Searching for Sputnik: Revealing Hidden Curriculum as Motivation for Teacher Growth

Jeffrey Allan Schneider

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Searching for Sputnik: Revealing Hidden Curriculum as Motivation for Teacher Growth

by

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DEDICATION

To my wonderful and amazing wife, Beth, for all of her support and encouragement during this process.

There is no way I could have done this without you.

To my sons Andrew and Nicholas for encouraging me to undertake this endeavor so that I would not be a Wolowitz.

And to my brother, Paul, and sister, Jennifer.

I earned my master’s degree and you followed suit to try to keep up.

Now the ball is back in your court again.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this action research study is to understand the impact of revealing the hidden curriculum on veteran teachers. Relying on a theoretical framework of hidden curriculum, cognitive dissonance, and transformative learning to develop a tool to motivate teachers to reflect upon and ultimately improve their core curricular and pedagogical beliefs and practices. I studied three veteran social studies teachers as they reflected upon one aspect of their hidden curriculum obtained through a survey of their students. The intent was to create a disorienting dilemma with enough power to spark cognitive dissonance, thereby resulting in the teachers experiencing an increased desire to grow. The results showed that simply reflecting upon the student-provided data was not significant enough to motivate the teachers to want to change their teaching practices. However, coupling the process with reflection on their current curricular and pedagogical beliefs increased some participants’ desire to alter their practices. Motivating teachers to challenge and change their core curricular and pedagogical beliefs may require a more complete process like transformative learning to succeed. With proper modifications, the process described in this study can be an effective tool for those who wish to motivate and engage with teachers in the growth process.

Keywords: cognitive dissonance, disorienting dilemma, hidden curriculum, hypocrisy paradigm, transformative learning
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication .............................................................................................................. iii

Acknowledgements ............................................................................................... iv

Abstract .................................................................................................................. v

List of Tables .......................................................................................................... ix

List of Figures ......................................................................................................... x

Chapter 1: Introduction ......................................................................................... 1
  Problem of Practice ......................................................................................... 2
  Theoretical Framework ................................................................................... 5
  Research Questions ......................................................................................... 12
  Positionality ....................................................................................................... 13
  Research Design ............................................................................................... 19
  Significance and Limitations ......................................................................... 25
  Dissertation Overview .................................................................................... 27
  Definition of Terms ......................................................................................... 28

Chapter 2: Literature Review .............................................................................. 30
  Introduction ...................................................................................................... 30
  Purpose and Strategies .................................................................................... 31
  Cognitive Dissonance and Hypocrisy Paradigm ............................................ 33
  Transformative Learning .................................................................................. 43
  Hidden Curriculum ......................................................................................... 65
| Chapter Summary | .......................................................... | 78 |
| Chapter 3: Methodology | .......................................................... | 80 |
| Introduction | .......................................................... | 80 |
| Methodological Overview | .......................................................... | 81 |
| Research Methods | .......................................................... | 92 |
| Description of Procedures | .......................................................... | 98 |
| Data Analysis | .......................................................... | 106 |
| Reflecting with Participants | .......................................................... | 107 |
| Devising an Action Plan | .......................................................... | 107 |
| Chapter Summary | .......................................................... | 108 |
| Chapter 4: Data Analysis | .......................................................... | 110 |
| Introduction | .......................................................... | 110 |
| Findings of the Study | .......................................................... | 112 |
| Interpretation of Study Results | .......................................................... | 183 |
| Chapter Summary | .......................................................... | 185 |
| Chapter 5: Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations | .......................................................... | 187 |
| Introduction | .......................................................... | 187 |
| Results | .......................................................... | 188 |
| Action Plan | .......................................................... | 201 |
| Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research | .......................................................... | 207 |
| Conclusion | .......................................................... | 211 |
| References | .......................................................... | 214 |
| Appendix A: Debriefing Statement | .......................................................... | 231 |
Appendix B: Student Perceptions of Learning Survey .................................................. 232
Appendix C: Teacher Beliefs and Practices Survey ...................................................... 235
Appendix D: Informed Consent Form – Teachers ......................................................... 241
Appendix E: Modified Think-aloud Protocol .............................................................. 242
Appendix F: Final Teacher Interview Protocol ............................................................ 243
Appendix G: Parental Notification Letter .................................................................... 245
Appendix H: Teacher Reflection Guide ....................................................................... 246
LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 Student Reported Most Assigned Tasks – Hall ........................................115
Table 4.2 Student Perspective on Message Teacher is Sending – Hall .......................118
Table 4.3 Best Types of Tasks – Hall ........................................................................119
Table 4.4 Student Reported Most Assigned Tasks – King, Holocaust .........................123
Table 4.5 Student Perspective on Message Teacher is Sending – King, Holocaust ......127
Table 4.6 Best Types of Tasks – King, Holocaust .........................................................128
Table 4.7 Student Reported Most Assigned Tasks – King, Civics ...............................130
Table 4.8 Student Perspective on Message Teacher is Sending – King, Civics ..........132
Table 4.9 Best Types of Tasks – King, Civics .................................................................134
Table 4.10 Student Reported Most Assigned Tasks – Smith .......................................138
Table 4.11 Student Perspective on Message Teacher is Sending – Smith ..................141
Table 4.12 Best Types of Tasks – Smith .................................................................142
Table 4.13 Dissonance Thermometer – Hall ...............................................................172
Table 4.14 Dissonance Thermometer – King .............................................................176
Table 4.15 Dissonance Thermometer – Smith .........................................................179
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Data Collection Process ................................................................. 22
Figure 2.1 Transformative Learning Process ................................................. 49
Figure 3.1 Data Collection Process ................................................................. 92
Figure 3.2 Study Timeline ............................................................................ 98
Figure 4.1 Formula for Weighting Most Commonly Assigned Tasks ............. 114
Figure 4.2 Reflection on Most Commonly Assigned Tasks – Hall ................. 117
Figure 4.3 Reflection on Most Commonly Assigned Tasks – King, Holocaust .... 125
Figure 4.4 Reflection on Most Commonly Assigned Tasks – King, Civics .......... 131
Figure 4.5 Reflection on Most Commonly Assigned Tasks – Smith ................. 140
Figure 4.6 Curriculum Ideologies Inventory Results – Hall ............................ 152
Figure 4.7 Curriculum Ideologies Inventory Results – King ............................ 157
Figure 4.8 Curriculum Ideologies Inventory Results – Smith ............................ 165
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

On October 4, 1957, the Soviet Union successfully launched the world's first artificial satellite, known as Sputnik I, into space. While only the size of a beach ball, Sputnik’s 98-minute elliptical orbit of the Earth marked the beginning of the space race and ushered in a new era of political, military, technological, and scientific developments in the United States (Garber, 2007). Just as Sputnik motivated the United States to adjust its trajectory, events and experiences in a person’s daily life can have similar results.

I assume my educational experience is indicative of most teachers. I enjoyed learning, albeit some subjects more than others, and was inspired by a few notable and supportive teachers. In particular, I credit my ninth-grade science teacher for my desire to become a teacher. Mr. Simpson’s class was almost entirely lab-based. As students, we mimicked real scientists by maintaining detailed lab books, which we were able to use on our final exam. Since this was years before the days of state-mandated testing, the exam was process- and skill-based rather than the regurgitation of information through the selection of the “best possible answer” to multiple-choice questions. What also stands out in my memories of that course was that the teacher rarely answered questions. He would simply smile and, if we were lucky, provide some direction to help us find the answer for ourselves. If the experiment failed, it was merely a learning opportunity as we set it up and tried again. I recall that many students despised his class and his method of teaching. They would have preferred being told what to memorize than having to learn for themselves.
After dabbling in a few other majors, I eventually became an education major in college. I was exposed to various educational theories and established my ideals regarding the type of teacher I wanted to become. However, upon entering the field, something happened. Many of my ideological principles about being a teacher crashed upon the rocks of the reality. I do not recall noticing it. It just happened. Within a few years, I was the embodiment of the stereotypical social studies teacher – lecture for most of the period, assign textbook readings and worksheets for homework, give multiple choice-style tests, and complain that the students were not motivated to learn. Regarding classroom culture, I was the content expert whose word was law. I governed with an iron fist through the consistent enforcement of my rigid classroom policies and procedures, which I felt were for the good of my students. Years later, as part of a graduate course, I completed an assignment in which I identified and reflected upon my core curricular beliefs in comparison to the classroom teacher I had become. Through this experience and recalling Mr. Simpson’s class, I started to realize I was far from the type of teacher I had envisioned becoming. Almost every aspect of my practice was misaligned with my ideals. It was that recognition that helped motivate me to change and grow. That was my Sputnik.

**Problem of Practice**

Motivating teachers to improve their practices is a central issue for instructional leaders at the school, district, state, and national levels. As an instructional coach and social studies curriculum specialist, I partner with teachers to improve the teaching and learning that occurs in their classrooms. This typically takes the form of helping teachers incorporate strategies to improve student learning, increase student engagement, or to
modify student behaviors. I was trained to implement Jim Knight’s (2007; 2011) impact cycle, a dialogical coaching model. A key initial step in the process is to identify the current reality of the classroom, accomplished most effectively through video recording. This helps the coach and the teacher focus on elements that are visible in the classroom (Knight, 2014). However, there are often deeper, latent messages, typically referred to as the hidden curriculum, which may remain unaddressed in this process (Martin, 1976). This hidden curriculum may parallel a teacher’s ideals and principles regarding teaching and learning, but it may also contradict them (Spera & Wentzel, 2003). Realizing that one’s ideals do not correspond to one’s practices is disconcerting. According to Festinger (1957), the resulting emotional state of cognitive dissonance could be a motivating factor for a person to change their practices. For Mezirow (1991), this type of disorienting dilemma could be the stepping off point of a process that results in a transformative shift in one’s core beliefs. This was true of my reflecting upon Mr. Simpson’s class, my ideals, and my praxes.

The problem of practice addressed in this study is the challenge instructional leaders encounter in motivating teachers to engage in critical reflection on the teaching and learning in their classroom as motivation to improve their core curricular and pedagogical practices and beliefs. As an instructional leader and coach, my role is to support teachers through the growth process. In my experience, most teachers do not see a need for them to change. When discussing issues concerning teaching and learning in the classroom, I have observed how the teachers’ typical first response to coaching relates to their students. Normally, teachers said things like…they are not studying like they should…they don’t know how to take notes properly…they just don’t pay attention.
While the ultimate purpose of dialogical coaching is to improve the students’ learning and behavior in a classroom, the teacher’s behaviors or ideals may also need to change to bring about the desired results (Knight, 2007, 2011).

Teachers are also continually bombarded with whole-district or whole-school professional development focused on the next great thing that purportedly will cure all of their classroom difficulties. These unsustained and whole-group directives are not designed to address specific needs in the individual teachers’ classrooms, but rather major areas as determined by the administration. I have been on both sides of this table. As a teacher, I sat in mandatory professional development presented with great enthusiasm by the district staff or school administration. We entered each school year armed with this latest weapon. However, within a month or so, the passion for this latest practice from the carousel of pedagogies faded in the hearts and minds of the administration and subsequently the teachers since it was no longer a requirement. Before long, things were back to “normal.”

As a district instructional leader, I have seen firsthand how the selection of each year’s professional development focus is conducted. I helped to create and deliver, with zest, professional development to administrators and teachers. Then the next year, we would do it all over again with a new strategy. This carousel does not provide teachers with any personalization of professional learning to address issues within their classroom. While teachers need to continually reflect upon and change their practices to grow, this top-down system may cause teachers to jump through any required hoops each year, such as writing new purpose statements each day, without causing any meaningful changes to their pedagogical practices (Evans, 1996).
This qualitative, action research, case study sought to understand the impact of revealing the hidden curriculum associated with the tasks assigned by the teacher and motivate the teachers to reflect upon their pedagogical practices and core curricular and instructional beliefs to result in a newfound desire to improve the teaching and learning in their classroom. Students were surveyed to gain their perceptions of the teaching and learning in the classrooms. After reflecting upon and making clear their current beliefs and goals, the teachers were presented with the data from the student surveys, with their initial reactions recorded. The teachers were provided time to further reflect upon the student data in comparison to their own ideals. Participating teachers were then interviewed to uncover the impact of revealing the hidden curriculum. I hoped to create a tool that teachers can use by themselves or with some assistance to uncover potential areas of growth and motivate them to improve their pedagogical practices and/or curricular and instructional beliefs.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study incorporates ideas from the theories of hidden curriculum, cognitive dissonance, and transformative learning, which are briefly discussed in this section.

**Hidden Curriculum**

The formal classroom curriculum represents only a small part of what students actually learn. Our students are paying close attention to everything happening in and around our schools, including the condition of the building and the relationship between the staff (Sizer & Sizer, 1999). Students possibly learn as much from the methods of learning as they do from the actual content (Aronson, 2002). This is the basis behind the theory of hidden curriculum. The concept of the hidden curriculum encompasses a wide
range of definitions, ideas, and perspectives (Alsubaie, 2015; Apple, 2004; Giroux, 1988; Gordon, 1982; Jackson, 1968; Jerald, 2006; Miller & Seller, 1990; Skelton, 1997; Snyder, 1973). Jerald (2006) defines hidden curriculum as an implicit curriculum that expresses and represents attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors. These are conveyed or communicated through words and actions without conscious intent. Miller and Seller (1990) add norms and values to the list of what is transmitted through the hidden curriculum and further delineate conveyance or communication to include unstated promotion and enforcement.

This study focused primarily on the progressive interpretation of hidden curriculum as initially advanced by Dewey (1938), which he termed *collateral curriculum*, and Jackson (1968) who provided the concept with its current moniker. The progressive version of hidden curriculum concentrates on the school’s covert learning, behavioral, and affective impacts, both positive and negative (Hlebowitsch, 1994). This includes results such as disliking social studies, learning to think critically, and treating others with respect. This study will not delve into the issues and debates regarding more radical perspectives of hidden curriculum, such as critical pedagogy’s vision of education’s intended purpose to maintain docility and control in society and using educational reform as a method to assist in recognizing and removing the inequities in our society (Apple, 2004; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1988). While teachers may or may not have designs on radically changing society or challenging its inequities through their teaching, they likely have intentions concerning many of the intellectual, emotional, or affective aspects of learning (Ames, 1992; Wentzel, 2000). While these intentions may
be overtly evident in the classroom, numerous unintended and covert messages are transmitted as well.

Attempting to gain a deep understanding of a teacher’s hidden curriculum according to students’ perspectives across all aspects of what occurs in the classroom, plus taking into account external factors such as the influence of the students’ home life, might not be plausible (Martin, 1976). Within the classroom, the teacher’s demeanor; the tasks they assign; their approach to the curriculum; or their rules, policies, and procedures could each be responsible for the latent messages received by the students. In addition, each individual student may react to the hidden curriculum differently. As such, it may be more accurate to refer to a hidden curriculum rather than the hidden curriculum (Martin, 1976). Subsequently, the intent here is not to uncover an exhaustive and prescriptive understanding of the hidden curriculum, but to use a new appreciation of the students’ perspective through the analysis of a hidden curriculum in one particular area: the tasks teachers typically assign to their students.

**Cognitive Dissonance**

Through cognitive dissonance, an aversive consequence induces attitudinal or behavioral change. Leon Festinger (1957) theorized that when individuals have two inconsistent cognitions, an unpleasant state of dissonance, or psychological tension, occurs. This typically transpires when new knowledge or information is incongruent with existing knowledge. This dissonance motivates psychological work on behalf of the individual to reduce the inconsistency. To diminish the dissonance, a person could add consonant cognitions, subtract dissonant cognitions, increase the importance of consonant cognitions, or decrease the importance of dissonance cognitions (Harmon-Jones &
Harmon-Jones, 2007). For example, a teacher who primarily uses direct instruction reads a report that disputes the effectiveness of that method, thereby creating a state of cognitive dissonance in the teacher. The teacher could deny or devalue the research, find additional research that supports the use of direct instruction, or reduce direct instruction in favor of a more effective instructional method based on the research (McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001).

The amount of dissonance depends on the level of importance of the cognitions, the level of consistency or inconsistency between the opposing cognitions, and the degree of choice on the part of the individual experiencing the dissonance. The stronger of the cognitions is usually the one most resistant to change and typically about one’s past behaviors since they are difficult to undo (Harmon-Jones, Harmon-Jones, & Levy, 2015). Harmon-Jones et al. give this example: after eating an unhealthy meal while on a diet, it is easier to create acceptable rationalization for that behavior than to convince yourself that you did not eat that meal. For teachers resisting change, a similar justification might be “this is the way that I have always done it” or “this is the way I learned it.”

Much of the attention and research of cognitive dissonance focuses on attitude change in which the participants attempt to justify the behaviors that are the source of dissonance or reduce the averseness of the behavior (Fried & Aronson, 1995). The hypocrisy paradigm of cognitive dissonance offers an argument for the ability of dissonance to influence future behaviors (Aronson, Fried, & Stone, 1991; Dickerson, Thibodeau, Aronson, & Miller, 1992; Fried & Aronson, 1995; Stone, Aronson, Crain, Winslow, & Fried, 1994). Hypocrisy is a combination of advocating a position one supports and being made aware of one’s failure to act in accordance with that position.
(Fried & Aronson, 1995). For example, Stone et al. (1994) asked participants in an experimental group, after having to recall past transgression regarding safe sex, to write a short, persuasive speech about AIDS and safe sex practices and deliver it while being video recorded, which was later going to be shown to high school students. After the experimenter left the room, the participants had the opportunity to procure condoms in total privacy. In their conclusion, the researchers noted that more participants in the hypocrisy condition bought more condoms than in the other groups, demonstrating that the hypocrisy paradigm is a viable method for altering future behaviors (Stone et al., 1994). The hypocrisy paradigm of cognitive dissonance could be a useful method to increase teachers’ desires to change their instructional practices, especially when supplemented with instructional coaching. Partnering with an instructional coach would provide the teacher with support as they proceed through the change process.

**Transformative Learning**

While the hypocrisy paradigm of cognitive dissonance is focused on changing behaviors, the theory of transformative learning for adults concentrates on altering core beliefs. Although it is typically associated with Jack Mezirow, transformative learning theory evolved and expanded to incorporate the ideas of a variety of other theorists as well as siring numerous offspring. At its core, transformative learning is a constructivist approach based on the critical theory of Freire (1970). It is constructivist in that it supports the idea that meaning exists within each person and is the product of their past experiences (Mezirow, 1991). New experiences can strengthen or call into question one’s personal meaning system. Freire (1970) warns of the dangers of not critically examining one’s beliefs, which likely have been deposited through the banking system of
education and the political, economic, and social systems designed to maintain the hegemonic power structure. In essence, Mezirow (1991) is concerned with the meaning-making process.

Transformative learning encompasses eleven (originally ten) steps grouped into four key components – disorienting dilemma, critical reflection, rational discourse, and praxis. First, the learner experiences a disorienting dilemma. Ideally, this would be an epochal experience, but could also take the form of a series of incremental events over a period of time. This triggering event causes a significant level of disruption and discomfort because the individual’s previously held beliefs are no longer able to explain what was experienced (Mezirow, 1991). In this regard, the disorienting dilemma operates like Festinger’s (1957) cognitive dissonance in that it motivates individuals to attempt to alleviate the negative impact of the conflicting cognitions. While there is some debate concerning whether a disorienting dilemma is necessary (Taylor, 2000; 2007), it has been shown to be one of the more impactful steps (Brock, 2010).

Second, the learner engages in critical reflection about their core beliefs. While a starting point might be reflecting upon one’s actions, the ultimate goal is to reflect upon one’s core beliefs, their source, and their impact on one’s actions (Mezirow, 1991). According to Mezirow (1998), the most meaningful reflection is that which transcends simple introspection by including critique of our beliefs and assumptions. The close sibling of critical reflection is rational discourse, the third main component of transformative learning. This involves establishing a meaningful dialogue with one’s peers, mentor, or facilitator as they struggle with coming to terms with their assessments of their old beliefs and the foundations of their new understandings (Kitchenham, 2008).
Rational discourse is a learner centered phenomenon that is based on trust, empathy, and emotional awareness which allows individuals to openly share information to try to obtain a common understanding (Taylor, 2007). The final component in the process is praxis. For Mezirow (1992), this is the reflective implementation of one’s new perspectives into action. Critically reflecting upon one’s beliefs and discussing them with others is meaningless unless the individual actions in the real world emulate their new perspectives.

Transformative learning theory has been the subject of a significant number of studies and amount of research since its inception. The overwhelming majority of those studies have been qualitative due to the slippery nature of measuring what cannot be witnessed (Howie & Bagnall, 2013). The few attempts to provide quantitative data supporting transformative theory have failed to produce significant reliable and valid results (Walker, 2018). However, the vast amount of relevant qualitative research (i.e. Brancard & Quinnwilliams, 2012; Brown, 2005; Caruana, Woodrow, & Pérez, 2015; Kreber, 2006; Mälkki, 2012; Ukpokodu, 2007) does provide support for Mezirow’s theory.

**Synthesis of the Frameworks**

These three theoretical frameworks are intertwined throughout this study. According to the theories of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) and transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991), to make meaningful change, either in practices or beliefs, one must first have a deep understanding of the current situation and a spark for change. Revealing one aspect of the hidden curriculum, the tasks teachers typically assign to students, served as the window into the current reality of the classroom. There are
several tools for glimpsing the current reality of a classroom, such as video recording, outsider observation, or student surveys. However, since I desired the students’ perspectives of the teaching and learning in the classroom, I chose student surveys for their ability to better uncover the hidden curriculum. While this study focuses the students’ perceptions of the tasks assigned to them as one aspect of the hidden curriculum, it may also be useful in uncovering the teacher’s true curricular and instructional beliefs. Revealing the hidden curriculum was viewed as a catalyst for change by serving as the source of the cognitive dissonance. The hypocrisy paradigm of cognitive dissonance has shown that this emotional response can be a powerful motivator towards altering behaviors (Fried & Aronson, 1995). However, this type of disorienting dilemma has also been shown to aid in the process of altering one’s deep-seeded beliefs and assumption (Mezirow, 1991).

There seems to be a chicken and the egg conundrum at play regarding improving teaching and learning. Do changes in practices result in new beliefs, or are new beliefs required for improved practices to be accepted? City, Elmore, Fiarmen, and Teitel (2009) argue that teachers revise their beliefs after they begin to teach differently. Meanwhile, Brancard and Quinnwilliams (2012) note that “when beliefs are revised, changes in practiced can be sustained” (p. 322). The participating teachers’ reactions to the revealing of the hidden curriculum provided some evidence regarding which will come first, the practices or the beliefs.

