind. As one teacher indicated, "I can handle the crises of students, even when they're worried about their parents overseas, but I try not to *cause* any more worry, any more trouble . . . I mean, they have enough."

The teachers also feel like they are being watched, particularly in the wake of the teacher stepping on the flag. Many classrooms have a "cell phone holster" where students are responsible for depositing their phone for the duration of class. A fear spread that anything they did in class would be recorded. Though many teachers took steps to mitigate this threat, mostly through taking students' phones, teachers did report that the possibility of something they said or an activity they engaged students in being recorded, spliced, and then used out of context was, as a teacher described, "terrifying." All teachers indicated they choose their words carefully and think deeply about bringing up anything that might be deemed controversial, particularly involving foreign policy, the military, or war.

The Complicating Factors of Space

The study involving the teaching of war began four weeks after the teacher stepped on the flag and during the politically polarizing and bruising 2016 primaries and presidential election. Several recently published studies have indicated that the time just prior to and since the election witnessed an uptick in tension, stress, acts of harassment, and violence in schools (Costello, 2017; Rogers et al., 2017). Immigrant students, students of color, women, and members of the LGBTQAI+ community have been the victims of the surfacing anger and resentment sparked by the words and actions of (now) President Trump. Scholars have called for a pedagogy of trauma (Sondel et al., 2017) to help students cope with and heal from victimization. Worried that social studies teachers would "sit out" this election cycle in fear of reprisals from students, parents, and community members, Hess (2016), who has spent much of her career studying the successful teaching of controversial issues, wrote an impassioned opinion piece in *Social Education* imploring teachers to engage and teach the election.

The teacher who stepped on the flag wasn't the only person to bear the brunt of the hostile reaction; much of his school did as well. For days, television cameras set up across the street, a group of mothers stood in front of the schools waving large American flags,

phone calls filled with foul and hateful language affected the office staff, and the social studies teachers received email after email after email of the same. All nine of the teachers in this study knew this was happening and also read about an English teacher at a high school in the central part of the state who was secretly recorded by students (Grubb, 2016). She was accused of using several exercises in logical fallacies to unfairly label Trump's arguments as misleading and false. After a right-wing website published the recordings online, she resigned her position.

There is subtle and unspoken messaging rampant in schools signaling what form of patriotism should be taught. All three high schools in this study have a military liaison officer who is on campus regularly to help keep the school community connected to the military. There is an annual student art contest with a financial prize to the student who creates the best art piece honoring the military. A frequent field trip for upper elementary and middle school students is to one of the two museums in town that honor the military. All three schools are decorated with military regalia and emblems representing the military units stationed at the local base. As one teacher argued, "It is absurd to think that a teacher could not read the signs here. Teach the military positively . . . period. There are patriotic messages everywhere. Of course, a teacher is going to teach differently [here] than they would somewhere else. If they want to keep their job anyway."

Personal Connection

All nine teacher participants are military connected. By this, I mean that each of the teachers are connected through family to a member of the military. Three of the nine served in a branch of the armed forces for at least four years. This impacts their teaching in different ways.

For all nine, there is a lingering desire to protect the military as it relates to their students. Even the four who offered quite strong critiques of the military and America's involvement in wars would often stop mid-interview and shift their critique with a "well, you have to understand, in the military . . . or here around the base . . ." to indicate that things were different here than they were likely anywhere else. It was similar to Fallows's (2018) notion that if you aren't from the military or lived near one, you just don't understand.

One female teacher, who had been married to and divorced from three soldiers during her 27-year career, feels strongly that the military, as she said, the "macho, gung ho, military," was responsible for, as she said, "my failed marriages." She still recommends military service for some of her students. "The military has changed since then . . . It's better, I hope," she shared by way of explanation. She further explained, "It can be good for them. I tell them not to make it a career but gain some skills, serve your time then leave." She allowed recruiters in her classroom and spoke to the children often about the opportunities her husbands had gained from their time in the service.

Another teacher, the most strident critic of the military and war (outside the classroom), is married to a recently retired soldier. Though she is troubled by American militarism generally, she does have respect for what she calls "soldiering." As she explained,

“soldiering” is what soldiers do in difficult circumstance. So, she has trouble with strategy, choice to go to war, and how wars are executed by civilian and military leaders, but she has respect for what the soldiers do in the field, for one another, while facing fire. This is shown in class through discussion and celebration of soldiers in film. This is done extensively when a student asked if she had seen *Hacksaw Ridge*, a film depicting the heroic actions of a conscientious objector who refuses to carry a weapon but heroically rescues dozens of soldiers from the battlefield, risking his own life again and again. This discussion lasted about 20 minutes and was repeated over the next several weeks with discussions of *Saving Private Ryan*, *American Sniper*, and *Lone Survivor*. In each, the teacher celebrated the tenacity and grit of the individual soldiers depicted with attention to what they sacrificed and risked for their comrades.

Each of the nine teachers in different ways revealed that their connection to the armed forces shaped how they spoke to children about the military and about patriotism. Even those teachers who reported being critics of the military generally and war specifically signal to students that there are benefits to being a soldier, that the military is deserving of their respect, which is a form of patriotism.

Teaching Patriotism: Three Pedagogies

Three different pedagogies emerged in the teaching of war, from the five teachers observed over the course of one school year. Two teachers teach a bit of a mixture of several pedagogies. The three teachers highlighted in this section are Mr. Jones, Mr. Jeffers, and Ms. Smith. All three pedagogies are teacher centered with limited student voice. Much of the student voice heard in all three pedagogies involve questions for clarification or moments of humor. The first is a *pedagogy of patriotism*, where teachers intentionally teach an authoritarian (Westheimer, 2007) or blind patriotism (Kahne & Middaugh, 2010) that translates into teaching an America-first, nationalistic (Epstein, 2009) curriculum. The second pedagogy is a *pedagogy of tension*. This pedagogy manifests in teachers attempting to balance competing interests, which include the difficulty of teaching the history of war, feeling the pressure to teach the district-prescribed curriculum, teaching with student socioemotional needs in mind, and understanding the political and ideological context in which they taught. The third pedagogy used is a *pedagogy of facts*, where teachers describe themselves as history teachers as opposed to social studies teachers who teach historical thinking and literacy (Epstein, 2009; Wineburg, 2001; Wineburg et al., 2013). Teachers engaging this pedagogy argued they teach history and war with a critical lens but do so by using facts only, not allowing conjecture or discussion of facts not in evidence.

A Pedagogy of Patriotism

Two teachers observed and three other teachers involved in the study teach a pedagogy of patriotism. Each of the schools involved in this study recite the pledge of allegiance as part of the morning announcements. While students and faculty are given the choice to stand, a little over half of each class of students observed do, and each of the nine teachers indicated that they stand as well.

Mr. Jones, more than other teachers in the study, both clearly articulates and teaches a pedagogy of patriotism. This is why his thoughts and teaching are surfaced in this section. When asked how he frames the pledge of allegiance to students one teacher, Mr. Jones, who teaches through a pedagogy of patriotism, told me:

I tell the students, “You can do anything you like, but I own that chair, and I do not allow it to be sat on during the pledge.” Why would I allow them to disrespect the sacrifices being made by other students’ parents? Patriotism has to be directly taught. I mean, we can’t expect love of country to grow out of thin air; students need to be taught. I think it’s part of teaching about war.

He explained that there is no way to teach war to his students other than that American choices in war are correct and patriotic. “It isn’t that we [the United States] didn’t make mistakes, but we have learned from our mistakes, there’s proof, but regardless, you have to support the country,” he explained. Patriotism, while not in the standards, is directly taught by him as well as three others of the nine teachers in the study.

During the run-up to the 2016 presidential election, this teacher had an “Elect Trump and Pence: Make America Great Again” banner in his classroom. Though an assistant principal asked him quietly to take it down, he refused. The banner remains to this day. He argued that his disagreement with the principal was about patriotism, what the soldiers were fighting for. Mr. Jones said he kept it up as an example for his students, though he said, “I don’t care who they are in favor of . . . They don’t have to like Trump . . . but now that he’s the president, they have to respect him.” He also has a photograph of a special forces unit that he and his students sent candy and messages to. While I was observing, he told students that they had been “wiped out” soon after receiving their care package. “You need to understand the sacrifices these people make for us,” he told the students. His instruction was similar, teaching the wars America has been in as “difficult” and “bad” but “necessary” and “fought well.” In class, he teaches the nouns of war, the people, places, and things, emphasizing the dramatic story that he tells well and with dramatic flair. Stories I observed him tell were of Teddy Roosevelt and the Rough Rider charge up San Juan Hill during the Spanish American War, what life was like in the trenches, and the cold temperatures American soldiers experienced during the Battle of the Bulge. The focus of much of the instruction is on what is endured by soldiers and how they sacrifice.

A Pedagogy of Tension

Two teachers who were observed and two additional teachers from the original nine involved in this study indicated they engage a pedagogy of tension. Mr. Jeffers was able to articulate clearly the complexities of a pedagogy of tension, and this tension was also quite easily observed during his teaching of war. This is why this section focused on Mr. Jeffers. Mr. Jeffers struggles with how to respond to where and who he teaches and the particular time in which he is teaching, the era of Trump. “I’ve been teaching for over twenty years . . . I’ve got a family.” He is married with children. “I’m going to be smart . . . There’s only so many risks I’m going to take.”

He understands that he does not teach in a political-ideological vacuum but teaches within a specific community that holds particular values. To not understand this, Mr. Jeffers told me, is to “be a fool . . . and a fool and his job will soon be parted,” he said with a wry smile. He is aware of that particularly since “the foot and the flag” teachers are being watched and critiqued even more than usual. Not by school district administrators but by the public at large.

To teach something controversially, particularly about war, Mr. Jeffers feels, is to critique Trump. “The past,” he joked, referring to the quote from Faulkner, “is never past . . . particularly in social studies class.” He feels that the critique of war is immediately connected to candidate, president-elect, and now President Trump. Mr. Jeffers is also convinced that students need a critical (Freire, 1970; Parkhouse, 2018) telling of war. The students need the opportunity to critically examine the United States at war to develop a clear understanding of the history of the United States at war, which would allow students to develop their own perspective. This perspective is tempered by his fear of damaging students socioemotionally:

What happens if we explore the justness of a war or something and some kid's dad is in Afghanistan . . . the damage that could happen to that kid. I struggle with how to handle that. It's not a leap to talk about Vietnam being a bad war or something and having the students connect that to Afghanistan. I've had it the other way too. Last year I had a kid tell me how many confirmed kills his father got during his last rotation. What am I supposed to do with that? How am I supposed to tell him what his old man did was wrong?

Added to this is the pressure he feels to prepare students for the end-of-course exams and to follow the district curriculum. Teachers engaged in a pedagogy of tension spoke often of “Well, there are things I have to teach,” and, “There's a pretty specific curriculum,” and, “We have these important tests, and we're expected to do well on them.” When asked if district personnel check in on his or his colleagues' teaching to ensure fidelity to the standards, he answered no. When asked if he has taught “outside the standards” before, spending more time on particular content, teaching content in a different chronology, or teaching thematically, he answered similarly, no. When asked if anyone he knew had gotten in trouble for teaching differently, he again said no. Smiling by the third question, he said:

I know what you're getting at. If I think I should teach war differently, I should teach war differently. I wrestle with it, though. I'm a public school teacher. A county employee. I knew what I was getting into when I signed up. There are constraints and guidelines. I never realized I'm such a rule follower until I say it out loud. But I worry about going outside the lines. Like I said, test scores are important here. It's a tension . . . yeah, it's a tension.