**Research Questions**

The purpose of the study is to understand the impact of revealing the hidden curriculum to the teacher to develop an instrument to motivate teachers to work to
improve their teaching practices and/or curricular and instructional beliefs. This was accomplished by making participants aware of the hidden curriculum demonstrated by any incongruence between student and teacher perceptions of learning. This also helped reveal contradictions between the teachers’ core curricular and pedagogical beliefs and their actual teaching practices. The resulting cognitive dissonance within the participants was used as motivation to improve their teaching practices and/or begin to critically reflect upon their core curricular and instructional beliefs. My research questions are:

1. To what extent do student perceptions of learning based upon the assigned tasks align with the teacher’s perceptions?

2. To what extent are teachers aware of the messages they transmit through their hidden curriculum?

3. How does the revealing of student perceptions of learning impact teachers?

**Positionality**

According to Herr and Anderson (2015), positionality refers to asking the question, “Who am I in relation to my participants and my setting?” (p. 37). Taking on the role of research practitioner, I regularly reflected on my position and its impact on the research. Action researchers should be continually aware that their positionality is never fixed. Instead, it is always dependent upon the context and situation (Thompson & Gunter, 2011). My position of being an insider or outsider can change rapidly from situation to situation (Merriam et al., 2001; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

I am currently an instructional coach and the high school social studies curriculum specialist for my school district. As an instructional coach, I partner with teachers of all subjects at my assigned school to improve teaching and learning. As the high school
social studies curriculum specialist, I provide support to the roughly one-hundred high school social studies teachers in the district. This includes creating pacing guides, curriculum guides, common assessments, and various teaching resources. The 2020-2021 school year is my third as an instructional coach and fifth as a curriculum specialist. I have also been a middle and high school social studies teacher for twenty-one years, only one of which was in the school district where the study takes place.

My study took place at Pseudonym High School (not the real name of the school), where I am an instructional coach. I have never taught at the school, nor have I previously conducted any instructional coaching with the participating teachers. However, I have known the teachers for over five years while serving as the secondary level curriculum specialist. I have visited all their classrooms on several occasions and facilitated professional learning opportunities in which they participated. Despite these prior experiences, the participating teachers likely saw me as an outsider. While I share the same ethnic group and I am a similar age as the participants, differences in gender, socio-economic status, and cultural background may have further increased the possibility of my being perceived as an outsider when interacting with individuals, thereby increasing the difficulties of building trust (Merriam et al., 2001).

According to Herr and Anderson’s (2015) spectrum of positionality, in some respects I am an insider studying my own practice of being an instructional coach. I will use the data gathered to help the teachers and any others with whom I work beyond the scope of this study to increase their desire to hone their craft. However, I need to remember that just because the process may bring success or failure with some teachers does not mean that those results will be replicated with others with whom I collaborate.
The content and results from this study may be useful to other instructional coaches, both within my district and beyond.

Because this study involves my own practices, I needed to be continually reflective of my personal desire to see it succeed. According to Herr and Anderson (2015), since I used the process of the study to continually analyze my relationship as an instructional coach in order to make meaning and improve my practice rather than conducting a formal evaluation for an outside source, the need to have outside evaluation is reduced. As an action research practitioner, I needed to remain cognizant that since I could simultaneously work and take copious notes, some of the data I used to reflect on my practice came from memory and may contain bias, prejudice, and assumptions that needed to be regularly examined (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

In another respect, that of helping teachers analyze their own practices, I was outsider collaborating with insiders. In this case, the insiders were the teachers. Since much of the data collected came from the students involved in the study, they too could be considered insiders. While this positionality may appear to be more representative of applied research, it is an extension of action research, which allowed me to engage more closely with my participants (Herr & Anderson, 2013). For both the teachers and the students involved, I needed to maintain trust to increase their honesty and willingness to be forthright in sharing their thoughts. The goal was to transition from talking about them, to talking with them (Smith et al., 2010) so as to balance the power relationship between me, as the researcher, and the teachers and students as the researched (Baum, MacDougall, & Smith, 2006).
My hope as I started the study was that by guiding teachers through a similar reflective process that I underwent, they would have similar realizations and start on the path to progressing into the teacher they always wanted to be. However, I regularly reflected on the possibility that even though the teachers were volunteering to participate in my study, they may not have had the same desire to improve that I did. While the purpose of the study was to influence teachers to work to improve, I tried not to use my position to exert my core curricular and pedagogical beliefs upon those teachers.

I tried to be aware and prepare myself for the struggles that some teachers might have when they experience any emotional or intellectual stress associated with the process in this study. While I was inspired to change my practices to match my ideals, my teacher-participants may not have been. Individuals respond in various ways when experiencing cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). For me, it was my practices, but some teachers may alter their ideals. There was a chance that the participants would alter both if there were dissonance between two different sets of ideals in addition to the dissonance between belief and practice (Festinger, 1957; Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones, 2007). I also needed to prepare for conversations with teachers whose ideals are not in alignment with the school and district visions for teaching and learning or even generally accepted, high-impact teaching strategies (Hattie, 2012). Again, I needed to proceed with caution since my goal at this point was not to influence the teachers’ philosophies concerning teaching and learning.

Research has shown that the dynamics of power and identity can come into play (Rainville & Jones, 2008). As an instructional coach and curriculum specialist, I make sure that every teacher who partnered with me knew that what was discussed between us,
or what was seen by me while observing the teacher, remained strictly between us. Since none of the teachers participating in my study had partnered with me or another instructional coach, they may not have fully understood how the relationship between a teacher and an instructional coach works. Teachers may see instructional coaches and curriculum specialists as an extension of the administration, since we are often engaged in conversations with the various members of the administration and asked to lead professional development at the school and district level. While enlisting teachers, I was sure to clarify and provide a written agreement to any teachers who were involved that I would maintain their confidentiality.

The administration evaluates me as the instructional coach partially on my ability to improve teaching and learning at the school. I have been provided broad parameters regarding my role as the instructional coach. The only directive I have received from the administration is to support teachers with transitioning to blended learning and increasing student engagement. Motivating teachers to engage in critical reflection as well as supporting them in the process is my own goal and hence my problem of practice.

Since I was the district social studies curriculum coordinator for five years, I have strong connections with many social studies teachers across the district. Some of them have worked with me on various projects like creating the district high school social studies curriculum guides and common assessments. They have attended professional learning sessions that I have hosted or read the monthly newsletter I used to share with resources and research designed to help them reflect upon their practices and improve their craft. As such, the participants may have already known my pedagogical beliefs, which may have influenced their responses regarding their own ideals and principles. I
believe that the trust I have built with those teachers actually made them more comfortable in being honest with the information they shared.

There are numerous ambiguities and complexities concerning the visible social identities within the insider-outsider dyad, especially in connection to the interview process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Both parties bring biases, predispositions, and attitudes that may affect the relationship and thereby the data. This warranted continual reflection of my efforts to remain respectful, non-judgmental, and sensitive throughout the study.

Since this is my first year working at Pseudonym High School, and we are operating in a blended learning environment, my opportunities to interact with students have been minimal. While some may have noticed me at the school, they likely do not know my current role. It is likely that they viewed me as an outsider when I presented them with the survey. To help increase the level of trust, I presented a written statement to all students informing them of the purpose of the study and that their participation in the survey was voluntary. In addition, I assured them that the information they shared with me would not contain their names or other identifying characteristics.

In summation, I have definite principles and ideals about how I feel teaching and learning should occur in the classroom. I attempted to ensure that those views were neither purposefully nor inadvertently conveyed to the teachers or students in this process. I was also cognizant of and limited any preconceived notions and expectations regarding the students’ perceptions of the hidden curriculum and the teacher’s ideologies. As the action researcher, I continually reminded myself that I was not judging the teachers’ principles or actions, especially if they strongly contradicted mine, and tried not
to enforce my ideals upon them (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This is similar to my role as an instructional coach in that I am not to act as a judge of the teacher’s tactics, but to help them in their search for a better method.

**Research Design**

The study adheres to the parameters of action research inquiry conducted by practitioners in their own education settings to advance their practice and improve their students’ learning (Efron & Ravid, 2013). This process involves a cycle of action including developing a plan of action to improve what is already happening, implementing the plan, observing the effects of the plan, and reflecting on the plan as a basis for further action (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Action research’s unique characteristics – constructivist, situational, practical, systematic, and cyclical (Efron & Ravid, 2013) – make it ideal for this study. From a constructivist standpoint, I am generating my own knowledge and making informed decisions regarding my research to apply to my practice. The study is also situational in that it is applicable to the particular setting; however, my hope is to be able to use the data to expand the process in the future. It is practical in that it encompasses an area of concern for me regarding my ability to increase the number of teachers participating in the instructional coaching process. Rather than the informal research that I am accustomed to as an educator, this study is more systematic concerning its structure and implementation. Since the research starts with a question and ends with the application of knowledge gained that leads to new questions, it is also cyclical in nature.

This action research study uses qualitative methods. Qualitative research provides richer data for analysis (Efron & Ravid, 2013) and it focuses on “understanding
how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 15). Qualitative research methods allowed me to probe deeply into teacher-participants’ beliefs and ideals with regard to instruction, learning, and the craft of teaching; to gather evidence from the student perspective to help teachers see the hidden curriculum of their classroom; and to record the teachers’ reactions to the cognitive dissonance when those two areas of evidence collide.

In qualitative action research, there is not a formulated set of rules regarding the sample size or method of selection (Efron & Ravid, 2013). My sampling consists of three of the ten teachers in the social studies department at Pseudonym High School. I limited the number of teachers due to the amount of qualitative data I intended to collect and analyze, as well as the likelihood of data saturation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Saturation occurs “when there is enough information to replicate the study when the ability to obtain additional new information has been attained, and when further coding is no longer feasible” (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Unlike other forms of research in which the number and representativeness of the sample are important, with qualitative action research, the potential of significant contributions by the participants is more important (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Participation was voluntary since one of the keys to the success of action research is participant buy-in, and voluntary participants are more willing to share and provide richer amounts of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Demographic categorization is not an important factor since this study makes no comparisons based on demographic data. My goal was to develop an instrument that will motivate teachers to grow, not to make those comparisons. In addition, it would not be
prudent to attempt to make generalizations according to those various characteristics based on the limited number of participants (Frankel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019), and action research “makes no pretensions of abstract theory, universality, or generalizability” (Gribich as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 11).

One main area of concern was that I needed to keep some aspects of the purpose of the study relatively secret, which made enlisting volunteers more challenging (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019). First, I needed to minimize the influence on teacher behavior prior to the collection of data concerning the hidden curriculum. Second, telling my participants I intended to cause cognitive dissonance within them would have impacted my ability to do so. Although there was no outright deception, I initially informed the teachers that the purpose of the study was to discover and compare the student perceptions of the learning tasks with their own, which is partially true. I approached participant enlistment from the perspective of “I am curious about student perceptions of learning, and I need your help.” After enlisting the teachers, I provided them with the additional detail that I would be comparing their core curricular beliefs to the students’ perceptions based on the typical activities assigned to them. At the conclusion of the study, participating teachers were informed of the full purpose of the study and provided with a copy of the Debriefing Letter (Appendix A).

**Data Collection**

Data collection occurred in four phases and used various data sources as depicted in Figure 1.1. Action research allowed me to make use of multiple forms of data and analyze them in a systematic way as the research process unfolded (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Respondent validation, or member checking, accompanied any transcription or
notes during interviews and observations, to add validity to the data collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

![Data collection process](image)

Figure 1.1 Data collection process

First, I gathered survey data on the student perspective concerning the tasks typically assigned to them to attempt to uncover aspects of the hidden curriculum. Second, I collected data regarding the participant teachers’ core curricular beliefs and their perceptions on the frequency of the use of various instructional strategies and tasks assigned to the students. Third, the teachers received data from the student perspective portion and responded to that data. Fourth, I interviewed teachers after allowing them a week to further reflect on the data to determine the impact of revealing the hidden curriculum on the teachers’ desires to alter their pedagogical practices and/or core curricular and instructional beliefs.

**Hidden Curriculum.** Acquiring a representation of the hidden curriculum from the student perspective concerning the typically assigned tasks and comparing it to the teacher’s perspectives was accomplished through qualitative analysis of several data sets. First, all students in the class who obtained parent permission were asked to complete a structured survey (Appendix B) regarding their views on the typical tasks assigned by the teacher as evidenced in the previous data collection phase. Next, participating teachers’ ideals regarding their perspectives of their pedagogical practices as well as their core curricular beliefs were collected as part of a verbal statement of their core teaching
beliefs, and via a survey (Appendix C). The survey included a section in which the teachers reported the frequency with which they use various instructional strategies and tasks. In another section, teachers shared their core curricular and pedagogical beliefs.

These surveys were administered electronically through Google Forms to increase the ease of coding and to assist in providing anonymity on the part of the student-provided information. Open-ended questions were included in the surveys to allow interviewees the opportunity to express themselves more fully and provide richer data (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). By using written responses, students and teachers were afforded the opportunity to reflect more deeply and better organize their thoughts (Opdenakker, 2006).

**Teacher Response.** At a meeting of the participating teachers, each of the teachers verbally shared what they feel are their core curricular and pedagogical beliefs. The public declaration of one’s beliefs has been shown to be vital in causing cognitive dissonance (Stone, Aronson, Crain, Winslow, & Fried, 1994). This occurred on the same day that the students completed their surveys. Two days later, teachers were presented with written summaries of the student perspective regarding the hidden curriculum of the typically assigned tasks. This occurred during a private interview session to capture the spontaneity of the teachers’ preliminary reactions (Opdenakker, 2006). The teachers had approximately one week to further digest the data, organize their thoughts, and engage in metacognitive reflection using a guide I provided. The goal was for the teachers to construct their own meanings from the information provided to them. The teachers shared their reflections and feelings regarding the data at a subsequent one-on-one
The interviews were audio and/or video recorded for later transcription and analysis in conjunction with interviewer notes.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis for qualitative research involves making sense and meaning through consolidation and interpretation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative data analysis is “a complex procedure that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 202). For this study, the findings were merged from the various data sets to develop themes and categories. The qualitative data were coded following the step-by-step process described by Merriam & Tisdell (2016). I began by jotting notes, comments, and questions during my first review of any transcripts, field notes, or documents collected. At this point, I used open coding by being liberal in identifying any segments of data that may have proven useful later in the study. Upon completion of this open coding for each data source, I used analytical coding to group like items based upon interpretation and reflection on meaning (Richards as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As I completed this process with each data source, I kept a running list of the coding groups. Using a constant comparative method, categories began to develop inductively (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As I finalized these categories, I made sure they were relevant and useful for answering my research questions, exhaustive in that all relevant data fit within a category, mutually exclusive so that no one piece of data belongs to more than one category, and conceptually congruent (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Once I had identified my final categories, I sorted all the evidence into appropriate categories.
**Research Question One.** To what extent do student perceptions of learning based upon the assigned tasks align with the teacher’s perceptions? I answered this question using data from the Phase 1 student surveys regarding the tasks typically assigned to them as well as the data collected from the Phase 2 teacher surveys, a think-aloud, and interviews regarding their core curricular and pedagogical beliefs.

**Research Question Two.** To what extent are teachers aware of the messages they transmit through their hidden curriculum? Through the teacher survey, think-aloud, and interview with participants, data were collected in which the teachers shared their views and understandings of the student perspectives collected in Phase 1.

**Research Question Three.** How does the revealing of student perceptions of learning impact teachers? During the think-aloud and interview with the teachers, they reflected upon their reaction to the hidden curriculum and its impact on their motivation for future growth in their pedagogical practices and/or their core curricular and instructional beliefs.

**Significance and Limitations**

Due to the limited scope of this study when compared to the expansiveness of the theories encased within it, the purpose was not to reveal elements of hidden curriculum that can be applied to all students in all settings. It also was not designed to provide significant and generalizable evidence concerning all teachers’ reactions to cognitive dissonance and transformative learning regarding their ideals and their practices. However, the results of this study are of value to me and possibly other instructional coaches as we search for strategies and processes that may help us to inspire teacher growth. In this era of mandated standards, high-stakes testing, and effect sizes (Hattie,
logic and rationalized decision-making seem to rule, turning the practice of teaching into a science rather than an art. Undeniably, some teachers respond positively to logic. For others, teaching is an emotional endeavor. I believe many teachers entered the field not because it was an emotional calling, not a logical one. In part, this study provides some evidence regarding the effectiveness of using an emotional rather than a logical component to encourage change in teacher practices.

Individuals respond to dissonance-inducing events and cognitions in diverse ways (Festinger, 1957; Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones, 2007; McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001). Whereas revealing the hidden curriculum associated with the tasks the teacher assigns may induce high levels of dissonance in one teacher, it may produce low levels of dissonance in others. In addition, that same level of dissonance may not occur if the hidden curriculum associated with other aspects of the classroom experience, such as the teacher’s classroom rules, policies, and procedures, were exposed. The reasons for these differences could include various social, intellectual, and emotional factors (McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001), which are beyond the scope of this study. As a result, the data gathered in this study may only apply to the participants of the study in these contexts.

For teachers whom I was unable to generate enough dissonance to motivate them to change their practices and beliefs, the incorporation of additional aspects of the their hidden curriculum, such as their assessment and feedback procedures, their classroom rules and policies, as well as their selection of content to teach, would likely provide greater opportunities to locate areas of dissonance. Also, supplementing the student survey with follow-up interviews or focus groups could provide data of greater depth to inspire teachers to change.
Just because someone experiences cognitive dissonance does not mean they will alter their beliefs or practices. There are several different mechanisms that people could use to reduce dissonance. For instance, a teacher who perceives they have no alternative but to teach the way they do, will use that justification to reduce the dissonance. As a result, any lack of dissonance may be due to the teacher’s own cognitive defense mechanisms. To negate or reduce this cognitive dissonance strategy may require providing examples of teachers at the school or in similar situations who are able to incorporate other teaching practices.

The teachers who participated in the study may decide to duplicate the procedure to reflect on other aspects of their instructional practices. Additionally, as they discuss their experiences with other teachers, it may encourage them to follow a similar path. I will be sharing the procedures and results of this study with the other instructional coaches in my district in hopes they will try this strategy as a supplement to our current dialogical coaching model as well as to apply their expertise to further improve the process. The data generated may seem limited to these few experiences, especially regarding the individualized nature of hidden curriculum and the unpredictability of cognitive dissonance. However, I believe efforts to help teachers be more reflective, especially taking into account the student perspectives and the hidden curriculum, are valuable undertakings in the mission to grow the teachers whom I support.

**Dissertation Overview**

Chapter two will provide a more in-depth analysis of the relevant literature and theoretical framework associated with this study, focusing primarily on the hypocrisy paradigm of cognitive dissonance. Chapter three expands on the methodology in greater
Chapter four affords a comprehensive analysis of the data and findings of the study as well as interpretations of its results. Chapter five delivers key conclusions as well as limitations and suggestions for future research.

The intent of action research is to solve a pressing, localized problem of practice (Efron & Ravid, 2013; Herr & Anderson, 2015). For me, as with other instructional leaders and school administrators, this involves finding ways to motivate teachers to grow and improve their core curricular and pedagogical beliefs and practices. By revealing the hidden curriculum to instill cognitive dissonance, my hope was that this study would result in the creation of a viable tool any teacher could use to start the process of improving the teaching and learning in their classroom.

**Definition of Terms**

*Action Research*: an inquiry conducted by practitioners in their own education settings to advance their practice and improve their students’ learning (Efron & Ravid, 2013). This process involves a cycle of action including developing a plan of action to improve what is already happening, implementing the plan, observing the effects of the plan, and reflecting on the plan as a basis for further action (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

*Cognitive Dissonance*: the unpleasant state of dissonance, or psychological tension that occurs when individuals have two inconsistent cognitions. This typically happens when new knowledge or information is found to be incongruent with existing knowledge. This dissonance motivates psychological work on behalf of the individual to reduce the inconsistency (Festinger, 1957).

*Disorienting Dilemma*: an event that causes significant disturbance or disruption in order to force a person to critically evaluate their beliefs and assumptions (Mezirow, 1991).
Hidden Curriculum: an implicit curriculum that expresses and represents attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors, which are conveyed or communicated through words and actions without conscious intent (Jerald, 2006).

Hypocrisy Paradigm: a form of cognitive dissonance that asks individuals to become aware of already existing inconsistencies between their actions and their beliefs in an effort to influence future behaviors (Fried & Aronson, 1995).

Transformative Learning: a constructivist adult learning theory that emphasizes critically reflecting on one’s beliefs and assumptions to develop new perspectives that guide subsequent actions (Mezirow, 1991).
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Student intellectual, social, and emotional growth is the primary goal of education, regardless of the teacher’s curricular ideology. Professional learning and improvement of the teacher should model and accompany the development of their learners. However, the carousel of educational reforms tied to the traditional modes of professional development have failed to produce desired changes in teaching and learning (Evans, 1996). Instructional coaching has evolved as a viable alternative to traditional professional development. However, it faces similar challenges of motivating veteran teachers to want to change their practices.

The problem of practice addressed in this study is my struggle with motivating teachers to engage in critical reflection on the teaching and learning in their classroom as motivation to improve their pedagogical practices and/or core curricular and instructional beliefs. The purpose of the study is to understand the impact of revealing a hidden curriculum to teachers in order to develop an instrument to motivate teachers to improve their teaching practices and beliefs. This was accomplished by first making participants aware of a hidden curriculum demonstrated by any incongruence between student and teacher perceptions of learning. This also helped reveal contradictions between the teachers’ core curricular and pedagogical beliefs and their actual teaching practices. The resulting cognitive dissonance within the participants can later be used as motivation in
conjunction with instructional coaching to improve their teaching practices and/or beliefs.

The associated research questions are:

1. To what extent do student perceptions of learning based upon the assigned tasks align with the teacher’s perceptions?
2. To what extent are teachers aware of the messages they transmit through their hidden curriculum?
3. How does the revealing of student perceptions of learning impact teachers?

This chapter contains a discussion of the importance of the literature review and the strategies and rationales employed to locate and select the sources that are highlighted. This is followed by a detailed discussion of the relevant theories of hidden curriculum, cognitive dissonance, and transformative learning as well as summaries of supportive studies.