As a result of this tension and fear, Mr. Jeffers chooses not to teach patriotism, at least not directly. He avoids things he assumes his students, their parents, or the larger community might identify as controversial. “I stay inside the lines.” He teaches war but exactly as the district prescribes, staying away from topics that

might trigger his students or be labeled as controversial. The tension wins out. Mr. Jeffers and other teachers ascribing to a pedagogy of tension continue to worry about what their pedagogic choices will lead their students to.

A Pedagogy of Facts

One of the five teachers observed and another one (two total) of the nine teachers interviewed indicated they teach war critically. They both self-described as history teachers as opposed to social studies teachers (Epstein, 2009; Wineburg, 2001; Wineburg et al., 2013) arguing that they teach through facts. This emphasis on facts, they argued, protected them from critique from students, parents, or the larger community. Ms. Smith articulated this most clearly in both interview and classroom observations. This is why she is focused on in this section. Ms. Smith, the teacher observed who engages a pedagogy of facts, argued, “It's not social science, I don't teach science, and it's not social studies. I don't know what that even is . . . I teach history, what happened. Period.” She argued that this allows her to teach war in all its complexity by sticking to the established facts about each war in American history. “I mean, they can't argue with facts, right?” is how she responded to any fears that the students or community might critique her. She did indicate that the facts she sticks to are “well trod, well documented, not like Zinn revisionist history” but facts that she described as “legitimate.” In other words, the content taught uses the “master narrative” (Allridge, 2006) of history.

Like a pedagogy of patriotism and a pedagogy of tension, a pedagogy of facts is teacher centered and lecture based. Unlike the previous two pedagogies, controversial content is touched upon, if quickly, leaving little chance for student comment. Topics that can be deemed controversial included in Ms. Smith's class are critiques of Manifest Destiny as a reason for the Mexican-American War, the Spanish American War as an illegitimate war of imperialism, the use of area bombing³ and the atom bomb in World War II, the Gulf of Tonkin Incident that began the Vietnam War, and the My Lai Massacre.

Ms. Smith, a natural storyteller, passionately delivered her lectures with the aid of chosen images and text displayed on power point slides. She told the story of America as she stalked the room, keeping the attention of most students. Students, meanwhile, took notes rapidly, only interrupting the narrative with questions of clarification. “Was that 1945?” “But weren't we helping the French long before the Gulf of Tonkin?” were asked to be sure they had the content recorded correctly in their notebooks rather than questions of critique, disagreement, or examination. Content is framed in a way to prevent critical questioning from happening. History is taught as an agreed-upon fact, not a narrative built upon surviving documentation, perspective of narrator, assumed omissions, or the influence of political power on officially recorded history. In short, controversial issues in war are reduced to a few short lines in a

3 Area bombing, used toward the end of World War II, was the use of incendiary bombs on parts of cities like Royan, France, Dresden, Germany, and Tokyo, Japan. This resulted in high levels of civilian deaths.

notebook. Like the less controversial content, the controversial history is to be learned, not examined, not called into question.

Ms. Smith shared that she didn't worry about emotional student reactions to content until, as she said, "the uniforms begin to look like their fathers," typically World War II and forward. As she said:

I can handle students getting emotional. They come to me and talk about deployments, their parents overseas, but I don't want to cause trauma. So, I'm careful. I teach the tough stuff but do it in a way where it's, I don't know . . . disconnected from them. It's history; it's the past. It's not today.

The content is taught in a pedagogy of facts and difficult content covered with a more critical lens than either a pedagogy of tension or a pedagogy of patriotism. There is little student analysis of the topics taught of the story told or student voice heard. The assumption is re-enforced by teacher pedagogy that history has happened, the past is past, and all that remains is to remember the people, the places, and the things. Connection to the present is not made; connection to the lives of students is not made nor is a deeper analysis that is necessary for critical civic literacy.

The Patriotism They Didn't Teach

One day during hall duty, Mr. Jeffers was approached by a well-muscled young man, a football player, and as a junior, he had committed to four years of military service. He was wearing a hat popularized by Tom Morello, the ex-Rage Against the Machine guitarist that read, "Make America Rage Again," a replica of the "Make America Great Again" hats popularized by the Trump campaign. "Aren't you concerned what the other students will think? How they'll react?" Mr. Jeffers asked. It was a genuine question asked out of concern. "No. First, I don't hide what I think about Trump." This was after the election. "Second, I don't disrespect, but I tell it how I see it. And I'm not afraid. I've got rights, right?" The young man smiled at the rhyme, and Jeffers did the same. They spoke for a few more minutes about politics, class, and the young man's recent decision to enlist.

This exchange in many ways encapsulates the differences between all nine teachers' notions of how patriotism should be taught in schools and their students'. The teachers avoid dialogue and political discourse. They instead intentionally, in terms of a pedagogy of patriotism, and less intentionally, in pedagogies of tension and facts, diminish student engagement and interaction with the content. What students should think and how they should think are either handed to them (pedagogy of patriotism) or engaged not at all (pedagogies of tension and facts), leaving students' individual sense of patriotism undisturbed.

The students' perspectives from focus group discussions (Morgan, 2002) and overheard conversations were recorded in field notes. The students' perspectives were nuanced, complicated, and ranged further than the students studied by Flannagan (2013) and Kahne & Middaugh (2010). In preparation for the focus groups (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 1989) students were asked to write reflective journals (see appendix) then engage in a facilitated class

discussion.⁴ Among other questions, students were asked how they defined patriotism, and what role schools had in teaching it, if any. The journaled answers were mixed, ranging from one student response that read, "Schools shouldn't teach patriotism because it is brainwashing and indoctrination," to another, which asserted, "Schools have an obligation to make certain that all students love America because we're at war and our families are sacrificing everything for this country." The majority of responses were somewhere in between, arguing that schools should teach patriotism, our country is great, but should also teach critical thinking and, as one student wrote, "critical awareness that is necessary for good patriotism."

The focus group discussions reified the range revealed by the student journal writing. During these discussions, students disagreed, asked questions of one another, and generally good-spiritedly engaged in critical dialogue. Where students universally agreed is that their parents who are or have served should be respected. Whether the government of the United States should be trusted in its decisions to go to war had sharp agreements as well as what should be allowed in terms of protest. One female student argued, "We should be able to do anything to end war." A male student responded, "We should vote, and that's it." Others indicated that writings, speeches, and marches were okay, with some students adding, "So long as everyone behaves, ya know, doesn't burn flags and stuff." Which led a minority of the students to argue that if you can burn a flag to protest the war, you should. The students' answers were thoughtful and engaged but short on specifics and details. Students who were opposed to large protest argued that it was disrespectful, while students who argued that war should be ended through drastic action were short on details. They were interesting, passion-filled discussions that evidenced that students wanted to talk about difficult issues in school. The students didn't want to be told what to think about war or about patriotism but did indicate that they wanted more thoughtfully facilitated opportunities to, as one student said, "discuss things like this . . . I mean . . . I just loved this . . ."

The students indicated that they admired their teachers and like the way they taught. They did, however, say that they would like war to be taught *differently*. The students would like the teaching of war to be focused on larger questions and to offer them opportunities to critically examine the content presented to them. The ability to discuss content more often was also something that was overwhelmingly wanted. All of these items asked for by students would also provide an opportunity for students to more closely and more critically examine their understandings of patriotism and what role it plays in history and their current lives.

Discussion and Conclusion

The task of education in a democracy is to develop a thoughtful, critically engaged citizenry, human beings, who will read, think,

4 The school district did not allow one-to-one student-to-researcher interviews. Three focus group interviews were held in two teachers' classrooms. It was, unfortunately, all that was permitted.

talk, understand, and engage. Engaged citizens follow and support when the choices are just, explained, thoughtful, but never out of a blind faith. Patriotism should be earned and given by the people with eyes wide open, having critically examined as much evidence as possible. This task of growing a critical, complicated patriotism was made nearly impossible as a polarizing candidate ran for the presidency, a young teacher reaching for poignancy placed his foot on the flag, and the parents of students continued to be engaged in overseas combat. Yet choices were made, and patriotism was taught.

Schools and teachers do not exist in a vacuum (Liston & Zeichner, 1991) but instead educate children within particular context, time, and space. The nine teachers in this study made particular pedagogic choices based on pressures they were feeling and experiencing. Their choices impacted the civic education their students received. Kissling (2016) has argued for a more localized notion or patriotism connected to the land and space schools inhabit. While this notion is a powerful one, this study indicates that teachers with connections to the community feel a pressure to be less disruptive, more respectful, and less inclined to teach a more critical form of patriotism (Kahne & Middaugh, 2010; McLaren, 1998; Westheimer, 2007). Left alone, feeling the weight of school system and community pressure to conform, a teacher will teach a pedagogy of patriotism, an overt supportive teaching of American history; a pedagogy of tension, where conflict and controversy will be avoided; or a pedagogy of fact, which teaches controversial issues but in a way that denudes the conflict. In short, all three pedagogies either overtly or accidentally reify an uncomplicated form of patriotism (Kahne & Middaugh, 2010; Westheimer, 2007) that supports the notion of our country, right or wrong.

Two of the three pedagogies (a pedagogy of tension and a pedagogy of facts) indicate that Kissling's (2016) critique of Westheimer (2007) and Kahne & Middaugh's (2010) two-bucket approach to types of patriotism is correct. It is not that a teacher teaches one or the other directly, as Westheimer and Kahne and Middaugh seem to argue, but instead lightly teaches or steers clear of complications, which leads to a reenforcement of commonly held ideas of patriotism rather than an overt push for what patriotism should be. This results in a middle ground between either *authoritarian* or *democratic* forms of patriotism (Westheimer, 2007) or *blind* or *critical* forms of patriotism (Kahne & Middaugh, 2010) where undisturbed forms of patriotism are left alone, to grow in the shade. This further indicates that teachers need to be fully versed in their school communities but be distant enough from them to present their students with alternate possibilities for what patriotism can be. These schools, educating the children of soldiers, offer a canary-in-the-mineshaft warning. It is difficult to teach a critical patriotism here; we must develop ways to teach more critical forms of patriotism in difficult community spaces. This is necessary for the democratic and civic health of the United States.