**Purpose and Strategies**

The purpose of a literature review is to “present a logically argued case founded on a comprehensive understanding of the current state of knowledge about a topic of study” (Machi & McEvoy, 2016). The literature review shares with the reader the results of other related studies and connects the new research with the larger body of existent literature. It provides a framework for the importance of the study as well as a means for comparing the results with other studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A well conducted literature review demonstrates a true engagement with the thinking of the key and relevant theorists and researchers (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009). Action research progresses through cycles of plan, act, observe, and reflect. As such, reviews of the relevant literature continue throughout research process in an effort to unearth possible
additional issues and questions as well as provide further direction and guidance (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

Various search engines and databases (EBSCOhost, ERIC, JSTOR, and Google Scholar) were employed to locate the sources used to support the theoretical framework for this study. Sources include academic books, book chapters, quantitative and qualitative studies, and peer reviewed theoretical articles. Initially, I used the name of the theory (i.e. cognitive dissonance, transformative learning, hidden curriculum) as the key term in my searches. Through my research regarding more recent research on cognitive dissonance, I became aware of its offspring, hypocrisy paradigm, which supplanted cognitive dissonance as the primary search term. Once I developed a suitable understanding of the hypocrisy paradigm theory, I included terms such as impact, effects, and response into my search parameters to locate sources and studies that would be relevant to my problem of practice and research questions. In addition to searching for transformative learning, I also searched for transformational learning. Once I felt I had reached saturation on the general principals of the theory, I further focused my search on disorienting dilemma and reflection since those are the key elements from transformative theory that were relevant to my study. Since my study focuses on secondary level social studies teachers, I added secondary, social studies, and teacher as search terms. Initially, I set a timeframe parameter for studies from the past decade, but since much of the initial work in the various theories occurred in the last few decades of the last century, I felt that I needed to expand my search to the past thirty or forty years. As I read each source, I mined its reference list for additional sources that might prove useful to my study.
Cognitive Dissonance and the Hypocrisy Paradigm

While only a few decades old itself, the hypocrisy paradigm has its roots in Leon Festinger’s (1957) influential theory of cognitive dissonance. According to Festinger, an unpleasant condition of cognitive dissonance occurs whenever a person has two inconsistent cognitions. This realization of inconsistency usually occurs whenever a person becomes aware of new information that is inconsistent with previous held beliefs. For example, an individual claims to be an honest person and then realizing that they have told a lie would be an inconsistent cognition. It is important to note that research has shown that there must be an element of personal responsibility to spark dissonance (Greenwald & Ronis, 1978). Since the dissonance is uncomfortable, it motivates the individual to attempt to reduce or eliminate that discomfort through psychological work. This psychological work could include adding additional supporting cognitions, deleting the cognitions that cause the dissonance, increasing the importance of supporting cognitions, or reducing the importance of the dissonance causing cognitions (Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones, 2007). The amount of dissonance depends on various factors: the importance of the cognitions, the amount of discrepancy between the cognitions, and the amount of choice the individual has (Harmon-Jones, Harmon-Jones, & Levy, 2015). Returning to the example of the honest liar, if the person told a “little white lie” to a stranger, it may not cause the same amount of dissonance as telling a major lie to a loved one.

Early studies and discussion regarding the traditional cognitive dissonance theory focused on causing attitude change as participants attempt to justify their behaviors that contradict their previously held beliefs (Fried & Aronson, 1995). Since my research is
interested in possible changes in behaviors as well as beliefs, I turned to one of the more recent interpretations of cognitive dissonance known as the hypocrisy paradigm. The hypocrisy paradigm evolved decades later from Festinger’s theory with some significant differences in terms of the dissonance induced effects and the manner of creating the dissonance. Numerous studies have shown how the hypocrisy paradigm provides a methodology to employ dissonance to cause behavioral change (Aronson, Fried, & Stone, 1991; Dickerson, Thibodeau, Aronson, & Miller, 1992; Fried & Aronson, 1995; Fried, 1998; Stone, Aronson, Crain, Winslow, & Fried, 1994) instead of the attitudinal change that typically accompanies cognitive dissonance.

Like cognitive dissonance, the hypocrisy paradigm requires two opposing cognitions. However, the dissonance resulting from cognitive dissonance is often artificially created. For example, this might happen when asking someone to engage in work that runs counter to their beliefs to earn a reward (Fried, 1998). Since the individual is being rewarded for behavior that has already occurred and cannot be denied, that person will engage in psychological work to either strengthen one cognition or weaken the other (Festinger, 1957). The hypocrisy paradigm asks individuals to become aware of already existing inconsistencies between their actions and their beliefs (Fried & Aronson, 1995). This dissonance motivates the individual to alter future behavior (Fried, 1998). Hypocrisy has been shown to be more effective if people make an initial public declaration of their pro-attitudinal stance (Stone, Aronson, Crain, Winslow, & Fried, 1994). Revisiting the example of the honest person who lies, through cognitive dissonance, the individual would attempt to rationalize away the dissonance by making claims like “it was just a little, white lie,” or “I almost always tell the truth.” With the
hypocrisy paradigm, the dissonance would motivate the individual to stop telling lies in the future. While earlier hypocrisy studies focused on behavioral changes, more recent ones researched the possible impact of hypocrisy on both attitude and behavior (Chiou & Wan, 2007; Vinski & Tryon, 2009).

**Evidence of the Impact of the Hypocrisy Paradigm**

Numerous studies have shown the impact of hypocrisy on future behaviors. Rather than attempt to include all such studies here, I summarized four that demonstrate the effect on pedestrian beliefs and behaviors and three additional ones are used to show the power that hypocrisy has on beliefs and practices that are more entrenched.

The hypocrisy paradigm has repeatedly been shown to be able to impact pedestrian beliefs and behaviors. In one of the earliest hypocrisy paradigm studies, Dickerson, Thibodeau, Aronson, & Miller (1992) assessed the positive impact of hypocrisy upon participants’ beliefs and behaviors surrounding water conservation. Stone, Aronson, Crain, Winslow, & Fried (1994) applied a similar treatment and determined the induction of dissonance through hypocrisy altered participants’ behaviors with regards to condom usage. With the growing issue of addiction to online gaming, Chiou and Wan (2007) studied the impact of hypocrisy on altering adolescents’ attitudes toward online gaming as well as modifying their behaviors. They supplemented the typical hypocrisy paradigm study with elements to measure the impact of personal responsibility and justification of cost. In those three separate studies, the researchers all attributed the hypocrisy paradigm of cognitive dissonance to alter participants’ behaviors on some level (Chiou & Wan, 2007; Dickerson, Thibodeau, Aronson, & Miller, 1992; Stone, Aronson, Crain, Winslow, & Fried, 1994). While Vinski and Tryon’s (2009)
attempt to implement an induced hypocrisy treatment to test the impact on high school students’ cheating attitudes and behaviors failed, it did illustrate the timing and mental work necessary for possible behavioral change.

The four previously discussed studies reflect the power of hypocrisy on more mundane beliefs and behaviors. However, since this study is related to a teacher’s core beliefs and practices related to their career, it is important to determine if hypocrisy can also have a significant impact on altering the behaviors associated with more deep-seated beliefs and practices. Simmons, Webb, and Brandon (2004) attempted to utilize hypocrisy to increase college students’ intentions to quit smoking. The 144 university undergraduate smokers were asked to develop a speech that would be video recorded and shown to adolescent smokers to persuade them to stop smoking. The results showed that the manipulation increased the participants’ intentions to quit smoking. Based on their data, the researchers theorized that when smokers who feel they are rational persons are presented with information that smoking is highly dangerous and yet it is easy to quit, they reduce their dissonance by clinging to low-risk beliefs rather than altering their behaviors. This may be due to not wanting to appear to be a failure in their own minds.

Could the induction of hypocrisy decrease the amount of prejudicial behavior among aversive racists? Hing, Li, and Zanna (2002) conducted a study on forty-nine participants who were identified as low in explicit prejudice and low in external motivation to be non-prejudiced. Participants were asked to write a persuasive essay on why it is important to treat minority students fairly and were told that excerpts from their essays might be used as part of a campus-wide campaign to increase acceptance of various races, genders, sexual orientations, etc. Participants in the hypocrisy condition
were then asked to write about two instances when they did not treat an Asian person fairly or reacted more negatively to an Asian person than they should have. To test the behavioral impact of the dissonance, participants were asked to complete an anonymous ballot concerning financial cuts to various student clubs on campus. Both low prejudice and aversive racists wrote equally strong anti-discrimination essays and identified equally severe transgressions with regards to racism. However, compared to the low prejudice group, the aversive racists experienced more negative feelings and higher levels of dissonance than those in the control group. As a result, the aversive racists reduced the cuts to the Asian club, and some even advocated for increasing their funding, significantly more than either the control group or the low-prejudice group.

A person’s religious beliefs can be a powerful influence on their behavior. Yousaf and Gobet (2013) explored the consequences of the hypocrisy paradigm on that relationship using three experiments. In a set of experiments, participants were asked how important they felt various activities were, how much time they spent on them over the past week, and how much time they should have spent on them. Two of the experiments included a self-affirmation questionnaire given after the initial questionnaire. The results show that religious dissonance that was induced through hypocrisy results in feelings of guilt or shame. The study revealed that participants in the hypocrisy group actually augmented their religious beliefs, thereby increasing the gap between their beliefs and their behaviors. One possible explanation of this, as noted by the researchers, was that the strengthening of religious beliefs after the hypocrisy treatment could be an indication of their motivation to improve their behavior.
**Dissonance Reducing Strategies**

Leon Festinger (1957) initially hypothesized three main methods of dissonance reduction (modification of one of the dissonant cognitions, adding new consonant cognitions, or minimizing the importance of one of the cognitions). Research in the past sixty years has revealed various additional strategies used to reduce the discomfort of dissonance including denial of responsibility, misattribution, and trivialization. Denial of responsibility refers to the individual’s ability to rationalize away their dissonance by believing that their actions were forced, making them not responsible for those actions. Misattribution allows individuals to blame some other factor for their dissonance rather than the contradiction between their beliefs and behaviors. Trivialization occurs when the individual minimizes the importance of either their beliefs or behaviors in an attempt to minimize cognitive dissonance. All three of these methods belong to Festinger’s third mode of dissonance reduction, minimizing the importance of one of the cognitions.

Gosling, Denizeau, and Oberlé (2006) noted that most dissonance inducing experimental studies utilized the manipulation of choice to spark dissonance, yet the various theorists and researchers were not in agreement regarding the denial of responsibility on dissonance reduction. Their research sought to empirically study the use of denial of responsibility for dissonance reduction through three experiments. In the first two experiments, they were able to show that “when given the chance to do so, individuals tend to deny responsibility for their act as a means to reduce cognitive dissonance” (pp. 726-727). The third experiment demonstrated the effectiveness of denial of responsibility in reducing the negative self-directed affect caused by dissonance, specifically shame, guilt, self-criticism, anger with oneself, and disgust with oneself, in
cases where there was freedom of choice. Denial of responsibility allows individuals to disassociate themselves from their own behavior.

Misattribution, the opportunity for participants to blame some other reason for their dissonance, is another plausible dissonance reducing strategy. Fried and Aronson (1995) conducted an experiment where the participants \( n = 78 \) made public speeches about the importance of recycling. Hypocrisy was induced in half of the participants by asking them to indicate several instances when they failed to recycle. Before being asked to volunteer for recycling, half of the participants were provided with the opportunity to misattribute their dissonance arousal to various factors in the laboratory, such as lighting, temperature, or sound level, whereas the other participants were not. In other words, the participants were given the prospect of rationalizing away their discomfort by blaming other factors for their dissonance rather than the contradiction between their beliefs and behaviors. The participants in the hypocrisy condition who were given the opportunity to misattribute their dissonance were much less likely to engage in other dissonance reducing behaviors.

Trivialization, defined as the reduction of the perceived importance of one of the dissonance-causing cognitions, is another dissonance reducing strategy. In a series of four experiments, Simon, Greenberg, and Brehm (1995) sought to identify and measure the impact of trivialization as a dissonance reducing strategy. The researchers concluded that if an individual’s beliefs were made salient before the counter-attitudinal behavior, they would be more likely to hold true to their beliefs. Since they would not alter their beliefs, they would engage in trivialization to reduce their dissonance. The reverse also seemed true. If the counter-attitudinal behavior occurred before the beliefs were
revealed, trivialization was more likely to occur. Their data also suggested a pattern in which their participants tended to trivialize the issue causing the dissonance over other factors.

**Varying Impacts of Hypocrisy**

Hypocrisy (and cognitive dissonance) does not impact all people the same way. While some are disturbed greatly by it, others are unfazed (McConnell & Brown, 2010). The studies described below identify and demonstrate some of the major factors that can impact the level of dissonance experienced as well as how individuals respond to the dissonance.

McConnell and Brown (2010) explored the role of self-complexity in relation to the hypocrisy paradigm. People with greater self-complexity are described as having a higher number of meaningful self-aspects as well as the extent to which each self-aspect is unique. For example, a person with combinations of self-aspects such as spouse, parent, friend, employee, artist, and athlete have a higher self-complexity than someone whose only self-aspect is employee. People with lower self-complexity report feeling larger affective responses to self-relevant feedback because the particular feedback occupies a larger percentage of their overall self-concept. The opposite is true for high self-complexity individuals. The researchers concluded that when acknowledging that one’s actions were contradictory with one’s preexisting beliefs, those with greater self-complexity showed a greater propensity to bolster their attitudes than those with lower self-complexity who weakened their attitudes to put them more in line with their contradictory behaviors. This showed that individuals respond to dissonance differently
and that self-complexity and self-concept play a significant role in determining how people will respond to cognitive dissonance.

Similar to self-complexity, self-integrity may also be a factor affecting one’s response to hypocrisy and dissonance. Fointiat (2004) tested that theory while examining the hypocrisy of housewives’ attitudes and behaviors towards safe driving. They theorized that threatening the self-concept should increase the dissonance and the resultant behavioral change. The study followed procedures similar to the studies discussed above with the addition of a condition that either threatened or strengthened the participants’ self-integrity through the rephrasing of a key aspect of the interaction between the experimenter and the participant. The self-integrity threatening group members were told that “Everybody could break the speed limits. I’m sure that at least once you have driven faster than was allowed” (Fointiat, 2004, p. 244). Meanwhile, the self-integrity strengthening participants were told that even though ninety-five percent of drivers violate speed limits, the researcher did not believe that the participants belonged in that category. When behavioral change was the goal, the results showed that threatening self-integrity had a greater impact than strengthening self-integrity.

Stone (2003) tested one additional aspect of self, that of self-consistency. Stone noted that there did not seem to be a consensus among researchers as to the relationship between a person’s perceived level of self-consistency (beliefs and actions were in accord) and the influence of cognitive dissonance. Stone designed two experiments in this study to examine the conditions under which self-esteem moderates the process of dissonance arousal. He concluded that there was evidence to suggest the importance of self-consistency for people with low self-esteem in dissonance arousal. In other words,
people with low self-esteem reported less attitude change as compared to those with high self-esteem.

The three studies discussed in this section relate to the importance of self in dissonance reduction. However, a collectivist approach in regards to the commitment factor can have a strong impact on altering one’s behaviors in the face of hypocrisy (Fointiat, 2008). In Fointiat’s study, participants were asked to write an essay in favor of following driving laws, then instructed to recall past driving transgressions. Subsequently, the participants were offered an opportunity to distribute safe-driving flyers. The key difference between the two experimental groups was that the participants in one treatment developed their arguments for safe driving individually, while those in the other treatment developed theirs as part of a group. Participants who composed their position papers as part of a group agreed to distribute more safe-driving flyers than those who wrote individually.

Fointiat (2008) studied the impact of a collective creation of a position statement. This relates to the publication of a person’s ideals. However, there is still the other half of cognitive dissonance, that of the contradictory behavior. Fried (1998) theorized that making past transgressions salient and public, would be more likely to result in behavioral change when compared to keeping those transgression private. In this study, participants made speeches regarding the importance of recycling. A key difference from previous hypocrisy studies was that the key manipulation was whether past transgressions were made public or not. Contrary to the hypothesis, those who were publicly identified with their transgressions committed to volunteer to encourage recycling significantly less or donated less money to a recycling organization than those who remained anonymous.
Fointiat, Morisot, and Pakuszewski (2008) studied the impact of increasing the number and severity of transgressions on the amount of dissonance and the subsequent amount of behavioral change. Participants (French university students, \( n = 120 \)) rated various traffic violations, made pro-normative advocacy statements, and then were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. Following the initiation of the appropriate treatment, they were asked to participate in a voluntary road-safety association and distribute handbills advocating safe driving. Findings indicate that participants who recalled four transgressions were more likely to participate in the road-safety association than those who only recalled one. In addition, those who recalled more serious transgressions experienced greater levels of dissonance.

**Transformative Learning**

Transformative learning is one of the dominant contemporary theories on adult learning (Cranton & Taylor, 2012; Dirkx, 1998, Taylor, 2008). It is typically associated with the work of Jack Mezirow and his team dating back to a 1970s study of women who were resuming their education or returning to work after a prolonged period of time (Kitchenham, 2008), although it has its roots in theories dating much earlier. While it has evolved over the decades, transformative learning theory maintains its core ideals while producing a significant number of offshoots (Howie & Bagnall, 2013).

Mezirow’s (1991) transformative learning theory seeks to explain how adults view, interpret, and transform their world. Learning is “the process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation and action” (Mezirow, 1990, p. 1). According to Mezirow (1996), “The most significant learning is that which enables the learner to understand and
shape his or her behavior to better anticipate and control the real world” (p. 158). The goal of transformative learning is to help individuals reflect upon their current beliefs and assumptions, which guide their actions (Christie et al., 2015). If they discover through reflection that their beliefs and assumptions are flawed, they alter them. Ultimately, this mental shift is accompanied by a behavioral one (Mezirow, 1991). As Dirx (1998) explains, “Rather than taking in content or subject matter passively, proponents of transformative learning consider content and skills as texts that are rendered meaningful through the learners’ acting on them within their own particular life contexts” (p. 8).

**Theoretical Foundations**

The transformative approach to learning is anchored in the theory of constructivism. Like constructivism, transformative theory includes an acceptance that meaning exists within each person (Mezirow, 1991). Because every individual has a particular worldview built upon their experiences, culture, and education, “Knowledge is not viewed as something ‘out there’ to be taken in by the learners. Rather, it arises within the social acts of trying to make sense of novel experiences in the day-to-dayness of our lives” (Dirkx, 1998, p. 9). These meanings are acquired from external forms and experiences that are validated through human interaction. Therefore, our understanding of the current external world is a function of our past experiences (Mezirow, 1991). However, Mezirow claims this worldview may not be well articulated or even recognized by the individual. Support for it often comes from a set of casual assumptions that are ingrained into the individual’s way of thinking. These points of view can be so ingrained that it takes a powerful catalyst or dilemma to break through them (Christie et al., 2015).
As such, our present interpretation of reality is subject to revision. However, as adult learners, “we are caught in our own histories” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 1), meaning that our current perspectives and interpretations are based upon our formal education, socialization, and various aspects of culture. The formative learning experiences of our childhood set limits on our learning in adulthood. Learning to be analytic and reflective of meanings, purposes, and values is therefore critical for adult learners (Mezirow, 1991).

Experiences can either strengthen, extend, or call into question our existing personal meaning system. According to Mezirow (1991), people tend to acknowledge and accept experiences that support their existing perspectives. However, experiences that contradict those perspectives are minimized to avoid anxiety and distress, creating a blind spot. The experiences may be tossed aside or written off as irregularities. Mezirow states that integration of this experience into our meaning systems is less likely, and it is more likely that recall will be distorted. When testing theories, the average person tends to focus on confirmatory evidence. Even when confronted with contradictory evidence, people tend to accept the idea that the exception proves the rule (Mezirow, 1991).

Mezirow’s transformative learning theory is also couched in Paulo Freire’s critical theory. Freire (1970) compared traditional education to the banking method of education where the teacher deposits information that the student may withdraw at a later time. This leads to students who are unable to think for themselves. To counter this, Freire states that students need to develop a more critical consciousness of themselves and the world around them. In doing so, they could transform themselves and the world. Freire maintains that there are three stages of conscious growth, culminating in *critical transitivity*, when people are able to think critically about the current situation and take
critical action to effect change. For Mezirow (1998), “Learning to think for oneself involves becoming critically reflective of assumptions and participating in discourse to validate beliefs, intentions, values and feelings” (p. 197). Mezirow (1991) also claims transformative learning “can lead developmentally toward a more inclusive, differentiated, permeable, and integrated perspective” (p. 155). While both Mezirow and Freire purport that adult education should result in this type of critical self-concept and empowerment, Freire places more emphasis on a broader goal of social justice rather than individual transformation (Baumgartner, 2001).

Mezirow’s (1991) transformative learning theory is also partially built upon the work of Habermas, including his three general areas in which humans generate knowledge – the technical, the practical, and the emancipatory. The first two fit neatly into two of Mezirow’s (1991) instrumental and communicative learning domains. Instrumental or technical learning surrounds how people interact with, control, or manipulate their environment. It typically involves testing a cause and effect relationship to improve one’s control over a future situation. The purpose of communicative or practical learning is to better understand what others mean and to make ourselves better understood (Mezirow, 1991). “Communicative action uses understanding and agreement, via a process of rational and fair discourse, to achieve a mutually acceptable end” (Gougoulakis & Christie as cited in Christie et al., 2015, p. 10). Habermas stressed the importance of communicating to come to an understanding not solely based upon one individual’s perspective (Kitchenham, 2008). Finally, emancipatory knowledge is that which is acquired through critical reflection. Emancipatory learning involves using critical reflection to identify and challenge distorted meaning perspectives. This involves
a questioning of the unquestioningly accepted presuppositions that underlie our actions and thoughts (Mezirow, 1991). This emancipatory learning is often transformative.

**Meaning Making**

According to Mezirow (1991), meaning perspectives (frames of reference) and meaning schemes (habits of mind) play a central role in the learning process. A meaning perspective is a “habitual set of expectations that constitutes an orientating frame of reference that we use in projecting our symbolic models and that serves as a (usually tacit) belief system for interpreting and evaluating the meaning of experience” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 42). Mezirow claims our meaning perspectives determine the conditions for construing meaning from an experience. They provide us with criteria for judging or evaluating and help determine our self-image. These can include cultural canons, psychological schemas, religious doctrines, philosophical stances, political perspectives, and aesthetic values (Mezirow, 2009). In a study of students participating in cross-cultural educational opportunities, the term *baggage* was used in referencing a person’s assumptions, expectations, and preconceived notions that must be unpacked to make room for new perspectives (Intolubbe-Chmil, Spreen, & Swap, 2012).

A meaning perspective is a general frame for reference made up of a series or more specific meaning schemes (Kitchenham, 2008). Meaning schemes are more concrete manifestations of our meaning perspectives and are more likely to be critically examined and transformed than meaning perspectives (Kitchenham, 2008; Mezirow, 1991). Mezirow (2000) identified six habits of mind used to help interpret experiences. These include epistemic (ways of knowing), sociolinguistic (social and cultural norms),
psychological (self-concept and personality), moral-ethical (conscious and morality), philosophical (worldview), and aesthetic (tastes and standards).