References

- Achinstein, B., & Ogawa, R. (2006). (In)Fidelity: What the resistance of new teachers reveals about professional principles and prescriptive educational policies. *Harvard Educational Review, 76*(1), 30–63.
- Allridge, D. (2006). The limits of master narratives in history textbooks: An analysis of representations of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. *Teachers College Record, 108*(4), 662–686.
- Apple, M. (2006). *Educating the "right" way: Markets, standards, god, and inequality*, (2nd ed). New York: Routledge.
- Apple, M. (2014). *Official knowledge: Democratic education in a conservative age*, (3rd ed). New York: Routledge.
- Au, W. (2008). *Unequal by design: High stakes testing and the standardization of inequality*. New York: Routledge.
- Barton, K. (2015). Elicitation techniques: Getting people to talk about ideas they don't usually talk about. In *Theory and Research in Social Education, 43*, 179–205.
- Costello, M. (2017). The Trump effect: The impact of the Presidential election on our nation's schools. https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/splc_the_trump_effect.pdf.
- Creswell, J. (2008). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach*, 3rd Edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Creswell, J. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach*, 5th Edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Duncan-Andrade, J. (2007). Gangstas, wankstas, and ridas: Defining, developing, and supporting effective teachers in urban schools. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, Vol. 20, No. 6*, 617–638.
- Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic field notes*, 2nd Edition. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Epstein, TK. (2009). *Interpreting national history: Race, identity, and pedagogy in classrooms and communities*. New York: Routledge.
- Fallows, J. (2018). The Iraq war and the inevitability of ignorance. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/03/iraq-war-anniversary-fifty-first-state/555986/>.
- Flanagan, C. (2013). *Teenage citizens: The political theories of the young*. Cambridge: Harvard Education Press.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Herder and Herder.
- Freire, P., & Macedo, D. P. (1987). *Literacy: Reading the word & the world*. Bergin & Garvey Publishers.
- Fraenkel, J. R., & Wallen, N. E. (2006). *How to design and evaluate research in education*, (6th ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.
- Gibbs, B. (2019). Patriotism, pressure and place: Civic agency in base country. *Peabody Journal of Education, 94*(1), 97–113.
- Gillen, J. (2014). *Educating for insurgency: The roles of young people in schools of poverty*. Oakland, CA: AK Press.
- Grubb, T. (2016, September 26). Orange County teacher resigns after politically charged lesson spurs criticism. *News & Observer*.
- Hess, D. (2009). *Controversy in the classroom: The democratic power of discussion*. Routledge.
- Hess, D. (2016). No time to take a pass: Why schools should teach young people about the 2016 elections. In *Social Education, 80*(5) pp. 225–233.
- Westheimer's *Pledging allegiance: The politics of patriotism in America's schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hubbard, R. & Power, B. (2003). TK. *The art of classroom inquiry*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Publishing.
- Kahne, J., & Middaugh, E. (2010). Is patriotism good for democracy? A study of high school senior's patriotic comments. In J. L. Devitis (Ed.), *Critical civic literacy: A reader*. Peter Lang Publishing.

- Kissling, M. (2016). How patriotism matters in U.S. social studies classrooms, fifteen years after 9/11. In W. Journell (Ed.) *Reassessing the social studies curriculum: Promoting critical civic engagement in a politically polarized, post 9/11 world*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Liston, D. & Zeichner, K. (1991). *Teacher education and the social conditions of schooling*. New York: Routledge.
- Leedy, P. & Ormond, J. (2005). *Practical research: Planning and design (8th ed.)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Marshall, C. (2016). *Designing qualitative research 6th Edition*. Los Angeles: Sage Publishing.
- McLaren, P. (1998). *Life in schools: An introduction to critical pedagogy in the foundations of education, 3rd Edition*. New York: Longman Printing.
- Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Jossey-Bass.
- Miles, M. & Huberman, A. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. New York: Sage Publications.
- Mills, M. (1997). Towards a disruptive pedagogy: Creating spaces for student and teacher resistance to social injustice. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, p 35–55.
- Morgan, D. L. (2002). Focus group interviewing. In J. Gubrium & J. Holstein's (Eds.) *Handbook of interview research: Context and method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Mulcahy, C. (2011). The tangled web we weave: Critical literacy and critical thinking, pp. 1–11. In J. DeVitis (Ed.) *Critical civic literacy: A reader*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Murphy, J. (1991). *Restructuring schools: Capturing and assessing the phenomena*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Noddings, N. (2012). *Peace education: How we come to love and hate war*. Cambridge University Press.
- Noguera, P., Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2014). Organizing resistance into social movements. In E. Tuck & K. W. Yang (Eds.) *Youth resistance research and theories of change*. New York: Routledge.
- Oakes, J., & Rogers, J. (2006). *Learning power: Organizing for education and justice*. Teachers College Press.
- Parkhouse, H. (2017). Pedagogies of naming, questioning, and demystification: A study of two critical U.S. history classrooms. In *Theory and Research in Social Education* pp. 1–41.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods (3rd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Reese, W. (2011). *America's public schools: From the common school to no child left behind*. Johns Hopkins Press.
- Rogers, J., Franke, M., Yun, J., Ishimoto, M., Diera, C., Geller, R., Berryman, A., Brenes, T. (2017). *Teaching and learning in the age of Trump: Increasing stress and hostility in American high schools*. UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education and Access.
- Ross, E. W. (2014). *The social studies curriculum 4th Edition*. State University Press.
- Ross, E. W. (2017). The courage of hopelessness: Creative disruption of everyday life in the classroom. In W. Journell (Ed.) *Reassessing the social studies curriculum: Promoting critical civic engagement in a politically polarized, post-9/11 world*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Ross, E. W., & Vinson, K. (2010). Social control and the pursuit of dangerous citizenship. In J. L. DeVitis (Ed.), *Critical civic literacy: A reader* (pp. 155–169). Peter Lang.
- Saldana, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers, 3rd Ed.* Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publishing.
- Sandlin, J., Schultz, B., & Burdick, J. (2010). *The handbook of public pedagogy: Education and learning beyond schooling*. New York: Routledge.
- Segall, A. (2013). Teachers perceptions of the impact on state mandated standardized testing: Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) as a case study of consequences. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 31(3), 287–335.
- Sondel, B., Baggett, H., & Dunn, A. H. (2018). For millions of people this is real trauma: A pedagogy of political trauma in the wake of the 2016 U.S. presidential election. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 275–285.
- Stake, R. (2006). *Case study research: Design and Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.
- Tyack, D. (2003). *Seeking common ground: Public schools in a diverse society*. Harvard Education Press.
- Walsh, D. (2007). Second fiddle to fear. In J. Westheimer (Ed.), *Pledging allegiance: The politics of patriotism in America's schools*. Teachers College Press.
- Westheimer, J. (Ed.) (2007). *Pledging allegiance: The politics of patriotism in America's schools*. Teachers College Press.
- Wineburg, S. (2001). *Historical Thinking: And Other Unnatural Acts Charting the Future of Teaching the Past*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Wineburg, S., Martin, D., & Monte-Sano, C. (2011). *Reading like a historian: Teaching literacy in middle and high school history classrooms*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Wright-Maley, C. (2015). On "Stepping back and letting go": The role of control in the success or failure of social studies simulations. In *Theory and Research in Social Education*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 206–243.
- Yin, R. (1989). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Sage Publications.
- Yin, R. (2006). *Applications of case study research, 3rd Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Appendix

Interview 1

Introductory Semi-structured Interview Protocol for Teachers

1. How did you come to teaching?
2. How did you come to teach here (this school) specifically?
3. Can you describe your pedagogy and approach to content generally? Is there a writer, scholar, or pedagogical school of thought that you most adhere to?
4. Have you had to constrain or broaden your pedagogy and approach to content at your current school site? At other school sites?
5. How do you take into account needs of students or outside student experience regarding your pedagogy, content, and assessments?
6. Are there some questions and topics that you just won't teach or will only teach within a particular way based on who you perceive your students and their experiences to be?
7. How do you teach about war? Are there particular questions you focus on? Skill sets? Content? Are there things you purposefully don't teach?
8. Which wars and when? How do you construct your units and content order?
9. How are these units of instruction about war received by students? Do they struggle with them? In what ways?
10. Do they connect these units of instruction to their own lives? Do you do that intentionally? Do you attempt to soften these examinations, or do you spend more time on them?
11. Do you or how do you teach the antiwar efforts of the wars taught or the present-day antiwar movements?

12. How do parents react to the pedagogical and content approach you engage students in around war?

Interview 2

“Think Aloud-Read Aloud” Elicitation Device

Teaching War

Teacher 1

Teacher 1 teaches all the wars and conflicts she is assigned to teach but banks time. That is, she “strategically hustles” to spend more time on the “present-day wars,” which have meant Iraq and Afghanistan most recently. She teaches the other wars that America has been involved in more briefly, focusing on causes and outcomes and particular turning points focused on the state standards or the mandated tests. She teaches them methodically and chronologically. The amount of time spent on each war depends on the significance given to them in the standards and in the textbook pages. So the American Revolution gets some time, the War of 1812 less time, the Civil War significantly more than either of them, World War I and World War II the most of any other war; the Cold War is taught generally, with the Korean and Vietnam Wars getting a day or two but not much more despite large student interest in them, particularly about Vietnam.

A mixture of pedagogy is used but, as there is much content to cover and because the teacher is banking time to teach about Afghanistan and Iraq, the class moves pretty quickly. Though there is generally not enough time for intentionally planned student discussion on an issue or text, there is sporadic student discussion often, usually based on a question a student asks or a question posed by the teacher. The students seem to always be in conversation with the teacher, processing, asking, discussing. Students are assigned textbook work prior to class to accompany class activities, and students are given content quizzes and tests. Some film is used to supplement the teaching but not too much, such as excerpts of *Saving Private Ryan* to give students a feel for World War II.

There have been class discussions focused on different elements of the wars as well, including a discussion of whether the Green Mountain Boys acted illegally when they attacked Fort Ticonderoga and one on whether First Lady Dolley Madison was braver than her husband for staying behind and rescuing artwork and historical documents from the White House during the War of 1812; students are asked to sort or rank prominent generals from both the North and South for a discussion on which Civil War general was the best military strategist; and in a planned discussion, she has students complete a Socratic seminar on the poetry of World War I, particularly “Dulce et Decorum Est.” The focus is on the causes and consequences of the war rather than particular battles or particular people other than the most prominent of generals and presidents and dictators. Explaining that there isn’t enough time, she just touches on the Holocaust so that students know what it is but doesn’t go into the particulars. Students complete a map for each section, often focusing on some battles to give students a sense of the geographic space involved. The teacher lecture for each war can look like a conversation, or it can be more formal, such as a PowerPoint. Students complete handouts,

sometimes alone or in teams, and complete a gallery walk of photographs for the Vietnam War.

The teacher saves time at end of the school year to focus on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. She feels it is important for students to have an in-depth understanding of the countries, causes, combat, and decisions that they are living through now. The teacher also understands that the children of active duty and veteran soldiers are two to six times more likely to join the military and wants to make sure they have a full understanding of what they enlist in. She takes the students on an in-depth examination of the languages, cultures, and customs of Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as an overview of their histories. She also introduces American involvement in the Middle East in post-World War II; how the United States became involved in the Middle East generally and Iraq and Afghanistan in particular are focused on.

Something she feels is missing greatly from her and most teachers’ teaching about war is the voice and experience of the American soldier and the psychological aspects of war, specially, how war affects individuals during battle itself and later as they transition to civilian life. She uses letters from soldiers, journal entries, and substantial excerpts from Sebastian Junger’s book *War*, which details the lives of the soldiers of Second Platoon, Battle Company’s 15 months of combat in the Korengal Valley of Afghanistan. She also shows sections of the documentary films that Junger and Tim Hetherington made called *Restrepo* and *Korengal*. Both the book and the films detail the harrowing, complicated lives led by the soldiers as they went on patrol, braced for attack, and struggled as a unit. The instructional unit is hard, and she and the students feel exhausted by the end of it. There is constant discussion about the choices made by political and military leaders and a constant examination of the comments, lives, and decisions made by the on-the-ground soldiers. The students particularly struggle with the derogatory comments soldiers make of the enemy and how the soldiers often seem to “enjoy” the combat. She feels that it is important to surface for students what the life of a soldier is like in combat as vividly and appropriately as possible to have a better understanding of life in war. There is research, writing, presentation, and quizzes and tests throughout her class and this unit. Students read several sections of Junger’s book on combat, including a detailed description of how a soldier loses his legs when he is hit directly by a mortar round and another detailing a night raid where a wounded soldier is dragged away by enemy soldiers but is rescued by brave action from a soldier in his unit who charges into the darkness to save the first soldier. The rescuer later wins the Congressional Medal of Honor. The men are seen as men might be in combat everywhere, lonely, critical of people back home, vicious and cruel in combat, willing to do anything for their fellow American soldiers.