Our meaning schemes and perspectives determine the scope of our attention and therefore influence how we understand and interpret experiences within our value system. As a result, they can lead to distorted views of reality. Without critical reflection, this tends to lead toward the idea of self-fulfilling prophecies rather than transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991). Mezirow (1991) states that a crucial aspect of adult learning must include the process for justifying and validating meaning schemes and perspectives from prior learning. Our ways of knowing, believing, and feeling are distorted by uncritically adopting presuppositions, yet “we can transform these meaning structures through critical reflection” (Mezirow, 1992). Transformative learning is grounded upon the reflective assessment of premises and schemes. Reflective learning involves assessment or reassessment of our assumptions. It becomes transformative whenever presumptions or premises are determined to be distorted, inauthentic, or invalid. Transformative learning occurs whenever new or modified meaning schemes or premises are created (Mezirow, 1991). As such, adult education should strive to incorporate reflection as a means to either confirm or transform understandings and interpretations.

A transformation of one’s meaning perspective typically involves a more empowered sense of self, a more critical understanding of how culture and society shape one’s beliefs and feelings, and the development of strategies and resources to be used in taking action on new perspectives (Mezirow, 1991). A perspective transformation results in the development of a more dependable frame of reference “that is more inclusive, differentiating, permeable (open to other viewpoints), critically reflective of assumptions,
emotionally capable of change and integrative of experience” (Mezirow, 2000). However, reevaluating meaning perspectives is not enough for Mezirow. Acting upon one’s transformed perspectives “is an integral and indispensable component of transformative learning” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 209). Through this concept of praxis, new or modified interpretations must be remembered and applied regularly to new experiences or encounters, otherwise learning does not occur.

In essence, the transformative learning process, illustrated in Figure 2.1, begins with a disorienting dilemma, followed by a critical reflection and reevaluation of assumptions. Next, the learner engages in a rational discourse as they dialogue about their new perspectives with others to gain validation. Finally, they take action on their new perspectives (Baumgartner, 2001).

![Figure 2.1 Transformative Learning Process (summarized from Mezirow, 1991).](image)

Initially, Mezirow (1991) identified ten steps in the transformative learning process:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
3. A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions
4. Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of the conditions dictated by one’s new perspective (pp. 168-169)

An additional phase, *renegotiating relationships and negotiating new relationships*, was later added between 8 and 9 to add importance to critical self-reflection and communication with others (Mezirow, 1994). The sequence of the transformative learning activities is not a set-in-stone series of invariable and developmental steps. They are more individualistic, fluid, and recursive than was once thought (Baumgartner, 2001). For instance, Taylor (2008) how facilitators may at times need to start the process by having learners conduct premise reflection. Transformative learning is a process, not a destination (Doucet, Grayman-Simpson, & Wertheim, 2013). Each step provides the learner with an additional opportunity to expand and revise their understandings. Some steps seem to provide greater stimulus towards transformation, particularly critical reflection, disorienting dilemmas, and trying on new roles (Brock, 2010). However, one step on its own is not sufficient for transformative learning.

**Disorienting Dilemma**

The transformative learning process typically begins with what Mezirow (1991) refers to as a *disorienting dilemma, which* “causes a significant level of disruption or disturbance in a person, and where their frame of reference is shown to be inadequate to explain what they have seen, heard, or experienced” (Howie & Bagnall, 2013, p. 7).

50
Here, Mezirow (1991) incorporated Adorno’s theory of negative dialectics in which a
disequilibrium is created through the presentation and recognition of a dilemma, which
calls meaning schemes and perspectives into questions, resulting in transformation of
those beliefs through critical reflection. The concept of a disorienting dilemma strongly
resembles Festinger’s (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance. Perspective transformation
can occur rather painlessly through a series of incremental events that call one’s meaning
schemes or perspectives into question, or through an externally imposed epochal event.
These major events result in painful challenges and questioning of one’s personal values
and may even threaten a person’s sense of self. Whether epochal or incremental,
disorienting dilemmas often spark the ensuing stages of transformative learning
(Mezirow, 2000).

There is debate over the importance of disorienting dilemmas, partially because
theorists lack a common understanding of the concept (Howie & Bagnall, 2013).
Namaste (2017) claims “transformative learning hinges on navigating cognitive
dissonance” (p. 1). However, Taylor (1997; 2007) has shown that not all successful
resolutions of disorienting dilemmas results in transformative learning, and conversely,
even non-traumatic events can result in a transformative experience. Taylor (2000) noted
that there does not seem to be an understanding as to why some dilemmas lead to
transformative learning while others do not. This leads to the conclusion that there may
be other elements at work that are not accounted for in the theory of transformative
learning. Dirkx (2000) claims that epochal, burning bush experiences are rare, yet
individuals can experience deep and profound learning experiences without them. In
addition, the concept of the disorienting dilemma has been so watered down, that almost any life event could be considered a disorienting dilemma (Howie & Bagnall, 2013).

Mezirow (1991) claims that reflection is triggered when individuals are faced with a disorienting dilemma. However, a disorienting dilemma can lead to stress and anxiety, which adversely impact a learner’s performance (Roberts, 2006). Mälkki (2010) theorized that edge-emotions, the unpleasant emotions that emerge when individuals are being pushed out of their comfort zones, operate to automatically steer them back into balance. These edge-emotions may interfere with the dilemma’s ability to trigger reflection. Mälkki (2010) claims there is a tendency to maintain consistency in our meaning perspectives by avoiding contradictions: “Consequently, we are naturally inclined to interpret the situation in ways which would enable a return to the comfort zone, in order to feel the comfort resulting from the world appearing safe and understandable” (p. 12). Therefore, recognizing and responding to these edge-emotions is a critical step in being able to reflect upon one’s meaning perspectives.

**Reflection**

Mezirow’s (1991) thoughts about reflection and its importance are heavily influenced by Dewey’s seminal analysis of reflection. According to Dewey (1933), reflective thought is “active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusion to which it tends” (p. 6). Through reflection, we see through the ways in which we have habitually interpreted experiences to reassess previously unquestioned meaning schemes and perspectives. Dewey said that reflection involves critically assessing the content, the process, or the premise to give meaning to an experience.
Senge et al. (2012) also recognizes the importance of reflection to slow down the thinking process to become aware of how we form mental models.

Reflection upon content or process is important because thinking about what was done and the immediate causes of those actions, may transform meaning schemes (Kitchenham, 2008). Mezirow later referred to this as the *critical reflection of assumptions* (Mezirow, 1998). However, it is premise reflection, later called *critical self-reflection on assumptions* or *subjective reframing* (Mezirow, 1998), that is more complex and crucial. It could transform a meaning perspective by considering a more global view (Kitchenham, 2008). It is the process by which our belief systems are transformed. Mezirow (1991) also believes individuals should reflect upon the strategies and procedures that are used in problem solving to check the decisions we have made. Ultimately, this results in reflective action – taking action based upon insights gained through reflection (Mezirow, 1991).

In essence, learning depends upon reflecting on what we have learned, how we have learned it, and whether our presuppositions are valid. Mezirow (1991) cautions that reflection is different from introspection. Reflection involves critique. Our understandings are fallible and can be based upon defective assumptions. Critically examining our interpretations of our meaning schemes and perspectives is imperative for adult learning (Mezirow, 1991). It is also important to note that not all reflective learning is transformative. It can also be confirmative if our meaning perspectives are validated by reflection. Paradoxically, there is a possible tension between critical reflection and one’s meaning perspectives. According to Mälkki (2010), “Since attention and thinking are substantially guided by one's meaning perspective, the meaning perspective must
have a guiding role also in reflection” (p. 45). As a result, Mälkki claims that one’s ability to be reflective may be situated within their particular meaning perspective related to self-criticism.

**Rational Discourse**

Rational discourse is the twin requirement to critical reflection (Mezirow, 1996). Discourse is “that specialized use of dialogue devoted to searching for a common understanding and assessment of the justification of an interpretation or belief” (Mezirow, 2000). Senge et al. (2012), refers to this as *inquiry*, in which one participates in conversations in which they openly share their views and develop understandings of each other’s assumptions. Establishing an open dialogue with one’s peers, mentor, facilitator, etc., is an essential element as the learner works to come to grips with their new meaning perspectives (Kitchenham, 2008). Taylor (2007) also acknowledged the importance of relationships in the transformative process, stating that it involves an interdependent process built on “trustful relationships that allow individuals to have questioning discussions, share information openly and achieve mutual and consensual understanding” (p. 7). An education that holds critically reflective thought as its goal is not only learner centered and participatory, it also involves group discussions and problem solving (Mezirow, 1997). In their study, Glowacki-Dudka et al. (2012) discovered that even a diverse group of participants could engage in deep conversations once a level of trust was established. Daley (1997) also recognized the importance of rational discourse when he noted that the transformative learning process among nurses who had experienced a disorienting dilemma was hindered by a lack of venue or method for discussion with their colleagues.
Because we are all trapped by our meaning perspectives, we can never really make interpretations of our experience free of bias. Consequently, our greatest assurance of objectivity comes from exposing an expressed idea to rational and reflective discourse (Mezirow, 1990). Taylor (2008) recommends that this dialogue, as well as the reflection that preceded it, take on a holistic approach in which rationality and emotion are both emphasized. Mezirow cautions against engaging in critical reflection in groups. This is because critical reflection is impeded by group think in which an individual in the group adheres to a belief based upon their perception that others in the group hold that belief, even if that belief is incorrect (Mezirow, 1991).

Discourse involves critical evaluation of arguments and their supporting evidence as well as an examination of alternative perspectives (Mezirow, 2000). It leads to a clearer understanding by accessing a more collective understanding. It requires emotional maturity and social skills including empathy, awareness, and control. Mezirow (2000) recognized this is a challenge in an argument-based culture in which people are taught to believe there are only two sides to an issue and the purpose of an argument is to win rather than understand different ways of thinking in order to “search for common ground, to resolve differences, and to get things done” (p. 12). Discourse does not require consensus building. It only means that the participants are willing and able to seek an understanding of the various perspectives to reach an equitable agreement. For Mezirow (2000), effective discourse is best achieved if the participants have an openness to alternative points of view, the ability to objectively evaluate evidence and arguments, a critical awareness of their own assumptions, and a willingness to understand.
Praxis

Mezirow (1992) defines praxis as “the reflective implementation of a purpose” (p. 252). It is the implementation of one’s new perspectives into action. While the learner’s acknowledgment of a new perspective is important, the demonstration of that perspective after the reintegration of the learner into their social world is key. This may not be an easy process. The learner may not be able to implement a decision to alter their behavior because they lack the skills, information, or emotional support to do so (Mezirow, 1992). In addition, returning to one’s traditional environment may cause the learner to return to their earlier perspectives (Apte, 2009). As a result, the transformative learning process is not complete until the learning transforms behavior in the non-educational setting. As Apte explains, “If you have more experiences where you are more like this than that, then you might end up being more like this” (pp. 185-186).

Mezirow (1991) cited early analyses of transformative learning experiences that identified how difficulties faced by the learner resulted in negotiation, backsliding, compromising, stalling, and even failure. These difficulties typically occur at two points in the process: when people become aware of their misconceptions through critical reflection and when action based upon reflection should take place. Here, the learner may become frozen by inaction. They know what to do but are unable to move forward because they realize that by taking action, they are overtly demonstrating a break with their previous accepted schemes and perspectives (Mezirow, 1991).

Facilitating Transformative Learning

Facilitating transformative learning is not easy (Taylor, 2008). It demands a great deal of skill, work, and courage. People who experience transformative learning liken it
to a feeling of rebirth. Unfortunately, this feeling may not last when battered on the rocks of reality (Mezirow, 1991). To foster transformative learning, Mezirow (1991) states that the facilitator must establish ideal learning conditions. First and foremost, there must be a horizontal relationship between the teacher and the student so they operate on an equal footing with each other (Taylor, 2008). This includes making sure the learner has accurate and complete information, they are free from coercion and self-deception, they able to be critically reflective, and they are open to alternative perspectives. Cranton (as cited in Apte, 2009) suggests that the facilitator recognize the learner’s assumptions, create an environment that will challenge the learner’s assumptions, help the learner to identify their assumptions, provide psychological support as they reflect upon and revise their assumptions, and support them as they put their new assumptions into praxis. Being aware of the learner’s readiness for change is also key (Taylor, 2008). Apte (2009) provides guidance in the form of reflective questions that the facilitator needs to be asking of the learner and themselves to better facilitate the transformative learning process. These questions include:

- What is considered “normal” behavior in the learner’s world?
- What evokes the learner’s curiosity, surprise, anxiety, anger, etc.?
- What is the learner avoiding?
- How are the learner’s views shifting over time? (pp. 173-175)

Facilitators must also adhere to aspects of andragogy such as progressively decreasing the learner’s dependency on the facilitator, helping the learner to assume increased responsibility for their learning, and reinforcing the self-concept of the learner (Mezirow, 1991). Adult educators have the responsibility to help foster critical
reflection, establish rational discourse, and help learners learn how to take appropriate action based upon their new learning.

According to Mezirow (1991), effective adult learning programs should assist learners in decontextualizing their experiences. They should help learners become more aware of their history and consequences of their beliefs. Learners should be taught to be more reflective of content, process, and principles. They should learn how to be more open to other perspectives, and they should learn to rely less on psychological defense mechanisms as they interrogate their beliefs and perspectives. What the learner says they want may be inconsistent with their actions. Respondents will frequently espouse theories that they think they believe rather than the theories that their actions suggest they believe. Mezirow recommends that facilitators should start by accepting the expressed needs of the learner, which should lead them to an exploration of the reasons for these needs, which is based upon the learner’s beliefs and assumptions. A simple way to facilitate the critical reflection process at this point is with the question, “what are the assumptions underlying your perspective of the experience?” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 219).

A facilitator must be prepared for the adult learner to feel threatened, disoriented, confused, or anxious rather than curious or motivated by the transformative learning process (Apte, 2009). Emotions can spark critical inquiry (Boler as cited Willink & Jacobs, 2012). Therefore, facilitators must be sensitive to their learners’ emotional state. Adult learners may become defensive or even defend their current meaning perspectives and schemes even more ardently. In addition, Apte (2009) states that the facilitator needs to be aware of the learner’s current views and comfort level regarding change. Apte
recommends supporting tentative and exploratory steps towards transformation until the facilitator is certain of the learner’s willingness and ability to move forward.

Ethically, the facilitator must make sure that the learner may experience a transformation but must not present their own perspective or decide which of the learner’s beliefs will be called into question. Otherwise, according to Mezirow (1991), there should be no ethical questions with regard to facilitating the transformative learning process. A learner struggling with coming to grips with an inaccurate belief or perspective should not be an ethical concern provided the learner learn freely and decide when and how to act on their own (Mezirow, 1991). However, educators may need to provide emotional support and guidance in the transformative learning process.

**Alternative Perspectives**

In addition to Mezirow’s mainline version of transformative learning, there are other major alternative perspectives regarding research on transformative learning. These numerous strands of thought on transformative learning vary in terms of their views on personal or emancipatory transformation, the role of social context and culture, the influence of emotion and rationality, and one’s positionality (Taylor, 2008). The consciousness-raising strand, also referred to as the social-emancipatory view (Taylor, 2008), is exemplified in the work of Paulo Freire (1970). Freire (as cited in Dirkx, 1998) argues that “education, through praxis, should foster freedom among learners by enabling them to reflect on their world and, thereby, change it” (p. 3). This means transformative learning is emancipatory and liberating at the personal and the social level. Transformation as development, sometimes called the psychodevelopmental view of transformative learning (Taylor, 2008), is based on the work of Larry Daloz (Dirkx,
1998), who sees transformative learning as even more focused on personal change than Mezirow (1991) does, while relying less on rational reflection and more on psycho-socio development. Robert Boyd’s ideas form the basis of the individuation strand, also known as the psycho-analytic view (Taylor, 2008). More than the other theorists, Boyd is concerned with the expressive or emotional-spiritual dimensions of learning and how they integrate into our daily lives (Dirkx, 1998). For Boyd, the goal of transformative learning is to identify and become aware of the unconscious aspects of ourselves, then establish an intrapersonal dialogue with them (Dirkx, 1998). Davis (2005) advocates another perspective on transformative learning called appreciative inquiry. He claims that the negative aspects of cognitive dissonance involved with transformative learning can hinder one’s willingness to learn. Appreciative inquiry avoids the disorienting dilemma, opting for a four-phase model to nurture transformative learning – discovery, dream, design, and destiny. Learners (1) identify their personal success stories, (2) emphasize positives in the current condition, (3) articulate their vision of the ideal condition, and (4) develop and action plan (Davis, 2005). Other conceptions of transformative learning include neurobiological, cultural-spiritual, race-centric, and planetary (Taylor, 2008).

**Critiques of Mezirow’s Transformative Learning Theory**

There have been two consistent and relevant critiques about Mezirow’s transformative learning theory. First, Mezirow’s (1991) transformative learning theory has long been criticized for ignoring other aspects of the learning process such as the affective, social, and emotional features (Kitchenham, 2008; Taylor, 1997; 2000). While early on seeming to focus on the rational processes, in his later writings Mezirow
acknowledges the importance of other factors in the meaning making process (Baumgartner, 2001). Over time, the theory has evolved to include recognition of the role of emotion and imagination (Dirkx, 2001) as well as a social constructivist view, which gives transformative learning a more holistic view (Taylor, 2007).

Emotions and safe relationships have been shown to be vital factors to be embedded within the reflection process (Taylor, 2000; 2007). Mälkki (2010) cites various examples from Mezirow’s writings that indicate there is an emotional dimension to transformative learning, including that reflection may be painful. Also, studies on perspective transformation have shown that it involves reflecting upon the self and one’s socio-cultural context. This means that the process is social and collaborative and involves cognitive, affective, somatic, and spiritual processes (Dirkx, 2006).

A second major critique is the concern over the lack of quantifiability of transformative learning theory because it is difficult to measure what has not been witnessed (Howie & Bagnall, 2013) and “Affirmations have no guaranteed validity” (Newman, 2012, p. 40). Taylor (2007) claims that defining a perspective transformation is one of the most elusive concepts. As a result, the determination of whether transformative learning actually has occurred is left to the subjective reporting of researchers and research participants. The lack of measures, let alone agreed measures, means it is impracticable to discern either the similarities or the differences between the findings of different researchers (Howie & Bagnall, 2013). While there is a glut of qualitative data, Cranton and Taylor (2012) suggest it is time to develop valid quantitative instruments for assessing the process of transformative learning (Howie & Bagnall, 2013). As of 2017, there had only been four empirical studies that used
quantitative instruments, yet none produced valid and reliable results in relation to transformative learning (Walker, 2018). Walker (2018) claims that his *Transformative Learning Environments Survey* can be applied to “examine students’ perceptions of their own transformation and the extent to which the learning environment supports their perception of transformation” (p. 35) through each of four *scales* (disorienting dilemma, self-reflection, critical discourse, and acting).

**Relevant Transformative Learning Studies**

An exhaustive number of studies have incorporated some or all aspects and perspectives of transformative learning, many of which are referenced above. In the interest of time and space, I have opted to include additional studies based on their relationship to my research in that they focus on teacher education and/or disorienting dilemmas.

Kreber (2006) looked at the levels of reflection identified by Mezirow (e.g. content, process, premise) in relationship to three domains of teaching knowledge: instructional (design/processes), pedagogical (student learning), and curricular (goals, purposes of courses). Premise reflection (critical reflection) was the least common level used by participants of any of the domains of teaching knowledge. In addition, teaching experience seemed to be a factor in the level of reflection. More experienced staff were more likely to engage in process and premise reflection than their younger counterparts. Kreber suggests this demonstrates the role that motivation plays in fostering reflection and concludes that when learning about teaching, teachers need to begin with premise reflection. In other words, they should be more concerned with why (premise) they teach rather than with how (process) or what (content) to teach.
Brancard and Quinnwilliams (2012) studied the impact of learning labs as a method to lead and support teachers in making changes to their practice. They found that learning labs were more effective than traditional informational presentations. Informational presentations may be valuable when teachers are simply searching for new pedagogical practices or content information, whereas transformative learning principles are required when changes in practice require an associated shift in ideals. Following peer observations, teachers participated in learning labs where they could voice their beliefs and assumptions in a supportive environment to text and examine their assumptions. Through learning labs and transformative learning, the study’s participants changed their beliefs regarding what students can do and how they learn, their roles as teachers, and even their views on collaboration and professional development (Brancard & Quinnwilliams, 2012).

Mälkki’s (2012) research involved the role of disorienting dilemmas in triggering the process of altering one’s beliefs, values, and attitudes. Participants completed an anonymous survey about their beliefs on various issues, such as euthanasia and abortion, from strongly opposed to strongly in favor. Next, the participants were placed into groups of eight and asked to predict the general results of the first survey. Once the results were collected, tabulated, and revealed, there was a discussion as to why each group selected made their predictions. Each participant was also asked to report on the areas where they most obviously agreed and disagreed, including why they thought there were such differences. This discussion focused on the disorienting dilemmas that some of the participants had faced which resulted in their perspectives. The discussion also included debate regarding the influence of upbringing, education, society, and culture on
one’s worldviews. In particular, Mälkki noted that the disorienting dilemmas were manifested in various emotional experiences and that the participant’s relation to these emotions was key in triggering critical reflection that led to transformative learning (Mälkki, 2012).

Brown (2005) applied transformative theory in their study on pre-service administrators’ beliefs. The participants took part in an educational plunge (disorienting dilemma) in which they experience education from a culture different from their own, i.e. private, single-sex, charter, prisons, etc. The experience was designed to push participants outside of their comfort zone and expose existing assumptions and biases. This was followed by critical reflection and rational discourse through diversity panels. Panels consisted of participants who selected the same setting for their educational plunge. They researched the history of the culture, particularly that group’s educational experiences in the U.S. This was followed by cross-cultural interviews with individuals who were of a different race/ethnicity from the participant to help the participants develop a greater understanding of alternative world views and to increase their comfort in discussing educational issues. Brown (2005) shared common takeaways from the participants including that the experience was eye-opening and challenging. One participant said they “Loved it because it forced me to recognize my own biases, misconceptions, and ignorance. Hated it for the same reason. Definitely the most memorable (and probably the most valuable) experience this entire semester” (Brown, 2005, p. 7).

Caruana, Woodrow, and Pérez (2015) studied the effect of transformative learning experiences on the perspectives of students enrolled in graduate teacher preparation
courses. In this study, the disorienting dilemma was the introduction of reading materials, discussion questions, and service-learning experiences, with the purpose of sparking the transformative learning process. The participants were provided opportunities for critical reflection and rational dialogue, which the researchers claim allowed their students to question their individual perspectives and move towards taking action on their new perspectives more easily. Their research suggests there is potential for teacher educators to design learning experiences that trigger and facilitate transformative learning (Caruana, Woodrow, & Pérez, 2015).

Ukpokodu (2007) examined the use of a transformative learning in a social studies methods course to alter the students’ views about the teaching of social studies. Students entering the course typically were interested in learning the tips and tricks of making the study of history interesting for their future students. These prospective teachers were led through a series of activities focusing on identifying and challenging the various perspectives of the purpose of teaching social studies. Overwhelmingly, the students emerged with a new and deeper understanding of social studies rather than simply relying on what it was when taught to them. They also began to adopt a new attitude towards self-examination as a teacher. Their once shallow and narrow view of teaching social studies was significantly deepened and expanded by the experience (Ukpokodu, 2007).

**Hidden Curriculum**

In my study, the cognitive dissonance associated with a disorienting dilemma served as the motor to drive change in the teachers’ pedagogical practices and/or their core curricular and instructional beliefs. The fuel for that motor was the revealing of a
hidden curriculum in the classroom specifically tied to the students’ perceptions of the tasks typically assigned to them by their teacher. The concept of hidden curriculum has various definitions, interpretations, and applications as this section will discuss. Defining hidden curriculum is but the first step. Subsequently, there is a host of questions that must be answered: What is the source of the hidden curriculum? How does one find the hidden curriculum? What is to be done once it is identified? How is it determined if it is good or bad? Whose values are being emphasized? How effective is the hidden curriculum?

**Definitions and Perspectives**

When first officially used by Jackson in 1968, the term *hidden curriculum* referred to how schools latently diffused and bolstered various attitudes and behaviors. Its roots, however, can be traced back to John Dewey (1938) discussion of collateral curriculum:

> Perhaps the greatest of all pedagogical fallacies is that a person learns only the particular thing he is studying at the time. Collateral learning in the way of formation of enduring attitudes, of likes and dislikes, may be and often is more important…for attitudes are fundamentally what count in the future. (p. 48)

According to Kilpatrick (as cited in Hlebowitsh, 1994), while a child is learning the multiplication tables, they are also learning whether they like or dislike math, school, or the teacher. They are learning about self-esteem and self-ability. They are learning about dawdling, uniformity, and responsibility. All this comes from the memorization of multiplication tables.
At its most basic level, free from political or social underpinnings, hidden curriculum is the distinction between what is meant to be learned, as evidenced by the official curriculum and school policies, and what the learners actually learn as a result of the intellectual, emotional, and social experience of being in school (Sambell & McDowell, 1998). Eisner (1985) refers to the hidden curriculum as the implicit curriculum, consisting of values and expectations, which are learned by the students, but not included in the formal curriculum. For Giroux and Penna (1979), it is the “unstated norms, values, and beliefs that are transmitted to students through the underlying structure of meaning in both the formal content as well as the social relations of school and classroom life” (p. 22). Martin (1976) claims that the hidden curriculum can impact a student’s character traits (docility or conformity) as well as their cognitive states, emotional states, or attitudinal states.

The hidden curriculum can be transferred through student interactions with the explicit curriculum, staff members, other students, or even with the school environment (King, 1986). The hidden curriculum is not always negative, nor is conspiracy always present (Portelli, 1993). It can transmit both negative messages such as “boys are better at math than girls,” or positive ones like, “our school values treating others with respect.” It can also be used as a method to maintain hegemonic social and political order (Apple, 2004; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1988). This inculcation begins when our children enter kindergarten (Apple & King, 1977). To make the hidden curriculum seem even more elusive, the messages transmitted through the hidden curriculum “may be contradictory, non-linear, and punctuational and each learner mediates the message in her/his own way” (Skelton, 1997, p. 188). Emphasizing a particular set of behaviors, values, and
dispositions impacts others. For instance, Bowles and Gintis (as cited in Giroux & Penna, 1979) pointed out that students who were rated high in citizenship also rated significantly below average on measures of creativity and mental flexibility. John Eggleston (as cited in King, 1986) provided a disheartening discussion of the relationship between the formal curriculum and the hidden curriculum:

It could be argued that the purpose of the mathematics curriculum is not only to enable pupils to learn mathematics but also to allow some to understand that they cannot learn mathematics and to acquire a suitable respect for those who can (the teacher and the more able pupils destined for superior occupational status). (p. 86)

One’s understanding of hidden curriculum depends on their particular perspective, based primarily upon the relationship between schools and society. If one wishes to change and improve classroom life, they will have to first come to grips with this relationship (Giroux & Penna, 1979). Recognizing the hidden influences may not be enough. Teachers need to reflect on how these influences impact their curriculum and their pedagogical practices both positively and negatively. Dewey believed that teachers needed to be aware of what was occurring unconsciously in order to have a deeper understanding of the act of curriculum planning (Hlebowitsh, 1994). Being more progressive in nature, Dewey understood that schools played a role in transforming society rather than simply existing to transfer societal desires upon students (Hlebowitsh, 1994).

Skelton (1997) identifies four major perspectives and their understandings of the hidden curriculum. The functionalist perspective focuses on the roles schools play in maintaining social order and stability. Schools serve as “vehicles through which students
learn the social norms, values and skills they require to function and contribute to the existing society” (Skelton, 1997, p. 178). As such, schools do not exist in isolation, removed from society (Giroux & Penna, 1979). Jackson (1968) states that the hidden curriculum is shaped by the three concepts of crowds, praise, and power. Students must learn how to live and work with others, they must learn how to be and accept evaluations, and they must respect existing power structures. For example, Jackson (1968) claims that, while in school, the students learn to handle the delays and denials of their desires due to the nature of school and classroom structures. This prepares students for that type of existence in the real world. Schools are unexciting and boring to fulfill their role in preparing students for the real world (Apple & King, 1977). Internalizing specific norms while in school assists students in becoming productive members of the American society later in life (Wren, 1999). For instance, “The McGuffey graded reader series was used to inculcate discipline, good conduct, punctuality, respect of authority, and other commonly held social beliefs” (Ryan as cited in Wren, 1999, p. 594). According to the functionalist perspective, hidden curriculum was at one time not hidden at all. It was a conscious and purposeful attempt during the industrialization period in American history to create a community that espoused American values and create workers who were prepared for a standardized life (Apple & King, 1977; Vallance, 1974).

The liberal perspective, according to Skelton (1997), views the hidden curriculum as “those taken-for-granted assumptions and practices of school life which although being created by various ‘actors’ within the school, take on an appearance of accepted normality through their daily production and reproduction” (p. 179). The liberal perspective wants to bring to light the assumptions upon which these practices are based
and describe how they take shape in schools and classroom. Skelton (1997) uses the example of streaming, also known as tracking. The liberal perspective would investigate the origin of the assumption that this practice was most beneficial as well as how it impacts schools, classrooms, and students. Unlike the functionalist’s macroscopic perspective, which claims that schools and classroom systems and structures serve to prepare for the world beyond school, the liberal perspective is more microscopic. It holds that teachers and students are not passive receptors of social norms and values, but also serve as creators through their response to various school practices and structures. For instance, a student’s choice to conform, retreat, or rebel in response to the experiences in school is their attempt to decode the situation and select the best course of action to succeed or survive (Skelton, 1997). This is also indicative of Giroux and Penna’s (1979) social phenomenological approach to educational theory.

Like the functionalist perspective (Giroux & Penna, 1979), the critical perspective, sometimes referred to as the neo-Marxist approach, focuses on social norms working their way into schools and classrooms. However, the critical perspective seeks to address the role of schooling in facilitating and reproducing various inequalities in society (Skelton, 1997). This can include the power imbalance between teacher and student, meant to mimic that of employer and worker, but also imbalances based upon socio-economic status, race and ethnicity, gender, religion, or other characteristics. According to Apple and King (1977), “The curriculum field has its roots in the soil of social control” (p. 344). Skelton (1997) cites Keddie’s conclusion that lower class students are exposed to a much lower level of academic knowledge than middle- and upper-class students. According to the critical perspective, “The hidden curriculum of
schooling can be brought to light as a middle-class, male, and white-dominated phenomenon, which consequently leads to inequality and injustice in society” (Skelton, 1997, p. 184). Rather than having students reflect critically upon the systems and structures responsible for the imbalance, students are socialized to conform to the status quo (Giroux & Penna, 1979).

Education is not a neutral act (Freire, 1970). It is highly political and issues such as race and class are always tied to teaching (Howard, 2010). Howard also states that ongoing and critical reflection of one’s practices and beliefs is one of the most fundamental elements of cultural competence. While a teacher may feel they engage in fair and equitable practices and maintain a positive learning environment, the students may experience a different situation. Certain students may feel unfairly criticized, harshly evaluated, or treated unfairly when compared to their peers. Howard claims that revealing and analyzing a teacher’s hidden curriculum can help teachers reflect upon whether they consciously or subconsciously maintain deficit based, distorted, or negative views of students from particular racial, ethnic, or socio-economic groups. In addition, asking teachers to honestly reflect upon their core educational beliefs, ideals, and experiences, and then compare those reflections to their students’ beliefs, ideals, and experiences, may promote an atmosphere of mutual respect of the positionality of the teacher and the learners, which in turn promotes reciprocal teaching and learning. Howard (2010) suggests the increased cultural competence can lead to improved classroom management, lesson planning, instruction, and assessment for all students.

The postmodern perspective, based heavily upon the work of Foucault, also seeks to study and understand the forces at work through the hidden curriculum. Postmodern
thinkers like Foucault hold that sources of power are manifold in our society. Therefore, it would seem that institutionalization of power systems within our schools through hidden curriculum cannot be reduced to a simple or single source such as class or patriarchy, even though they may share the same goal of docility for certain segments of the population (Skelton, 1997). As such, the study of the hidden curriculum must take place at the micro-level of a particular classroom or student-based accounts of these types of norm entrenchment and the accompanying student responses. Rather than set students along a path of a predetermined social norm, the postmodern perspective would aim to “create a state of flux in the learner through the offering of new experiences and insights” (Skelton, 1997, p. 187). This would encourage a respect for perspective in our rapidly changing and pluralistic society.

Role of the Teacher

Teachers need to recognize that the hidden curriculum is not simply the product of institutions beyond their control. They intentionally and unintentionally play a role as well (Martin, 1976). While teachers overtly foster cognitive skills such as reading, writing, and math, they also foster non-cognitive objectives related to norms, values, and behaviors considered important for adulthood. This can include traits like respect for authority, punctuality, perseverance, dependability, and docility.

LeCompte (1978) studied teachers’ verbal and quasi-verbal behavior to determine the norms that the teachers stressed in their classrooms. In addition to equating academic achievement with personal worth, the students in all six classrooms studied by LeCompte were expected to “conform to authority, conform to a schedule and avoid wasting time, keep busy, and maintain order” (p. 25). A teacher’s individual style resulted in little
difference in the norms that were transmitted. In addition, until the structure of society and its vision for school change, teacher behavior will continue to emphasize those traits.

Langhout and Mitchell (2008) examined how the hidden curriculum facilitated academic disengagement in a second-grade classroom characterized by control and conformity. Students who were not engaged in the proper way, predominantly students of color, were reprimanded, resulting in academic disengagement and a latent message that school was not for them. The researchers also noted that the hidden curriculum placed limitations upon the teacher who was trying to foster an academically engaging learning environment within a system working against that goal (Langhout & Mitchell, 2008).

**Finding the Hidden Curriculum**

Hlebowitsh (1994) argues there has always been, and likely always will be, hidden effects of any curriculum. Therefore, locating a hidden curriculum and its influence on learning, then either reinforcing or modifying it within the learning process, are vital tasks for educators. One of the more challenging issues with locating the hidden curriculum is the idea that students interpret and respond to the hidden curriculum differently (MacLeod, 2014; Martin, 1976; Sambell & McDowell, 1998). The various perspectives on the hidden curriculum (Skelton, 1997) noted above supports that claim. The hidden curriculum is fluid and contextual (MacLeod, 2014). As a result, finding *the* hidden curriculum of a school or even a classroom might be unrealistic. However, locating *a* hidden curriculum is not. The next challenge would be to put together the pieces that represent the various understandings of the various hidden curricula into a cohesive picture useful for improving teaching and learning.
Because of its elusive nature, identifying a method to locate and study the hidden curriculum is challenging. Researchers have used student interviews (Margolis & Romero, 1998) and questionnaires (Cotton, Warren, Maiboroda, & Bailey, 2007), but recognized that these methods might not provide the level of depth required. A combination of interviews and observations seems to be required to provide the triangulation necessary to fully access and understand the hidden curriculum (Cotton, Winter, & Bailey, 1993). Malone and Tranter (2005) combined interviews with behavior mapping, surveys, and observations. Mossop et al. (2013) utilized a cultural web to identify the hidden themes by examining symbols, power and organizational structures, control systems, and ritual and routines. Martin (1976) suggests the social and power structure of the classroom, the use of language, disciplinary measures, and even the classroom furnishings and architecture must be studied. An analysis of the tasks assigned to students may also provide a glimpse into the hidden curriculum. Students’ perceptions of tasks influence how they approach learning (Good, 1983), but embedded within tasks are latent messages that “students use to make judgements about their ability, their willingness to apply effortful strategies, and their feelings of satisfaction” (Ames, 1992).

In the world of social studies, textbooks contribute significant to the hidden curriculum because they tend to either represent the hegemonic ideology or attempt to depoliticize and sterilize history (Bain, 2006). Textbooks can maintain an authoritarian status because of the widespread belief that they are above criticism due to stubborn misconceptions about what constitutes historical knowledge (Gabella, 1994). Wineburg (1991) also notes the power of textbooks to delegitimize other forms of historical knowledge, thereby impeding students’ development of historical thinking skills rather
than fostering it. Bain (2006) showed that even concentrated and sustained efforts to encourage high school history students to question their textbook were barely able to move the needle towards increased historical inquiry. Therefore, examining the content of a textbook could help one grasp the hidden curriculum being transmitted.

Assessment is another possible window into the hidden curriculum. Snyder (1971) explored how even though his university claimed to emphasize higher order educational goals like independent thinking and problem solving, an analysis of assessments indicated the memorization of facts and theories was the key to success. In addition, earning a grade can overshadow the functions and aspects of an assessment. The issue is not merely a question of whether students are evaluated; more importantly, it concerns students’ perceptions of the meaning of the evaluative information (MacIver, 1987). Conventional assessments have been criticized for sending the “wrong” messages to students about the approaches they should take to learning tasks (Sambell & McDowell, 1998). If assessment acts as a driving force for students’ behavior toward learning, then altering the assessments should impact student behaviors (Joughin, 2010). Somewhat ironically, teachers are also the recipients of hidden curriculum since the instruments used in their evaluations are likely accompanied by their own hidden curriculum.

Sambell and McDowell (1998) studied the impact of altering the formal assessment system on student practices. In one case study, the motivation to learn and study was altered when the assessment system shifted from a few long, open-ended essays in which students demonstrated high levels of knowledge about a few topics to lengthy multiple-choice exams that measure surface-level understandings of a much
larger range of topics. In a second case, the assessment moved from a traditional, unseen final exam to an open-book paper. Since this type of exam would not test memorization and regurgitation of information, the students’ approach to learning changed as they made a more concerted effort to understand the course material and relate topics to one another. An important lesson from Sambell and McDowell’s (1998) case studies is that even though students all understood the explicit communication about the changes in assessment, they responded in varying ways. Even with the moves toward criteria-referenced assessments and the explicit use of learning objectives, students still respond to learning tasks differently. This provides additional support for referring to a hidden curriculum rather than the hidden curriculum, which also makes finding and altering it more challenging.

Response to the Hidden Curriculum

In adhering to a critical pedagogical perspective, identifying the hidden curriculum casts light upon the systems and structures upon which it is built. When “the hidden curriculum becomes negotiable and visible to all participants…allowing for remediation, change, defence [sic], improvement, and informed dialogue” (Anderson as cited in Cotton et al., 2013, p. 195), teaching can be adjusted to offset the most undemocratic features of the hidden curriculum. Referring to the hidden curriculum as “latent” or “covert” and a natural outcome of schooling makes it seem that the hidden curriculum is not harmful and beyond a teacher’s control, which is simply not accurate (Martin, 1976). Any serious approach to improving teaching and learning in the classroom must begin with an examination of any contradictions between the official or intended curriculum and the hidden curriculum (Giroux & Penna, 1979). While attempts
to improve teaching and learning in an individual classroom may fail unless it is able to coexist with the expectations of society, the hidden curriculum may not be an impassable boundary. Rather, it can be a compass used to direct future educational change (Giroux & Penna, 1979).

Martin (1976) suggests four possible responses once the hidden curriculum is found: nothing, abolish, change, and embrace. By selecting nothing as a course of action, one is adopting a neutral stance in that the elements of the hidden curriculum are neither harmful nor beneficial. While some might wish to abolish the elements they have seen, it is not likely without large-scale changes if they are rooted in larger, societal values. The teacher might be able to abolish certain practices or harmful elements within their classroom. Changing one’s practices, procedures, environments, rules, etc. can help to improve the hidden curriculum by eliminating or minimizing the elements believed to be harmful and reinforcing those deemed valuable. An example of this would be shifting from a traditional grading system to one that is standards-based. Martin warns that despite reforms by the teacher, a powerful hidden curriculum may still survive. Martin’s (1976) final option is for the teacher to embrace the hidden curriculum. Here they can either continue their current practices to maintain the hidden curriculum or they can openly acknowledge the learning goals of the hidden curriculum to make them part of the official curriculum. Consciousness raising of the hidden curriculum can assist in the strengthening of desired effects or weakening of the harmful ones because the recipients of it are in a better position to understand and respond to it (Martin, 1976). In the end, Martin suggests consciousness raising may be the best weapon against, or for, the hidden curriculum.
Because hidden curriculum is interpreted and internalized individually, altering one’s practices to cause change in the hidden curriculum is not the end of the story. Teachers must be prepared to regularly seek out the hidden impact of their instructional and non-instructional decisions because any changes they make may have unintended consequences. While teachers may hope to create a “better” hidden curriculum, they need to ensure they do not end up with a worse one (Martin, 1976).

**Summary**

At the heart of the hypocrisy paradigm and transformative learning is the realization that we are not who we thought we were. Our actions do not always match our beliefs. For teachers, what they think they teach may not be what the students actually learn. Revealing a teacher’s hidden curriculum could be the catalyst that sparks change. Through cognitive dissonance, specifically the hypocrisy paradigm, one might alter their future behaviors to better align them with one’s beliefs (Festinger, 1957). The studies described above provide evidence of the power of hypocrisy for altering pedestrian behaviors as well as those that occupy greater importance in our lives. In adherence to transformative learning, perhaps revealing a hidden curriculum could trigger a deeper investigation into one’s meaning perspectives and assumptions. The research discussed in this section suggests a powerful disorienting dilemma combined with an avenue for critical reflection and rational discourse are key to modifying one’s praxis (Mezirow, 1991). By inducing and directing teacher’s cognitive dissonance, I hoped to inspire the participating teachers to improve their pedagogical practices and/or core curricular and instructional beliefs to improve learning in their classroom for all students.
According to Czajkowski and King (1975), Dewey seemed to understand that individuals learned almost everything they feel and value because their environment is structured in a manner that permits or encourages them. As a result, controlling what children feel and value will strongly influence who they become as adults and what those adults create in terms of a society. Because of this, “educators must reflect on what the attitudes, perceptions, and sensitivities they want the environment of children to express, along with those that it should not express” (Czajkowski & King, 1975, p. 280).

Macleod (2014) notes how the concept of a hidden curriculum provides teachers with an escape route from responsibility. If this is true, then the revealing and critical reflection upon one’s hidden curriculum could help teachers recognize their responsibility for ensuring all students have an equitable learning experience. For MacGillivray (1997), a simple block print hanging on her office wall served as the disorienting dilemma and cognitive dissonance that sparked her drive to reflect upon her practices, particularly those with latent messages that countered her purported intent of establishing a critical pedagogical system in her classroom. MacGillivray (1997) studied her students’ various written assignments, her written responses to those assignments, as well as her own journals and reflections about her classes to uncover her hidden curriculum so as to develop a plan and make adjustments to assist her in achieving her goals. I hoped to replicate MacGillivray’s journey for my participants by incorporating cognitive dissonance, transformative learning, and the hidden curriculum.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of my research was to examine teachers’ reactions to the revealing of the student perspective regarding the tasks assigned to them to develop an instrument that can be used to motivate experienced social studies teachers to improve their practices and/or core curricular and instructional beliefs. The instrument is designed to trigger cognitive dissonance in the participants by revealing an aspect of the hidden curriculum that contradicts the teacher’s core curricular and pedagogical beliefs. The central questions guiding my research are:

1. To what extent do student perceptions of learning based upon the assigned tasks align with the teacher’s perceptions?

2. To what extent are teachers aware of the messages they transmit through their hidden curriculum?

3. How does the revealing of student perceptions of learning impact teachers?

I expected a positive effect in that revealing the hidden curriculum via student feedback paired with teacher reflection would motivate teachers to improve their practices and/or core curricular and instructional beliefs. Previous studies involving the hypocrisy paradigm revealed altered behaviors in response to dissonance-inducing reflection on recent behaviors compared to purported beliefs (Aronson, Fried, & Stone, 1991; Dickerson, Thibodeau, Aronson, & Miller, 1992; Stone, Aronson, Crain, Winslow, & Fried, 1994; Fried & Aronson, 1995). I expected the addition of student-provided
feedback to increase the dissonance and the teachers’ desire to alter their pedagogical practices and/or core curricular and instructional beliefs. If the student-provided feedback, when paired with teacher reflection, were to be successful in motivating veteran teachers to improve their instructional practices and/or beliefs, then administrators, teacher leaders, and instructional coaches could incorporate this strategy. The results could also be of interest to those who advocate for increased student input on the learning process.

This section begins with an overview of action research, qualitative methodology, and case study methodology, including rationales for those selections for this study. This will be followed by a description of the participants and contexts for my study. I will then detail my methods for data collection, organization, and analysis. Finally, I will discuss any ethical considerations.

Methodological Overview

Action Research

Action research is a philosophical stance and attitude of inquiry that empowers people to continuously improve their ways of thinking and doing (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009). Educational action research allows teachers as well as other school personnel to become researchers and study their own practices within their classrooms and schools. Unlike other methodologies, which may seek to answer questions of a more general nature, the research questions in action research “arise from events, problems, or professional interests that the educators deem important” (Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 4). In essence, action research involves taking action to improve something, doing research to find out if something has actually been improved, and sharing your findings with others.
However, action research can be understood as more than mere research and more than mere action. It is constructivist, situational, practical, systematic, and cyclical (Efron & Ravid, 2013). For Herr and Anderson (2015), the goals of action research mimic traditional research in that they both seek to generate new knowledge and adhere to a sound and appropriate methodology. However, they emphasize that action research also includes the achievement of action-oriented outcomes, the education of both researcher and participants, and results that are relevant to the local setting. Since action research is about improving knowledge about existing situations unique to the people in the situation, the knowledge cannot be generalized or applied, although it can be shared (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009). Action researchers “are not concerned with whether the knowledge through their studies is applicable and replicable in other settings. Their goal is to improve their practice and foster their professional growth by understanding their students solving problems, or developing new skills” (Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 4).