Teacher 2

Teacher 2 teaches all the wars that America has been involved in, thoroughly and chronologically. This teacher feels that students need to know as much content as they can, particularly about the wars. She understands that her students may never take another history class and so must learn as much as possible in the time that

they have with her. The major wars, the American Revolution, the Civil War, World War I, and World War II, get the most time. The wars in Korea and Vietnam are taught during a Cold War unit so are touched on briefly, mainly the causes and effects and the Containment Policy and Domino Theory. The course is generally teacher centered, with the teacher providing students deep content on the wars themselves, comparing and contrasting them against one another. Though the class is teacher centered, compelling questions are asked, and she engages the students in “sparring” sessions where the teacher debates students on critical issues and turning points of history, often taking a devil’s advocate point of view. She assigns textbook reading that students dutifully complete, and most class sessions are filled with inspiring and interesting lectures well planned and well delivered by the teacher. The lectures focus on how they began to how they were fought, the effects on the local inhabitants, statistics on the number of soldiers killed and wounded, tactics and strategy, and detailed stories of heroics during battles. She is a good storyteller, a performer, and delivery of information is the good anecdote and the story well told. Students dutifully take notes and ask clarifying questions, but there is little student voice other than the occasional clarifying question or spontaneous discussion that arises out of a particular story or idea presented in class. The focus of the content read and delivered is on the stories of the leaders, presidents, dictators, generals, and heroes. Major battles are discussed with the military strategy and tactical plan focused on. Primary sources are often read, quizzes and tests taken, and essays written.

Teacher 3

Teacher 3 teaches thematically and begins her year with an examination of how each war America has been involved in, from the American Revolution to the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, began and whether the reasons for war were justified. The class has an inquiry-and-discussion focus, with students examining information alone or in teams, which often leads to whole-class discussions. The teacher gives students information through teacher talk and lecture sometimes but not often, mostly to clarify a complicated content narrative. She tells students on the first day of class that they are living in a time of war and need to gain a better sense of the causes and consequences of war and combat. The teacher wants students to become aware, to gain a critical lens of foreign policy and of war in general. She begins the course by asking students, “What justifies a country going to war?” Usually students answer the question generally, mostly for reasons of national interest, “if we were attacked,” “if there was something we needed”; a very few answer, “To help another country or others in need.” The teacher then narrows the question, asking, “For what reasons would you be willing to join the military and fight a war or send a loved one into combat?” There is generally a silence and a much more serious tone than previously. Students write their answers and talk with neighbors, and then she engages them in a whole-class discussion. This discussion becomes very complicated very quickly as it examines the reasons for going to war making surfacing some sharp critiques. It sets the tone for the rest of the unit.

Students are then asked to examine short paragraphs describing how each war began and evaluating the reasons and arguments for going to war. At first alone but then in teams, students list the pros or reasons justifying going to war and the cons or reasons that did not justify going to war. In partner teams, students compare their lists. In the teams, students are asked to write evaluations of the reasons for the war, examining whether it was justified at the historical time period and by their own standards of going to war. Students are then asked to sort each war, from the war they consider to be most justified to the one least justified, writing a two-paragraph explanation of their order. Students then form teams of four to share and compare their answers, seeing if they can agree on the war that is most just and the war that is least just. The teacher then engages the entire class in discussion, attempting to see if there’s agreement on the order and what justifies or does not justify going to war. The discussion is rollicking and engaging, with students recognizing the nuance and complexity of the decision-making and gaining a critical lens. As the discussion winds down, the teacher asks students to determine the one war in American history that is most just. There are three contenders, the American Revolution, the Civil War, and World War II. World War II wins out after a few minutes of heated debate.

This argument sets the focus for the next part of the unit—an examination of World War II as the “good war,” the war that the entire class and most of the country would argue was very justified. Students arrive at World War II with a large amount of prior knowledge, mostly highlighting why World War II was justified: the attack at Pearl Harbor, the Holocaust, Japanese and German aggression. They have seen their fill of World War II movies and television shows and feel they have much knowledge even if it is only skin deep. The focus of the World War II case study is to trouble that simple narrative. Students make maps of major battles, sort and argue over which battle was most significant, taking into account casualty numbers, evaluate tactical and strategic decisions (e.g., to not bomb death camps), and examine some of the more troubling aspects of the war. These include examining the unsung heroes of the war, including the Navajo Code Talkers, the Tuskegee Airmen, the Womens Air Corps (WACS), and the all-Japanese American and most highly decorated military unit in American history, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team; reading documents and examining Executive Order 9069 (Japanese Internment), the use of area bombing used on the city of Dresden, targeting nonmilitary cities, and in-depth analysis of the dropping of the atomic bombs, among others. After each examination, the students are asked to reflect on the question, “Does this make World War II less just? Why?” At the end of the case studies, students write an essay defining their notion of a just war, using examples from World War II and the other wars to justify their arguments.

The teacher next turns student attention to an example of a “bad war,” the war in Vietnam, for the second case study. Students examine how the war began, the reasons for it, its connection to the colonial campaigns of the French and other European powers, the Containment Doctrine, Domino Theory, how it was fought, the age, race, and socioeconomics of the average American soldier, the body counts on both sides, the tactics used to end the

war, like Free Fire Zones, Operation Rolling Thunder, the use of napalm, Agent Orange, and carpet-bombing. The same questions are asked as with World War II: “Does this make the war more or less just? Why?” Students often see similarities between World War II and the Vietnam War.