I am a current instructional leader and instructional coach. I consistently encounter teachers who are disenchanted with traditional professional learning yet also see no reason to improve their pedagogical practices and/or core curricular and instructional beliefs. This action research allows me to identify possible strategies to address my local problem, implement those solutions, and then test their effectiveness. Cyclically, I can restart the process based on the new information that my research has produced to further improve my practice. This study would hopefully lead to an instrument and process that will help teachers self-motivate to improve their practices. As I am in regular contact with other instructional leaders and instructional coaches in my
school district, I will be able to share my findings locally with those who may encounter similar problems of practice.

**Qualitative Methodology**

This study utilized a qualitative methodology regarding the data collection and analysis because “research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making a difference in people’s lives” (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 1). Rather than simply determining cause and effect or a correlation between variables, I seek to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon I am studying. As such, I needed a methodology capable of eliciting that understanding. Qualitative research is about understanding the meaning people have constructed. In the attempt to uncover the common understanding, qualitative methodology relies solely on data in the form of text and images rather than numbers (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) identify four basic characteristics of qualitative research: “The focus is on process, understanding, and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive; and the product is richly descriptive” (p.15). Creswell and Creswell (2018) identify similar characteristics but add that qualitative research occurs in a natural setting, incorporates multiple sources of data, has an emergent design, includes reflexivity, and involves a more holistic account.

These characteristics match my needs as a researcher. My attempt to understand how teachers respond to the hidden curriculum requires rich, thick, and descriptive data. I analyzed various forms of text data collected through several means, such as surveys and interviews that use an assortment of question types. As I analyzed the data, I worked
inductively by identifying patterns and building categories to create a comprehensive set of themes from which to draw my conclusions. The data collection process occurred in a naturalistic setting, in my case the blended learning classroom, rather than a laboratory. This allowed for whatever was being observed to happen naturally with limited researcher manipulation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). After developing an initial plan for my research, I was forced by the COVID-19 pandemic to adjust data collection methods to fit the school district’s plan for a blended learning environment in which students could either select fully asynchronous online learning or a hybrid model in which they would come to school one day each week and learn online the other days. Since I played the main role in collecting and analyzing the data, I was reflective in my positionality to be sure I was not advancing my own biases, values, and perspectives.

**Case Study Methodology**

Case studies allow a researcher to conduct an in-depth analysis of a program, event, activity, or process of one or more individuals over a sustained period to collect detailed information from a variety of data collection procedures (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In other words, case study allows researchers to study complex phenomena within a particular context (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It is particularly suited to cases where the phenomenon and context cannot be separated. The most important aspect of a case study is identifying the object of the study. The object of the study, the unit of analysis, rather than the topic of the investigation characterizes a case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The object of the study is not necessarily one individual. It could also be a class or a program (Efron & Ravid, 2013). For this study, the unit of analysis is the three social studies teachers at Pseudonym High School.
Once the object of the study is identified, case studies select examples of a phenomenon and conduct an in-depth exploration of the particular entity, its actions, and the reasons for those actions (Efron & Ravid, 2013). It is worth noting that the case study design also allows for the incorporation of other forms of qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In my study, there are elements of phenomenology blended into the case study as I seek to “identify the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants in a study” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 249). The phenomenon being studied is the impact of revealing the hidden curriculum, particularly the influence of the phenomenon on teachers’ desire to improve their practices.

Various aspects of the case study design make it ideal for action research in general and my study in particular. Yazan (2015) argues that case studies can maintain a flexible design in which the researcher can make major changes, even while conducting the research, as long as they are operating from a few well-defined research questions. This is also indicative of action research’s ability to evolve throughout the process (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Particularly, aspects of the instrumental case study fit my purpose and blend well with the overall goal of action research. An instrumental case study seeks to accomplish more than simply understanding a phenomenon; rather, the case is secondary and used to provide the researcher with greater insight into an issue or theory in order to help the researcher pursue an external interest (Baxter & Jack, 2008). When used appropriately, case study methodology can be a valuable method for developing theories, evaluating programs, and developing interventions (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This fits with my overall intent as I study a phenomenon within a particular context to assist in the creation of a new instrument to address my problem of practice.
Context

The study was conducted at Pseudonym High School, a rural high school near a major southern city with over 1300 enrolled students. The predominant reason the school was selected is because I work in the same location, making it an important element in addressing my problem of practice. The 2018 School Improvement Plan includes a goal that “every student, every day has excellent educators.” In evidence of this, the improvement plan indicates that nearly a quarter of Pseudonym’s teachers have master’s level credentials or other advanced degrees and nearly 20% of the teachers are National Board Certified in their subject area. The school was awarded a performance grade score of 84 (B) by the state for the 2018-2019 school year, partially due to exceeding academic growth. However, the school had earned an A-level rating in each of the previous three years. According to the school’s 2018 official improvement plan, the cohort graduation rate for 2019 was approximately 95%, continuing a slow but steady increase in that statistic for the school. This dedication to quality instruction and professional learning was an added benefit for having this setting for my study.

According to the 2018 published school profile on the district website, the school operates on a four-by-four block schedule in which students attend four classes each semester for approximately 90 minutes every day. However, due to COVID-19, the district is operating on a hybrid learning schedule for the opening of the 2020-2021 school year. Students attend face-to-face classes only one day per week and participate in online learning the other days. Parents/guardians had the option to have their children participate in online learning only, with no in-person requirement. Starting on the day
before the study officially began, the district altered their schedule so that secondary students would be attending school two days each week instead of one.

Due to the modified scheduling, classroom demographics are atypical. During the current school year, the overall in-person class sizes of the participating teachers range between 18 and 31 students. However, with the hybrid schedule and social distancing guidelines, none of the teachers in this study has more than ten students in their classroom at any one time. Each teacher also has some full-time virtual students who were not included as part of this study due to the lack of regular face-to-face contact with their teachers. Demographic data provided by the district for 2018 identifies the overall ethnic percentages as 81% white, 12% Hispanic, 4% black, 1% Asian, and 2% other. Consequently, the school’s diversity score, which identifies the likelihood that two students chosen at random would be members of a different ethnic group, is .30. A diversity score closer to 1.0 indicates a more diverse student body. The state average is .68. 19.5% of the students are identified as economically disadvantaged, which is significantly lower than the state average of 46.5%.

**Participants and Sampling**

Data were collected from a convenience purposive sample of social studies teachers at Pseudonym High School (n = 3). Purposive sampling yields in-depth understandings on specific, information-rich cases (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In action research, the research problem typically focuses on a specific group, such as a teacher’s class, a department, or even the entire faculty, making the population and the sample identical (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019). In addition, since generalizability is not a goal or expectation of qualitative research, especially for action research, the number of
participants is not critical (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Among other factors, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state that the number of participants depends upon the research questions and the amount of data being gathered. Ideally, research stops when saturation has been achieved (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Answering my research questions required a significant amount of data collection from teachers and their students as well as a substantial amount of data analysis along various strands. Using more than three or four teacher participants could result in an overwhelming amount of data that would be impractical for an action research study.

My criteria for sampling were that the participant must be a veteran social studies teacher. In this case, veteran refers to those with seven years of experience or more in the classroom. Veteran teachers were more likely to have solidified the core curricular beliefs and settled into a common pattern of pedagogical practices as compared to teachers new to the profession. Such higher levels of self-consistency have led to a greater impact of cognitive dissonance (Stone, 2003). These are precisely the types of teachers whom I believe could benefit from an instrument that I am proposing as a motivator for improving their pedagogical practices and/or core curricular and instructional beliefs. Social studies teachers were selected due to my familiarity with the subject matter. I was a social studies teacher for twenty years as well as a district-level curriculum specialist for four years. This experience was beneficial during the informal phase of the interview process as I needed to ask probing questions concerning the teacher’s instructional practices or curricular beliefs.

Recruitment occurred during a department meeting at which nine out of ten members of the school’s social studies department were present. I met with the absent
member privately to discuss the study. I provided a copy of the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix D), allowed teachers time to read it, and answered any questions or concerns. We also discussed potential timelines, pitfalls, and the time commitment on their part. Four department members agreed immediately and signed the teacher consent form. One participant was later dropped from the study due to the extremely low number of students who were able to secure parental approval before completing the required student survey. Through the consent letter and our discussion, potential participants were informed the purpose of the research was to compare teacher and student perceptions about learning. The full intent and purpose of the study was not explained because doing so might bias the study results. At the conclusion of the study, I told teachers were told the full intent of the study and provided the Debriefing Statement (Appendix A). In the interim period between their recruitment meeting and the inception of the study, participants were asked not to alter their regular classroom practices. Participants could withdraw from the study at any time.

Since I interviewed the participants myself, their anonymity was an impossibility. However, it is still vital for researchers, whenever collecting data for a study, to ensure confidentiality so others do not learn the identity of the participants (Efron & Ravid, 2013). In a small, qualitative case study such as mine, it can be challenging to maintain confidentiality due to the possibility of insiders, such as other teachers in the school, being able to recognize characteristics that allow them to identify the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To maintain the participants’ confidentiality, I used pseudonyms and used gender neutral pronouns when in the reporting of data and findings.
for each participant despite their actual gender. Each participant also had the opportunity to review any remarks included in the study.

I have known all the participants for over five years, primarily as the secondary level social studies curriculum specialist, but also currently as their instructional coach. Although this role does not give me a supervisory role over the participants, it allowed me the opportunity to build a relationship in which I was a valuable source of information and guide in providing quality social studies instruction. I relied on this relationship to assist in recruiting participants.

Institutional vulnerability could play a role in that teacher participants may have felt unduly influenced or coerced to take part in the study or produce the results desired. Their informed consent could have been tainted and not entirely voluntary due to fear of losing their jobs by not pleasing the administrator (Herr & Anderson, 2013). To reduce this possible influence, I distanced the school administration from the research process, especially regarding teacher recruitment.

Hall has over twenty-five years of experience teaching social studies, nineteen of which at Pseudonym High School. During this study, they taught world history to three classes of predominantly freshman. They claim that the state standards and mandatory testing currently have the greatest influence on what they teach, although they also admit that they focus on topics with which they are most comfortable. While they concede their greatest weakness is in dealing with disruptive students, Hall believes their main strengths are being organized and making the material easy to understand. They identify their trust in God and their experiences with great teachers as the factors that have had the greatest influence on who they are as a teacher.
King is in their ninth year of teaching, all at Pseudonym High School. During this study, they taught two Civics and Economics classes and one Holocaust class. Like Hall, King identifies the state standards as having the greatest control over what she teaches. In addition, they also credit their faith and their mentors as having a major impact on the teacher they have become. Her self-reported strengths include their positive relationship and rapport with their students, their commitment to rigor, and the energy they bring to the classroom. King does feel like they sometimes get stuck in a rut and is not always open to various perspectives and interpretations on how students complete their tasks.

Smith is a veteran of twenty-seven years of teaching, four of which at Pseudonym High School. At the time of this study, they taught American History II (Reconstruction to the present) to three classes of seniors. Smith enjoys “interacting with students and helping them see the value of studying history,” but would prefer not to have to assign grades to the work they assign. Even though Smith teaches in the same district and state as the other teachers in this study, they feel like they have a great deal of autonomy with regard to the specific content within the course standards. Smith sees themselves as a great communicator and models their instruction on the masterful storytelling history teachers they have had in the past.

Students are provided with additional protections under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Even though they are not my primary participants and collecting survey data may be considered normal educational practice, according to the Belmont Report (Department of Health and Human Services, 1979), this study could be considered research. In addition, the evidence collected from the students could be used punitively by their teachers. Even if
that possibility is small, students may have chosen not to participate in the study or provided false data, so all students and parents were informed of the intent of the study and presented with the opportunity to opt out of providing information. Maintaining the anonymity of the student participants was accomplished using random numbering as identifiers rather than names or assigned numbers. Teachers were provided aggregate data as a composite of all students. King received data grouped by course since they taught more than one. Qualitative data provided by students were edited to remove any identifying remarks.

**Research Methods**

This section provides detailed descriptions of the data sources and the process for collecting, organizing, and analyzing the data. Data collection followed the process depicted in Figure 3.1 and included surveys and interviews as data sources. One survey was used to reveal one aspect of the hidden curriculum based upon the students’ views of the typically assigned tasks. A second survey collected data on the participating teachers’ views on the typically assigned tasks and their core curricular beliefs. Data from these surveys were used to determine the extent to which the student perceptions of learning based upon the assigned tasks align with the teacher’s perceptions. Interviews of the participating teachers resulted in qualitative data used to analyze the impact of exposing the hidden curriculum on veteran teachers.

![Figure 3.1 Data collection process](image)

Figure 3.1 Data collection process
Surveys

**Student Survey.** For cognitive dissonance to occur, the teachers needed to be exposed to a stimulus that caused a contradictory cognition. Simple reflection on their own practices may cause dissonance, but adding specific evidence from another person’s perspective should increase the likelihood (Fointiat, Morisot, & Pakuszewski, 2008), hence the collection of student-provided data. To obtain numerous examples of how teachers’ practices contradict their beliefs so as to further increase the likelihood (Fointiat, Morisot, & Pakuszewski), I opted to survey as many of the teachers’ classes and students as possible rather than only one class.

In Phase 1, students completed the *Student Perceptions of Learning Survey* (SPL Survey) (see Appendix B) to reveal their perceptions of the tasks typically assigned to them and their perception of their teacher’s curricular intent. I created the SPL Survey to fulfill the specific needs of my study. This survey instrument was reviewed by three educators and three high school students to ensure clarity in the directions and prompts. First, I needed to collect student perceptions regarding which learning tasks are most frequently assigned to be able to present to teachers in phase three. I created a list of possible tasks from my own knowledge base. This included tasks such as notetaking from lecture, answering questions from the textbook, and analyzing primary source documents. I consulted various resources (Fisher & Frey, 2010; Hattie, 2012; Knight, 2013; Marzano, et al., 2001) to assist in augmenting my original list. Operating from the provided list, students identified in order, the top five learning activities most frequently used by their teacher and had the option for the students to add learning activities that were not listed.
Second, I needed to collect data on students’ perceptions of learning based upon the learning tasks typically assigned to them. To achieve this goal, I included several open-ended, opinion-style questions on the SPL Survey. While open-ended questions provide an area to be explored, they do not restrict the respondent to a set of prescribed answers, thereby resulting in more individualized responses (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019). The questions are opinion-based because my study is interested in the students’ perceptions of the learning tasks, and that type of question is best suited to obtaining a person’s feelings or beliefs (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I consulted various texts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) for assistance in crafting appropriate questions.

One question asked students to rank what they believe their teacher feels is important regarding the curriculum based upon the tasks typically assigned to them. Options were provided because I was concerned students may have found it difficult to encapsulate intended purpose without some type of guide. There are two prompts that afforded students the opportunity to share their perceptions of why their teacher asks them to complete certain tasks. Finally, there are two prompts in which the students shared what they think are the types of tasks that would be most useful toward learning history or civics as well as the tasks most useful in learning to be a historian or political scientist.

**Teacher Survey.** Participating teachers completed the *Teacher Beliefs and Practices Survey* (TBP Survey) (see Appendix C) in phase two of this study. The TBP Survey is an instrument of my own design, except for a section adopted from Schiro (2013), to help teachers identify their core curricular beliefs and pedagogical practices.
Like the SPL Survey, the majority of the TBP Survey contains open-ended, opinion style questions. I referred to various texts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to assist in creating questions best suited to my needs. This survey instrument was reviewed by three educators to ensure clarity in the directions and prompts.

Part I of the TBP Survey contains some open-ended prompts designed to slowly acclimate teachers to thinking about their core curricular beliefs and pedagogical practices. The open-ended prompts ask participants to reflect upon what they like and do not like about their job as well as their strengths and weaknesses as a teacher. Part I also includes a few prompts (see questions 6 – 8 in Appendix C) which were relevant when analyzing their response to the cognitive dissonance caused by revealing the hidden curriculum. Part II of the TBP Survey mimics the section in the SPL Survey that collects perceptions of the tasks typically assigned to students. I replicated this section to facilitate comparison of teachers’ perceptions with those of their students. I then added two open-ended prompts for teachers to explain their rationale for the selection of certain tasks. This rationale was used in conjunction with data from other sources to compare each teacher’s perceptions of the learning with those of their students.

To help create cognitive dissonance due to differences between beliefs and practices, I needed teachers to reflect upon and identify their core curricular beliefs. As such, Part III of the TBP Survey is adopted in its entirety from Schiro’s (2013) *Curriculum Ideologies Inventory* and required teachers to rank statements according to the extent to which they agree with them. The statements were grouped into categories concerning the teacher’s beliefs regarding the purpose of education, teaching, learning, knowledge, childhood, and evaluation. Next, I created Part IV of the TBP Survey with
four metacognitive prompts designed to have the participants reflect upon the process of completing the survey as a possible motivator for change. It includes a prompt that asked teachers to compare their core curricular beliefs with their pedagogical practices, potentially supplementing any cognitive dissonance caused by comparing their perceptions of learning with those of their students. The section also contains prompts asking teachers to what extent just completing this survey inspired them to improve their practices and/or alter their core curricular and instructional beliefs.

**Think Aloud Interview**

I used a modified think-aloud protocol (Ericsson & Simon, 1998) in phase three to collect data on the teacher’s initial reactions to the SPL Survey and capture their thought processes as they began to analyze the data. The think-aloud protocol is typically used to bring forth, as much as possible, people’s inner speech that occurs as they perform tasks. For Vygotsky (1962), this inner speech is close to thinking in pure meanings. Although think-alouds may not completely reflect a person’s thinking with perfect accuracy, the protocol creates an opportunity to make reasoning more coherent and reflective (Ericsson & Smith, 1998). To maintain some aspects of the original think-aloud protocol I encouraged teachers to keep talking whenever there were more than a few seconds of silence. They were asked to share what they were thinking as they analyzed the data. In Ericsson and Simon’s model (1998), facilitators do not ask participants to respond to prompts such as “why are you doing that,” “why do you think that,” or “how does that make you feel,” whereas for my study, I wanted to know the rationale behind the teachers’ reflections as well as their emotional response, so I modified the protocol (Appendix E) accordingly. Participants’ preliminary reaction assisted me in determining
the extent to which teachers are aware of the messages they transmit through their hidden curriculum as well as the impact that revealing hidden curriculum has on teachers.

**Interview**

During the phase four interview, participants had the opportunity to share their thoughts after they had additional time to reflect upon the data from the SPL Survey as compared to their own core curricular beliefs and practices from the TBP Survey. The interview was semi-structured to include a mix of more and less structured interview questions and discussion topics. A semi-structured interview afforded me the opportunity to be guided by the discussion and alter questions based on the particular situation. It also permitted me to respond to the discussion as it unfolded and probe further into unanticipated areas (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). See Appendix F for interview prompts and topics used to guide the interview.

In addition, this phase contained a dissonance thermometer (Devine, et al., 1999). A dissonance thermometer measures participants’ level of emotional distress caused by recognition of opposing cognitions. It does this by asking them to identify the extent to which they are experiencing certain feelings while reflecting on those conflicting thoughts (Devine, et al., 1999). Just as a temperature thermometer goes up and down in relation to the temperature, the dissonance thermometer changes according to the reported amount of dissonance being experienced. In Simmons, Webb, and Brandon’s (2004) study on the impact of the hypocrisy paradigm on college students’ intentions to quit smoking, those who were identified as having higher dissonance as measured by the dissonance thermometer had higher intentions to quit smoking. Data from the dissonance thermometer can identify whether the treatment causes increased dissonance as well as
whether there is a connection between the level of dissonance and the dissonance-reducing strategy. This interview assisted me in determining the extent to which teachers are aware of the messages they transmit through their hidden curriculum as well as the impact that revealing hidden curriculum has on teachers.

**Description of Procedures**

The process began with seeking approval for the study from the university’s instructional review board, the similar body for the participating school district, and the lead administrator of the school. As noted above, recruitment of potential participants occurred during a monthly department meeting where I shared the consent form (see Appendix D) and a general timeline for the study, which I expected to take approximately two weeks (not including the ten days for parents to preview the SPL Survey) as depicted in Figure 3.2.

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**Day 1**
Brief meeting with all participants and researcher in which participants share their core instructional and curricular beliefs; Teacher survey distributed

**Day 2**
Students complete SPL Survey either in class or online via Google Forms

**Day 4**
Teacher TBP Survey due; Individual meeting with teacher participants to share student data.

**Day 9**
Individual meeting with teacher participants to discuss their reflection of the student provided data

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Figure 3.2 Study Timeline
Teachers were told that within that time span, I would ask their students to complete a 15-20 minute survey during class and ask each of the participating teachers to complete a detailed survey, meet briefly as a group at the beginning of the study, and meet with me twice towards the end of the study. Each of those meetings was expected to take less than an hour. All teacher participants were required to sign the consent form.

**Teacher Presentation of Beliefs**

On the first official day of the study, I met with the participating teachers as a whole group. Each teacher gave an oral presentation of less than three minutes in which they shared their core beliefs about teaching and learning of history and/or civics, depending on the teacher. There was not a required format for the teacher declaration. The presentations were audio recorded to be used as a reference point later rather than to be used as data for this study. I included this task because research has shown that a public display of one’s beliefs increases the chance of cognitive dissonance. It would also assist me in acquiring a better understanding of the teachers’ beliefs, which is important to me as an instructional coach. In Fointait’s (2008) study, participants who composed position papers as part of a group were more prone to adjust their future behaviors than those who worked alone. While meeting as a group, teachers were not asked to share instances in which they did not adhere to their own beliefs. Fried (1998) demonstrated that those who made transgressions public were less likely to adjust their future behaviors.

**Phase 1: Collection of Student Data**

The district’s school board has a policy in which any surveys conducted by outside sources for research purposes must be provided to the parents at least ten days in
advance. Teachers placed copies of the parent consent letter (Appendix G), an introduction video, and a preview copy of the student survey via Google Forms within their class materials on their learning management system (Canvas). The teachers also emailed the same information to the students’ parent based upon the emails contained in the state’s student information system (PowerSchool). Within the preview copy of the student survey is a section where the parent identifies themselves, their student, and selects whether their child has permission to complete the SPL Survey or not.

Due to COVID-19, the school district implemented a blended learning schedule in which each student attends school only one day per week, with an additional option of full, online learning. The initial plan was to survey all students in the classroom setting without the teacher present. However, since only approximately one-half of the students were to be in class on the day of the survey, I decided to allow the students who were not scheduled to attend on the day of the SPL Survey to complete the survey at home rather than extend the process over consecutive days. I created and supplied a how-to video for students and maintained a helpdesk through Microsoft Teams in case any students had questions or issues with the process.

The SPL Survey was administered via a Google Form attached to my personal Google account. All high school students are issued Chromebooks by the school district, but I had a few extra computers available for students who did not have one with them on the day I administered the survey. Collecting data electronically helped streamline the data analysis process, particularly the qualitative data collected via the form, since the data did not have to be transcribed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The students present on the selected date completed the survey during regular class time. Others completed it on
the same day, but at a time of their choosing. The students were told that their answers would be anonymous. The Google Form did collect student names so I could verify parental permission, but I removed this information before sharing the data with the teacher. Each student was randomly assigned a four-digit code. The first digit (from one to three) corresponds to the teacher. The second digit (from one to four) represents the class period. The third and fourth digits are sequential and randomly given to each student. To ensure anonymity, I did not keep any record associating each specific student with their code number. Regardless, all student-provided data will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

The teacher participant was not present in the room during this phase of data collection to reduce the chance of an overt or latent influence on the students’ answers. In addition, this also minimized the threat of the teachers’ ability to associate responses to a particular class or student. When completing the SPL Survey, the students were told to base their answers on their own perceptions founded upon their classroom experiences rather than what the teacher has said on past occasions. This was done to obtain a more accurate picture of the hidden curriculum since it is based upon underlying actions instead of explicit dialogue. Upon completion of the student survey, I thanked students for their honest participation.

**Phase 2: Collection of Participant Data**

Teacher participants began completing the TBP Survey on the day I collected student perception data. Having the teachers complete the TBP Survey after the students completed the SPL Survey minimized the chance that the content of the survey would alter the tasks assigned by the teacher. I administered the survey through Google Forms.
attached to my personal Google account. As with the student survey, this increased the efficiency and accuracy of data analysis. The participants completed the survey at a time and place convenient for them within two days. I was not present while the participants completed the survey to minimize the impact that my presence may have. The survey automatically collected the participant’s name so I could associate data from the survey with each participant; however, I used pseudonyms when reporting the teacher data to protect each participant’s identity. I maintained all data in a password-protected file and deleted it from my Google account upon completion of the study.

Participants completed the survey in segments to limit the impact of later prompts concerning curricular ideologies on the earlier section on pedagogical practices. This front-loaded work should have increased the likelihood and/or strength of cognitive dissonance when they were presented with the contradictory evidence from phase two. Various hypocrisy paradigm studies have included a similar step by having participants identify their core beliefs before reflecting on past transgressions (Chiou & Wan, 2007; Dickerson, Thibodeau, Aronson, & Miller, 1992; Hing, Li, and Zanna, 2002; Simmons, Webb, and Brandon, 2004; Stone, Aronson, Crain, Winslow, & Fried, 1994; Vinski & Tryon, 2009; Yousaf and Gobet, 2013).

At this point, I reviewed the data to determine whether there was enough contradiction between the student data as depicted in the SPL Survey and the participant beliefs as depicted in the TBP Survey. I was prepared to drop a participant from the study if the participant’s reflections aligned with the students’ reflections. Should that have occurred, I would have still shared the data from the SPL Survey with those participants and recruited additional participants if necessary.
Phase 3: Presentation of Student Data to Participants

Two days after students completed their survey, I presented data from the SPL Survey to the participants. Teachers had the option to meet with me in person or virtually via Microsoft Teams. While I shared the data electronically with all participants, I also provided hard copies for the participants who met with me in person. Teachers received aggregate student data as well as data separated by course where appropriate. The numerical data related to the frequency of specific instructional activities were presented in the form of a table that identified the frequency with which the reporting students selected each task listed on the SPL Survey at each level of frequency. These tables included a weighted element based upon the individual student rankings to better relay the amount of time dedicated to each task according to the students’ perceptions. Students were able to enter in responses that were not already identified. In those cases, additional rows were added at the bottom of the table. For each student’s rankings, their top choice was counted five times, their second choice counted four times, etc. For the presentation of the qualitative data, each prompt from the SPL Survey was followed by the student responses as complete as possible. Any wording that could identify the author or class period was removed or edited to help protect student anonymity. These were arranged in the order that the entries were received. A blank line was inserted between each entry.

When the data from the SPL Survey were presented, I did not provide any direction in terms of how to analyze or evaluate the data, however, I answered any general questions the participant had. The participants followed the think-aloud protocol described by Ericsson and Simon (1998) in which they are asked to share their thought
processes as they analyze the data, although it was slightly modified. Instead of simply asking the participants to keep talking as they reviewed the data, I also frequently asked them to explain their thinking or share their emotional response to various student responses.

In-person encounters were audio recorded using my personal device to capture all verbal details for later analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Encounters conducted virtually were recorded using the tools embedded within Microsoft Teams. I also took handwritten field notes in a log while conducting the interview. Field notes help to record participants’ reactions that would not be picked up through audio recording (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A transcription of the audio recording as well as a copy of the field notes were made available to the participant at the conclusion of the study.

Confidentiality is a key responsibility of a researcher. Protecting information obtained from study participants is part of this commitment and is based on the participants’ right to privacy and control over their information. As such, “a rigorous procedure should be put in place to protect any personal information that is used for research purposes” (Lin, 2009, p. 134). Adequately securing confidentiality and anonymity, as well as responsibly protecting and discarding data, protects participants from their information being misappropriated (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). All audio data were double password protected, both through my device and through the voice recording application. I downloaded and stored the audio files in my personal Google Drive account, which was password-protected as well. Transcriptions of the audio recordings were done via a voice recording application, verified by me, and stored as a password-protected Word file on my personal computer. Copies of all data sets were
stored on a password-protected flash drive stored in a locked and fireproof case in my home. I will erase or destroy all data within two years upon completion of the study.

**Phase 4: Final Participant Interview**

Approximately one week after Phase 3, I met individually with each participant and used a semi-structured interview (see Appendix F) to gain additional insight into their thought process and emotional response after they had time to further process the data. Topics included how the participants interpreted the students’ data, the impact they felt the data will have on their pedagogical practices or core curricular beliefs, and the influence of the recognition of discrepancies on their future pedagogical practices.

These interviews were audio recorded with accompanying field notes. As with the interview in phase three, all audio data were double password-protected, both through my device and through the voice recording application. Likewise, teachers were afforded the opportunity to meet virtually instead. Recording and storing of the transcription followed a similar format as described above and I will erase or destroy all data within two years upon completion of the study.

As shown in the Vinski and Tryon study (2009) of the impact of the hypocrisy paradigm on high school students’ cheating attitudes and behaviors, time and mental effort could influence the amount of dissonance. This is the reason there was an extended time of one week between the initial dissonance-causing event (presentation of the student data) and the final participant interview. I provided participants with copies of their answers to the TBP Survey to refresh their memories as to their responses and influence the amount of cognitive dissonance experienced. In addition, I increased the mental effort on the part of the participants by providing them with a reflection guide.
I met with each participant individually rather than as a group due to the possible impact of making transgressions public. In his study, Fried (1998) showed that those who were publicly identified with their transgressions were less likely to alter their behaviors than those who remained anonymous.

**Conclusion of Study**

At the conclusion of the study, I thanked teachers for their participation, informed of the full intent of the study and provided a copy of the *Debriefing Statement* (Appendix A). I offered to provide them with any support or guidance they might need as they continue to reflect upon the data revealed to them in the study.

**Data Analysis**

Through analysis of my qualitative data, I sought to compare the teacher’s perceptions of learning with those of their students, determine the extent to which teachers are aware of the messages they transmit through their hidden curriculum, and examine the impact of revealing the hidden curriculum upon the teachers. Qualitative data analysis is inductive and comparative (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The intent of qualitative data analysis is to make sense out of text and image data, which involves a process of pulling apart the data and putting it back together (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). While researchers know the problems they are trying to solve, they cannot always control the direction of the qualitative data. As such, there must be ongoing and iterative analysis of data as it is collected, otherwise the data can be unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

I analyzed data using the constant comparative method, which is highly inductive (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As I collected and transcribed each data set, I used the open
coding method. I began by identifying bits of data I believed was an answer, or partial answer, to each research question. From these bits of data, I created categories. As I moved from one data set to another, I compared categories and created a master list. Following the advice of Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the categories were responsive to the purpose of the research, exhaustive, mutually exclusive, sensitizing, and conceptually congruent. Finally, I analyzed the interrelationships among the categories to reveal the explanation behind the data to better understand teachers’ reactions to the hidden curriculum.

Reflecting with Participants

Creswell and Creswell (2018) note it is important to avoid exploiting the participants. In other words, collecting data from the participants then abandoning them is disrespectful. After the data were analyzed, the findings were shared with the participants at the first available time of their convenience to give them time to respond to the data and ask questions. I shared how the creation of such an instrument mimics the identify phase of the Jim Knight coaching cycle in which the teacher gains a clearer picture of the current reality of the classroom (Knight, 2018). The process conducted through this study replicates portions of that strategy but provides a more in-depth analysis of the hidden curriculum. I offered to schedule follow-up meetings with those individuals to provide an opportunity to discuss the findings in greater detail or respond to questions of a more personal nature.

Plan for Devising an Action Plan

Action research does not end with the publication of the first set of findings. Since this is an action research study, it is by definition meant to be constructivist,
situational, practical, systematic, and cyclical (Efron & Ravid, 2013). I asked participating teachers to provide feedback about the instrument and the process as implemented in the study. This feedback, in addition to the data accumulated by the study, will be used to improve the instrument for the next time I use it and as I prepare to share it with teachers or instructional leaders who may wish to use it. I shared the current instrument with the participants, as well as promised to share any modified ones, so that they may use it in the future as they continue in their careers.

**Chapter Summary**

This study utilized action research, qualitative methodology, and a case study format to understand the impact of revealing the hidden curriculum on a teacher’s desire to improve their practices. As action research, it addressed a local problem of practice for me as a teacher-leader. Qualitative methodology provided thick description as I attempted to understand the how and the why behind the data. Using a case study structure allowed me to probe deeper into a few key instances rather than a larger sampling. The participants were veteran high school social studies teachers from my school. They were recruited due to my understanding of the social studies curriculum as well as my experiences with trying to motivate veteran teachers to improve their practices. I used multi-part surveys, primarily with open-ended prompts, a modified think-aloud protocol, and a semi-structured interview to collect data. I used one survey to collect student perspectives on the learning in the classroom. Next, I used another survey for teachers to report and reflect upon their core curricular beliefs and pedagogical practices. I presented the student-provided data and used a think-aloud protocol to collect teachers’ initial reactions. Finally, I interviewed teachers after they had a week to further
analyze and reflect upon the student-provided data. A constant comparative method was used to analyze the data. A presentation and discussion of the data is in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

In working with teachers as an instructional coach, I am regularly searching for strategies to motivate teachers, especially veteran teachers, to want to improve their practices. As such, the purpose of my research is to develop an instrument to motivate experienced social studies teachers to improve their practices and/or core curricular and instructional beliefs. To those ends, my goal was to create a significant amount of cognitive dissonance as a trigger event that would inspire teachers to be more reflective. The central questions guiding my research are:

1. To what extent do student perceptions of learning based upon the assigned tasks align with the teacher’s perceptions?
2. To what extent are teachers aware of the messages they transmit through their hidden curriculum?
3. How does the revealing of student perceptions of learning impact teachers?

Three veteran social studies teachers at a high school near a major southern city participated in the study. Two of the teachers, Smith and Hall, each have over twenty years of experience. Smith teaches senior-level, honors American History II. Hall teaches three general-level World History courses to freshmen. King, with only eight years of experience, teaches an honors-level Holocaust class of predominantly upper classmen and two Civics and Economics courses to sophomores. Due to COVID-19, the school district had offered families two models for learning. Students had the option to
receive instruction entirely virtually, but none of those students were asked to participate in this study. Most students at the school opted for a blended model in which they attended classes one day each week, with the day dependent on their last name, and virtual instruction the other days. During the week I launched my study, the schedule was modified so that blended-learning students were attending in-person classes two days each week.

This action research study used various qualitative instruments including a student survey to attempt to procure the students’ views of their teacher’s perspectives on learning based solely on the hidden curriculum related to the tasks the teacher regularly assigns. The teachers completed their own survey in which they shared their views on the tasks they assign as well as reflected on their core curricular and pedagogical beliefs and practices. Next, the participant teachers participated in a modified think-aloud as they reviewed the student-provided data for the first time. Finally, after having approximately one week to further review and reflect on the student data, each teacher was interviewed to share their final thoughts about the student data as well as their views on the impact of the entire process in terms of motivating them to alter their core curricular or pedagogical beliefs and/or practices.

The study was built upon three theoretical frameworks – hidden curriculum, cognitive dissonance, and transformative learning. Jerald (2006) defines hidden curriculum as an implicit curriculum that expresses and represents attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors. These are conveyed or communicated through words and actions without conscious intent. In my study, I attempted to reveal the hidden curriculum regarding the students’ perspectives of the tasks typically assigned to them by their teacher. Cognitive
dissonance is the unpleasant psychological tension that occurs when an individual has two inconsistent cognitions (Festinger, 1957). This typically transpires when new knowledge or information is incongruent with existing knowledge. This dissonance motivates psychological work on behalf of the individual to reduce the inconsistency. In this study, I attempted to create a dissonance by revealing the students’ perspectives of the tasks typically assigned to them when compared to the teacher’s perspective. Whereas cognitive dissonance, particularly the hypocrisy paradigm version of it, is aimed at altering behaviors, transformative learning is concerned with altering one’s core beliefs (Mezirow, 1991). This involves a series of steps beginning with a disorienting dilemma, which is similar to the concept of cognitive dissonance. This study only focuses on the disorienting dilemma rather than the other ten steps of transformative learning.

This chapter begins with a summary of the findings of the study organized by each research question and divided according to each teacher. There is a short discussion of the data at the end of each teacher section as well as an overall discussion of the teacher data at the conclusion of the section for each individual research question. Next, there is a discussion of the general findings and results that pulls together all of the data and interpretations and explains how the results address the research questions.

**Findings of the Study**

The findings of the study will be divided according to each individual research question. Within each research question, results will be subdivided for each teacher participant individually. Where applicable, King’s data is separated by course since their Holocaust course is more history-based and their Civics and Economics class is more political science-based. Rather than further subdividing the results according to the
individual data sources, I decided to keep like items together, such as the discussion of the tasks most useful to learning history, to make it easier to identify similarities, differences, and trends.

**Research Question 1**

*To what extent do student perceptions of learning based upon the assigned tasks align with the teacher’s perceptions?* This question focuses on the perceptions of the assigned tasks rather than simply a comparison of what the teacher claims to assign versus what the students perceive. As a result, much greater emphasis is placed upon the appropriate, open-ended responses in the SPL Survey and TBP Survey as well as the think-aloud protocol and final teacher interview, than any quantitative comparison of the reported frequency of assigned tasks made by students and teachers. Discussion of each segment of data from the SPL Survey will be immediately followed by associated data from the TBP Survey and/or the think-aloud protocol. Data will be presented regarding the students’ and teacher’s view of the commonly assigned tasks, the teacher’s rationale for selecting those tasks, the general feelings regarding the tasks assigned, the message that the teacher is sending with regards to what’s important, the tasks helpful for learning history, and the tasks helpful for learning how to be a historian.

**Hall.** Hall had twenty-five ninth grade, world history students complete the SPL Survey. Eighteen of the students completed the survey in class while the other seven completed it at home.

**Most Frequently Assigned Tasks.** The first part of the survey asked student to identify what they felt were the most frequently used learning tasks. To add emphasis to the items that students selected as most common, I weighted the responses according to
how many students selected each task first, second, third, fourth, and fifth most frequent. The formula I used is located in Figure 4.1.

$$
((\text{Percentage of students who selected this task 1}\text{st most}) \times 5) + (\text{Percentage of students who selected this task 2}\text{nd most}) \times 4) + (\text{Percentage of students who selected this task 3}\text{rd most}) \times 3) + (\text{Percentage of students who selected this task 4}\text{th most}) \times 2) + (\text{Percentage of students who selected this task 5}\text{th most}) \times 1)) \times 20
$$

Figure 4.1 Formula for Weighting Commonly Assigned Tasks

Hall’s students identified the following as the top five most frequently used learning tasks: watching a video and taking notes, read a secondary source and write answers to questions, use an online instructional program for learning, answer document-based questions using several sources, and listen to the teacher lecture and take notes. The top ten tasks selected by Hall’s students are listed in Table 4.1. There is a significant difference in the overall score between the top task and the next four tasks. In their associated responses in the TBP Survey, Hall was almost in complete agreement with those choices, although they did not specifically identify listen to the teacher lecture and take notes, among their top five, they did identify using PowerPoints, actually Google Slide presentations, which are their primary vehicle for lecturing.

Hall’s rationale for selecting the various learning tasks, as they explained in the TBP Survey, is that using lecture and PowerPoints allows them to “present a lot of information to students at one time,” in order to make it “easier to understand than reading a textbook or long passage.” It allows them to insert regular comprehension checks, to encourage critical thinking, as well as to incorporate appropriate images to
assist more visual learners. Meanwhile, their reasons for not using other tasks include that some are too challenging to use during remote learning, such as role-playing, simulations, or drawing representations of the content being learned. Hall admits that “asking students to create a product that uses the information they need to learn,” or “using concept maps or graphic organizers to help them see the big picture and the smaller details” are very useful to learning the content. These tasks, however, were not on Hall’s list of frequently used tasks.

Table 4.1 Student Reported Most Assigned Tasks - Hall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Frequency →</th>
<th>1st Most</th>
<th>2nd Most</th>
<th>3rd Most</th>
<th>4th Most</th>
<th>5th Most</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watch a video and take notes or write answers to questions</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>53.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read a secondary source and write answers to questions</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>43.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use an online instructional program for learning</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>40.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer a document-based question using several sources</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>37.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to the teacher lecture and take notes</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>36.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch a video</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>24.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher demonstrates/models how to complete a task</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: Google Docs or Google Slide questions</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read and analyze a map</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are given a task or problem and asked to figure it out on their own</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reflections on the Frequently Assigned Tasks.** As part of the SPL Survey, students were asked to reflect upon the types of tasks their teacher assigns or does not assign, and rate what they feel their teacher thinks is important (Figure 4.2). Most of
Hall’s students (n = 13 of 25) reported tasks that focus on grappling with understanding complex parts of the course content as being most important to Hall. Tasks that focus on learning and memorizing specific course content was selected most important by eight students and second most important by nine students. Overall, tasks that focus on developing the skills of a historian slightly surpassed tasks that focus on allowing students the freedom to learn about topics of their own choosing, although they were both rated well below the other two categories.

In their think-aloud review of the student responses, Hall stated that they are definitely “trying to help them understand, if I think it's…more complex material.” They also admitted “there is a good bit of it that focuses on learning and memorizing.” They acknowledged that, other than doing a little bit of map skills, they do not assign many tasks associated with developing the skills of a historian, not even research and writing. Concerning giving students choice of what they learn, Hall said, “we don't have much of that at all, so they're exactly right. I'm driving them through my topics and telling them this is what we need to learn.”

In the SPL Survey, students responded to the open-ended prompt, “Based entirely upon the tasks your teacher typically assigns or does not assign, what message do you feel your teacher is sending regarding what is important?” As I read their responses, I coded and sorted the student results into categories. If a student’s response included statements that fit into more than one category, such as “she wants us to memorize the subject and understand it,” it was counted as memorization and understanding. Responses that were off-topic, incomplete, or irrelevant, such as “If the assignments are
enough to help you learn about the topic,” were categorized as *miscellaneous*. The list of categories and the number of student responses for each category are located in Table 4.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Importance</th>
<th>Most</th>
<th>2nd Most</th>
<th>3rd Most</th>
<th>Least</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Student Responses</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Student Responses</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Student Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Student Responses</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Tasks that focus on learning and memorizing specific course content
- Tasks that focus on grappling with and understanding complex parts of the course content
- Tasks that focus on developing the skills of a historian / political scientist
- Tasks that focus on allowing students the freedom to learn about topics of their own choosing

Figure 4.2 Reflection on Most Commonly Assigned Tasks – Hall

Thirteen of the twenty-six comments identified or alluded to the memorization of factual or basic content. This included comments like “memorizing important events in different time periods,” and “I feel like my teacher wants me to really memorize the material more than anything.” Four students provided remarks suggesting that Hall was emphasizing higher-level understanding of the content. For example, one student commented that the questions that Hall asks required the student to do “both easy thinking and complex thinking.” Two students made statements suggesting this might be common. For instance, “The teacher thinks it's important to know the basics of what you're learning before you go more in depth or learn on your own.” In addition, two students mentioned that learning at their own pace would be helpful. Also embedded
within the student responses, four students indicated that doing “things” to learn the content as quickly and easily as possible also seemed important to Hall. One student suggested that “I think they are trying to make our virtual and in school experience as fun as possible.”

Table 4.2 Student Perspective on Message Teacher is Sending - Hall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Student Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memorization</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill Development</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment/Engagement</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Development</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hall recognized the students’ repeated views that they emphasized memorization of content. In their think-aloud, they said, “They are hitting on the idea that they need to memorize it.” In response to the fact that few students alluded to the importance of understanding the content in depth, Hall stated that the students “need to memorize the content first before they can understand it, although maybe not always.” Hall agreed to that sentiment that students need to learn at their own pace. However, other than saying this is definitely a part of their blended teaching, they did not identify any ways that they incorporate that in their teaching.

**Tasks Most Useful for Learning History and Being a Historian.** In the SPL Survey, students responded to an open-ended question that asked them to identify the types of tasks they felt would be most useful for learning history and for learning how to be a historian. As I read the student responses, I coded and placed them into categories. The categories and frequency of their responses is in Table 4.3. According to their
responses to the open-ended question, most of Hall’s students reported that watching videos, taking notes from PowerPoints, and answering questions from readings would be most beneficial. Other tasks mentioned included completing maps and doing group work. Interestingly, one student believes the students need more teaching to “make sure we actually know the information and not just memorize what's in front of us.”

Table 4.3 Best Types of Tasks - Hall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Best for Learning History</th>
<th>Best for Learning How to be a Historian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watching videos</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading about the topic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures (with notetaking)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering questions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working at our own pace</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze primary sources</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing research</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying historians</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with maps</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous or off-topic responses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
as “using concept maps or graphic organizers to help them see the big picture and the smaller details” would be useful to learning history.