The case study on Vietnam pivots to include an additional question: “How do we end war?” Using the antiwar movements of the Vietnam era, students investigate and interrogate the various ways different groups attempted to end the war in Vietnam. The groups and tactics include the speeches of the Students for Democratic Society (SDS), the spectacle of the Yippies (Youth International Party), the exploding of symbolic targets in an effort to bring the war home by the Weather Underground, the burning of draft cards and civil disobedience offered by Daniel and Phillip Berrigan, the release of the “truth” about the war by Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers, and the testimony of the Vietnam Veterans Against War (VVAW) at the Winter Soldier events. This culminates in a historical simulation debating the ways that the war in Vietnam should be brought to an end, with teams of students assuming the roles of the antiwar activists, developing speeches outlining each team’s way to end the war, developing questions to ask the other teams, and engaging in a furious argument about how to end war. For the unit close, students write an essay about how war can be prevented and ended using all the information they have gained from both case studies.

Teacher 4

Teacher 4 teaches all the wars the state asks her to but does so with a focus on the ethnic aspects of the war. Using a large question—Who’s included?—as a driving question for the year, the teacher examines every aspect of the content with a lens for inclusion and exclusion. This theme focuses on issues of race, class, gender, LGBTQ status, and power but focuses most specifically on race and ethnicity. Rather than teaching all the wars from start to finish, she takes racial and ethnic aspects of each war and examines them thoroughly after presenting a general overview of each war, as needed, teaching the context necessary to better understand the racial complexities to be discussed and talked about. Students complete research, engage in class discussion, use Socratic seminar to look at texts, use documentary films, conduct interviews in the community when relevant, take tests and quizzes, and write essays. Some of the topics covered include the Crispus Attucks and slave and Native American involvement during the American Revolution and War of 1812, the underground railroad leading to the Civil War and the 54th and 55th Massachusetts regiments, Executive Order 9066, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the Tuskegee Airmen, the Navajo Code Talkers during World War II, the ethnic breakdown of the soldiers fighting in the war in Vietnam, the civil rights issues in the army, among other topics. She also teaches the racial and ethnic divides of the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, helping students to understand the cultural, ethnic, and religious differences on both sides of the conflicts. She also examines the underlying ethnic tension that is involved in several wars, such as the ability to continually take land that led to the Mexican-American War, and the Spanish American War.

Student Focus Group Interview Protocol 1

Students wrote journals in response to these questions prior to the discussion.

1. Can you describe your parents’ military participation? Number of years? Rank? Duty station? Number of times stationed overseas?
2. Do you have a perspective about the current wars America is involved in?
3. What class is your/has typically been your favorite? Why?
4. How do you or like to learn best? Can you give an example from a recent class?
5. Do you study war and conflict often in school? Other social studies classes? English literature classes? How has it been taught?
6. How is it currently taught in your social studies class?
7. Do you like the way it’s taught? Is it more factual as in providing you just the facts and details? More of a narrative? Or more critical examination? Is it asking you to evaluate the choices made and critique the choices made by government officials and soldiers on the ground?
8. What wars have you studied this year? In what ways have you studied them? Have there been different questions and activities for each war? Or have they been together in one type of unit?
9. Has your class studied the anti-war movements of each of the conflicts? Today’s anti-war movement? What are your thoughts on how it’s been taught? Why?
10. Are the wars studied connected to the present? Or are they kept in the past?
11. Do you find the study of war interesting or do you find it difficult? How and in what way?
12. If you could change the way you are learning about the war and conflict how might you change it? Would you like more detail on what and how it happened? Would you like more of an opportunity to critique it? Would you like more of an opportunity to connect it to your own learning?
13. Do you feel students have the ability to change the political situation if they’d like to? How do you go about doing that?

Focus Group Interview Protocol 2

Patriotism and Media

Directions: Please answer each of the following questions in at least several sentences or a short paragraph. Thank you!

1. Are you the child of a current or retired member of the military? Was your parent/guardian a non-commissioned officer (NCO) or an officer? Did they serve overseas in active combat zones? Any other relatives in the military? In what capacity?
2. Scholars and individuals have defined patriotism in different ways and definitions run the gamut from

complete support of your nation's foreign policies to your country to "dissent is patriotic". The first notion of patriotism might be best represented by an after dinner toast by Stephen Decatur. He said, "Our Country! In her intercourse with foreign nations may she always be in the right; but right or wrong, our country!" The second sentiment might best be defined by James Baldwin when he said, "I love America more than any other country in the world, and exactly for this reason, I insist on the right to criticize her perpetually." How do you define patriotism?

3. Do schools have an obligation to teach patriotism, to teach love of country? If so, to what extent? How might schools go about this? Why?
4. Do schools have an obligation to help students develop a critical lens that might result in students becoming more critical of American foreign policy decisions? Why?
5. How do you watch or consume news? Television news? Cable news? Radio? Online? Why do you choose that medium?
6. Do you follow the news closely or not very? Why?
7. How well do you feel the media reports on military events generally and conflict and war in particular? Why do you think so?
8. During the Vietnam War the American media was granted unfettered access to front line troops. Print journalists, photographers, and television cameras were everywhere American troops were. For the first time Americans at home saw combat live on television and heard the voices of regular soldiers. It was argued by some that the average American was given a better understanding of the war. This was changed in subsequent wars with journalists being much more restricted. In the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan the rules have been loosened somewhat with journalists being "embedded" with troops but restricted as to what they could or could not report. Should journalists be permitted to report what they see no matter how difficult and possibly harsh it is? Or should journalists report what is happening in combat zones more generally, not getting into the specifics of what American soldiers are doing in combat?