Hall and their students also identified which types of tasks would be most helpful for learning to be a historian (Table 4.3). Three students mentioned tasks like taking notes and watching videos. However, 58% of those who provided valid responses recognized that being a historian requires a different set of tasks. These included doing research and analyzing primary sources. Specific student responses in this area included “learning how to analyze complex pieces of history,” “reading and analyzing primary sources,” and “how to ask questions and look up information.” In reviewing the student answers, Hall recognized that while the students were on track with some of their responses, they were off-track with others. For Hall, to learn how to be a historian means “teaching students to ask questions, and how to read and comprehend what they read, how to support their ideas with facts, and how to look at information from different points of view.” However, they stated, “I really don't think that we're training them to be historians.” This hints at her underlying beliefs about the teaching of social studies.

Discussion of Hall’s Data. While there are areas where Hall and their students seemed to agree, there are several others where their responses were contradictory, indicating that Hall and their students have different perceptions of the assigned tasks. Hall was in reasonable agreement with their students’ ranking of the most common tasks, particularly lecturing as the top task because it allows them to easily convey a sizable amount of content in a short amount of time. In their think-aloud, which was conducted as they initially reviewed the students’ responses to the SPL Survey, Hall was surprised the students put reading from a secondary source and answering questions as the most
common learning task. They were expecting *listening to the teacher lecture*, to be much higher. Otherwise, they admit the students “know what we’ve been doing.” Hall admitted that numerous other tasks, such as using concept maps and graphic organizers would be highly useful to learning the content, but those types of tasks were not identified by either Hall or their students as those frequently used. In their response to the prompt about the best types of activities to learn about history, there was no specific mention in Hall’s response about videos, lectures, notes, or answer questions from a reading, which are common practices in their classroom according to Hall and their students. Although, they did say that “anything you use that is repetitive because you have to keep reviewing and using the information to remember it.”

While their students appear to indicate that tasks that focus on deeper understandings and grappling with course content are most important to Hall, other data, including the students’ open-ended responses and Hall’s own testimony, suggest otherwise. For example, the students’ categorized most of the tasks assigned to them as focusing on memorization (Table 4.2). Hall also repeatedly reiterated the importance of memorization, primarily due to the state-mandated curriculum, even though the required end-of-course test has been eliminated. They claimed, “it [state testing] drives your instruction for such a long time it kind of becomes who you are.” It is worth noting that the entire first strand of the state’s world history standards focuses on historical thinking skills, yet it appears Hall may have overlooked them.

Hall admitted to not assigning many tasks associated with developing the skills of a historian, not even research and writing. This makes it even more surprising that 28% students said they thought it was second-most important to Hall and 24% said it was
third-most important. Hall does not seem concerned with providing instruction in social studies skills as evident by their comments and the responses made by their students in response to the prompt concerning types of tasks most useful for learning how to be a historian. Few students identified tasks that used regularly by Hall. Hall’s statement “I really don’t think that we’re training them to be historians,” suggests that, like their students, they may not understand the purpose of teaching students to be historians.

While seeming to recognize the value of a wide variety of learning tasks to either learn history or learn how to be a historian, Hall does not use these strategies as a regular part of their instruction. They claimed that operating in a distance-learning environment hampers their abilities to use them. They also indicated that “anything you use that is repetitive because you have to keep reviewing and using the information to remember it,” is valuable for learning history. In summary, Hall’s students seem to think that they want them to be able to understand more complex parts of the curriculum. However, the students offered a reasonable amount of specific evidence that the message conveyed is that learning history centers heavily on the memorization of facts. Hall agrees with that sentiment despite the students’ seemingly wanting more.

**King - Holocaust.** Overall, twenty of King’s twenty-three hybrid Holocaust students completed the SPL Survey. Twelve of them completed the survey in person, facilitated by me. The other eleven completed the survey online.

**Most Frequently Assigned Tasks.** Read a secondary source and write answers to questions was identified by 45% of the respondents as the most frequently assigned task, easily placing it at the top of the student-determined list. It was followed by listen to the teacher lecture and take notes, watch a video and take notes or write answers to
questions, answer a document-based question using several sources, and participate in whole-group discussions. See Table 4.2 for a listing of the overall top ten tasks based upon student scoring. King’s selection of the most frequently used tasks did not depart much from the student list other than a reordering of some of the types of tasks and the selection of read and analyze a primary source rather than answer a document-based question using several sources.

Table 4.4 Student Reported Most Assigned Tasks – King, Holocaust

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Frequency →</th>
<th>1st Most</th>
<th>2nd Most</th>
<th>3rd Most</th>
<th>4th Most</th>
<th>5th Most</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read a secondary source and write answers to questions</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>64.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to the teacher lecture and take notes</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>49.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch a video (not of your teacher) and take notes or write answers to questions</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>39.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer a document-based question using several sources</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>29.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in whole group discussions</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>28.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read a secondary source (i.e. textbook) and take notes</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze and interpret an image or political cartoon</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read and analyze a primary source</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch a video (not of your teacher)</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>13.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are given a task or problem and asked to figure it out on their own</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When initially reviewing the student data in their think-aloud, King said:

That's not surprising at all. I think I did rank that really high on myself. Just because I have to like, what is the best way to get them to do this information
besides giving them a PowerPoint to read through and take notes on it, you know, I'm giving them a secondary, you know a chapter reading in a book, a chapter reading or, you know, something that would allow them to then respond and, I've had a buffer with the kids that again, traditionally we would have had a classroom discussion based off of what they were seeing and reading, not having them write down the answers, but that's unfortunately the only way I get data.

This excerpt also reflects King’s repeated statements regarding their need to alter their instruction based upon the current blended learning model in place in the school district. They were encouraged “actually with the whole group discussion that at least they see that even in remote setting, we can have some discussions.” King claims that having these large discussions are vital to this particular class as they discuss topics such as “Was Hitler born evil?”

In the TBP Survey, King stated that their rationale for the selection of the most assigned tasks was based heavily on “defaulting to simpler assignments for ease of grading and to encourage student responses.” Distance-learning has increased the responsibility for learning on their students and they do not believe the students are responding well to that situation. Since they are not able to work directly with students every day, King says that they are forced to create atypical types of assignments to try to encourage students to complete the work. They stated that without the students completing their assigned tasks, their knowledge of their progress would be severely limited. They also claimed that the limited participation of their students in the distance-learning environment has reduced the interactive and collaborative learning tasks that they would typically assign.
Reflections on the Frequently Assigned Tasks. In their reporting of what they feel is their teacher’s general purpose behind the tasks they assign, 45% of students selected *tasks that focus on grappling with and understanding the complex portion of the course content* as most important to King. This was followed by *tasks that focus on learning and memorizing specific course content* at 25%. Overwhelmingly, their students selected the memorization of specific content as second-most important (60%). The development of skills ranked third overall with giving the students the freedom to learn about topics of their own choosing as least important. See Figure 4.3 for the complete results.

![Figure 4.3 Reflection on Most Commonly Assigned Tasks – King, Holocaust](image)

- Tasks that focus on learning and memorizing specific course content
- Tasks that focus on grappling with and understanding complex parts of the course content
- Tasks that focus on developing the skills of a historian/political scientist
- Tasks that focus on allowing students the freedom to learn about topics of their own choosing

Figure 4.3 Reflection on Most Commonly Assigned Tasks – King, Holocaust

In their think-aloud, King was encouraged by the student-reported data, but was expecting *grappling with and understanding complex part of the course content* to be
even more dominant in the *most important* category. They said every class meeting begins with a challenging journal entry that asks students to reflect on their current understandings. King was not surprised that the student choice option was rated very low because while they understand the importance of it, in their opinion the blended learning environment is not conducive to that type of learning.

When responding to the prompt on the SPL Survey concerning the message that students believe their teacher is sending regarding what is important, only one student specifically used the word *memorize* and only one referenced passing the class or the exam. Instead, the most common response (55%) involved a statement of the importance of learning and understanding the course content. For example, “I feel she's [sic] wants us to understand history and the reason behind events more than anything.” Three students either specifically mentioned or alluded to the incorporation of big ideas. One student remarked, “My teacher wants the students in our Remember the Holocaust class to grasp the idea of political influence.” Three students also said it was important to learn about the Holocaust so that it is not repeated, which was categorized as *application*. See Table 4.5 for the categorization and frequency of all student responses.

King was delighted with the student responses particularly that “it’s more important to actually learn during class time [rather than busy work].” This is especially true, according to King, since “in remote learning that's the number one complaint. When I check in with students across the board, not just my class, but how are you? They say I feel it's just constant busy work.” They were shocked that any student mentioned memorization since they allow students to use their notes on assessments.
They were “pleased with that they see just the importance of this issue of hatred and even making it applicable to today's society.”

Table 4.5 Student Perspective on Message Teacher is Sending – King, Holocaust

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Student Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memorization</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill Development</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment/Engagement</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Development</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tasks Most Useful for Learning History and Being a Historian.** When asked which tasks would be most useful for learning history, King’s students top choice was watching videos \((n = 9)\), claiming, “I personally like watching videos I believe that they help me understand and give me a visual of what is happening.” The next most common response \((n = 5)\) involved reading about a topic (see Table 4.6 for full categorization of responses). King provided their own list of tasks that would be useful to learning about history:

Whole group and small group discussions – Critically thinking through the event or time period, collaborative projects that are based in research and creativity, student choice of research to further peak interest, map reading and analysis, primary source close reading, station work to examine artifacts, primary sources, photo graphs, etc., presentation of current and controversial subjects in a controlled and safe environment, establishment of how to properly have a discussion of opposing sides.
Table 4.6 Best Types of Tasks – King, Holocaust

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Best for Learning History</th>
<th>Best for Learning How to be a Historian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watching videos</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading about the topic</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures (with notetaking)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering questions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working at our own pace</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative work</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze primary sources</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing research</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying historians</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with maps</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous or off-topic responses</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

King was pleased with the one student who indicated classroom discussion was important but wondered why more did not identify that task. They were surprised that watching videos was the task with the most responses. Their rationale for that phenomenon was that the students were just reporting what they typically experienced either in their class or other previous history classes because “That's how education is…Here's a reading. Respond to it. Watch this quick video clip. Think through it.”

*Analyzing primary sources* was the top response (*n* = 6) of King’s students to the prompt asking for the types of tasks best suited to learning how to be a historian. One student said this was because “This way, whoever is reading them can get knowledge straight from what they are researching.” Three still clung to watching videos and two to reading about the topic as viable tasks, especially if the video was not of their teacher. Six students entered answers that I categorized as miscellaneous, mostly because they showed a complete lack of understanding what the prompt was asking or were
incomplete responses such as “governent [sic],” “study,” and “questions.” An intriguing response from one student was

I am not really sure. I think that [King] is doing pretty good with the historical side of it because we are learning a lot of history, but I am not learning how to be an actual historian. I could tell you a lot about the history of the Holocaust (before, during, after, Jewish history, etc...) but I don't necessarily have the skills of a historian.

King - Civics. The student response rate in King’s Civics and Economics course was only 17 out of 46. All but one of those was completed by a student who was present in class the day the survey was administered.

Most Frequently Assigned Tasks. Reading a secondary source and write answers to questions, with an overall rating of 54.12 and listen to the teacher lecture and take notes at 48.24 were the top two responses. Answering a document-based question and participate in whole group discussions were also highly reported by the students. There was a wide spread of tasks, especially those ranked four through eleven. A few outliers, such as teacher demonstrates/models how to complete a task and watch a video (not of your teacher) were ranked most important by one student each. The top eleven responses from King’s civics students appear in Table 4.7.

King did not separate their answers in the TBP Survey according to the class they were teaching. They said that other than maybe more whole-class discussion, claiming that they do not alter their teaching style much for the civics class. Their responses were similar to the students’, although they gave more weight to watch a video (not of your teacher) and take notes or write answers to questions as well as read and analyze a
primary source. In their think-aloud, King was not surprised by most of the student responses, except the high ranking of two primary source-based tasks as well as the teacher demonstrates/models a task. Since they get few students joining their class for live streaming of the lessons, King claimed they have had to resort to more independent work. This includes “read and respond” or “watch and respond” types of tasks. Had this been a traditional school year, they claim there would have been a greater variety in the student responses to include more collaborative and creative work.

Table 4.7 Most Frequently Assigned Tasks – King, Civics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Frequency →</th>
<th>1st Most</th>
<th>2nd Most</th>
<th>3rd Most</th>
<th>4th Most</th>
<th>5th Most</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read a secondary source and write answers to questions</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>54.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to the teacher lecture and take notes</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>48.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer a document-based question using several sources</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>35.29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read a secondary source (i.e. textbook) and take notes</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>28.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in whole group discussions</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>21.18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use an online instructional program for learning</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read and analyze a primary source</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>16.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch a video (not of your teacher) and take notes or write answers to questions</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>15.29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher demonstrates/models how to complete a task</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>12.94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are given a task or problem and asked to figure it out on their own</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>10.59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch a video (not of your teacher)</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>9.41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Reflections on the Frequently Assigned Tasks.** When reflecting upon the most commonly assigned tasks (see Figure 4.4), 53% of King’s Civic and Economics students felt *tasks that focus on grappling with and understanding complex parts of course content* were most important to King. *Tasks that focus on learning and memorization of course content* were rated second-most important. *Tasks that focus on developing skills*, while only garnering two votes for most important, were able to outpace all other types of tasks in the second and third-most important categorizations. King was encouraged that the students thought they viewed “tasks that make them think through complex issues and parts of the content is actually…most important,” and that the memorization category was relatively equally spread out among the four classifications.

![Figure 4.4 Reflection on Most Commonly Assigned Tasks – King, Civics](image-url)

- Tasks that focus on learning and memorizing specific course content
- Tasks that focus on grappling with and understanding complex parts of the course content
- Tasks that focus on developing the skills of a historian / political scientist
- Tasks that focus on allowing students the freedom to learn about topics of their own choosing
When responding to the prompt in the SPL Survey about what message they feel their teacher is sending regarding what is important about the class based on the tasks they assign, almost half of the students \((n = 8)\) made comments that can be generalized as memorization or basic level knowledge of the content (Table 4.7). For example, one student remarked that it is important to King “that we have basic knowledge of our political history.” Two students referenced the workload rather than the underlying message being sent. Only five students provided responses that can be classified as building a deeper understanding of the government, such as “The assignments they gives they wants us to learn as much information as we can, and they want us to understand it.” King reacted to the students’ responses as follows:

I think from these responses they see what I am doing as busy work to get them through this course. They don't see the relevance. They don't see the connection. A few of them might be seeing that, but, you know, they just say they want us to know about government. They want us to know why it's important, but or how it can affect us, but in reality it's we have to pass this test to move on.”

Table 4.8 Student Perspective on Message Teacher is Sending – King, Civics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Student Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memorization</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill Development</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment/Engagement</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Development</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

She attributes this to the fact that the students in the civics class are sophomores who are required to take the course, whereas the Holocaust class is an elective consisting
of almost entirely upperclassmen. As a result, they do not see the relevance of the course and content and see the class as “grunge work that they have to get done.”

**Task Most Useful for Learning Civics and Being a Political Scientist.** When asked in the SPL Survey about the best types of tasks for learning about civics (Table 4.9), King’s civics students placed the greatest faith in lecturing and notetaking ($n = 5$) and reading about a topic ($n = 4$). The students seemed to especially like the use of EdPuzzle, which is a service that allows users to upload videos and embed questions at appropriate locations. One student shared, “I think what is most helpful in civics is when a teacher stands and talks about the material and shows examples of what they are talking about.” In their think-aloud, King stated that they believe the students confused most useful for easiest.

What I'm going through is they want ease of task. So what they see most useful as what's easiest. And, 'cause I can guarantee you if I gave them notes, if I gave them only PowerPoints and note taking, they would make no connection, no relevance, they would you know, not be able to respond when I give them a critical thinking question. But as 10th graders, they want ease and especially in remote learning. They want ease and so notetaking is easy. So I wonder if they are replacing most useful with easiest because that's interesting that they say that because I don't see them responding well to just notes.

King felt that the only student who answered the question correctly in their response was the one who said the best type of task for learning about civics is when someone shows the material, gives examples, and connects it to everyday life.
Table 4.9 Best Types of Tasks – King, Civics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Best for Learning Civics</th>
<th>Best for Learning How to be a Political Scientist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watching videos</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading about the topic</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures (with notetaking)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering questions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working at our own pace</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative work</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze primary sources</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing research</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying political scientists</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with maps</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous or off-topic responses</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For learning about how to be a political scientist, the student responses are fairly spread out among several categories with watching videos, reading about the topic, lecturing, and studying political scientists each garnering three comments. Studying primary sources was the next most popular with two comments. There were only two students who provided responses categorized as miscellaneous. King was discouraged by the student responses saying that they show a lack of understanding what a historian or political scientist does. She added, “because it's [the class] just note taking, regurgitating facts, and they see that as what a historian does.” For her, the best types of tasks are the ones that involve “critically thinking, perspective analysis, whole picture understanding, causation, contextualization, compare and contrast, continuity, [and] ask why,” although these typically would be categorized as habits of mind that learning tasks.
Discussion of King’s Data. There seemed to be a relatively strong similarity between the most common tasks as reported by King and their students, focused primarily on reading a secondary source and teacher lecture. There was a somewhat substantial spread between the overall power ratings for each of the top three or four tasks which suggests a reasonable amount of agreement among the students.

Interestingly, they facilitate class discussions quite frequently despite the distance-learning environment. However, the research question asks to what extent to the student perceptions of learning based upon the assigned tasks align with the perceptions of their teacher. Overall, the data suggests the students believe the tasks King assigns generally help to develop and reinforce deeper understandings over factual knowledge or skill. However, few students, especially in civics, were able to articulate how the tasks they assign relate to the development of those deeper understandings of the complex aspects of the curriculum. Instead, “to learn,” “to get a good grade,” and “to get smarter,” were vastly more common responses than “to understand what is happening in our government today,” or “to understand how and why the Jews were persecuted in order to better prevent it in the future.” This suggests the Holocaust students felt King put more emphasis on understanding the complexities of the content while the civics students felt their tasks accentuated memorization and basic levels of knowledge.

When comparing their two classes’ views on the types of tasks best suited to learning about the topic, a much greater percentage of King’s Holocaust students felt that watching videos was a better method (nine Holocaust students versus one civics student), while their civics students thought lectures and notetaking would be more beneficial (five civics students versus two Holocaust students). Otherwise, the types of tasks identified
by the students were relatively similar. The variance in these answers could be due to the nature of the class (history versus civics) or that civics is a required class while the Holocaust course is an elective. In their final interview, King repeatedly stated that they believe the students’ maturity level warrants teaching the classes differently and relying on different types of tasks. King’s response regarding the best types of tasks for learning history/civics include a wider range of tasks that require a more active and deeper level of understanding, critical thinking, and analysis than the passive tasks identified by the students. Few of the tasks from King’s list made it onto the students’ list. In addition, even though they claim to value those tasks, King admits to not using them frequently, especially in the civics class and due to distance-learning. Even though they see those tasks as valuable, they do not use them. As a result, since their students do not experience them, they do not recognize their value either.

For King’s Holocaust students’ answers to the prompt concerning what would be the ideal tasks for learning how to be a historian, a significant number of responses were coded as miscellaneous (30%). This suggests a significant number of students do not have a firm grasp on what it means to practice history. As one student said, they know a lot about the Holocaust, but not about being a historian. Regarding the civics students, there were far fewer civics students (12%) who said analyze primary sources would be helpful to learn about being a political scientist as compared to the Holocaust students (30%).

In their think-aloud exercise, King repeatedly said they felt “pretty even keel” about the student responses because some seemed to understand the concept of historical skills, even though the data suggest a sizable portion of them did not. Also, while King
identified various skills common to historians and political scientists, they failed to identify specific tasks to develop those skills. So, while they are perhaps thinking that the tasks they assign reflect the skills necessary to be a historian or political scientist, their students are not recognizing or internalizing that message. King lamented, “they're not quite making the connection that what I do actually is helping them just analyze and think through and hear personal testimonies and examine the facts and examine the artifacts and ask why.”

**Smith.** Smith teaches three sections of honors-level, American History II. From those classes, thirty-four of ninety-two students completed the SPL Survey. Twenty-eight of those students completed the survey in person while the others completed it online.

**Most Frequently Assigned Tasks.** Smith’s students overwhelmingly selected *listen to the teacher lecture and take notes* as well as *read and analyze a primary source* as the most frequently assigned tasks (see Table 4.10). There was a sizeable drop-off in overall rating to the next five tasks: *answer a document-based question using several sources*, *watch a video (not of your teacher) and take notes or write answers to questions*, *read, analyze, and interpret a table or chart*, *analyze and interpret an image or political cartoon*, and *read a secondary source and write answers to questions*. There was another sizeable span between the overall ratings of those tasks and the few that followed. This indicates that the students were in relative agreement regarding the most commonly assigned tasks. It is noteworthy that of the top six tasks as rated by the students, four of them are considered skill-based tasks. These include *read and analyze a primary source*,...
answer a document-based question using several sources, read, analyze, and interpret a table or chart, and read and interpret and image or political cartoon.

Table 4.10 Most Frequently Assigned Tasks – Smith

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>1st Most</th>
<th>2nd Most</th>
<th>3rd Most</th>
<th>4th Most</th>
<th>5th Most</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listen to the teacher lecture and take notes</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>65.29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read and analyze a primary source</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>58.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer a document-based question using several sources</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>34.71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch a video (not of your teacher) and take notes or write answers to questions</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>32.35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read, analyze, and interpret a table or chart</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>23.53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze and interpret an image or political cartoon</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>22.94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read a secondary source and write answers to questions</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>21.18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read a secondary source (i.e. textbook) and take notes</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>8.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch a video (not of your teacher)</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>8.24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Smith in their think-aloud, they felt the students were accurate in those numbers. However, they placed read, analyze, and interpret a table or chart as number two on their TBP Survey. Answering a document-based question rated third on the students’ list, but does not appear on Smith’s top five. In their think-aloud, Smith said they have not assigned large document-based questions. Their rationale for that ranking so high on the students’ list is probably because the students assumed reading and analyzing a primary source was the same as or similar to completing a document-based question. In reporting their rationale for the most common tasks, Smith stated they
firmly believe “reading primary resources is an essential skill for college bound seniors,” and that “using these activities in my classes has increased student learning and understanding in my history classes.”

Smith claims to normally lecture quite a bit since it is “beneficial in relaying a high percentage of content in a relatively short period of time.” Because she creates videos of the lectures, students have the ability to access the lectures at a time more convenient for them. They were regretful that there are several tasks that make regular appearances in their traditional classes that they do not believe they are able to effectively incorporate in a distance-learning environment, such as class discussions and collaborative tasks. They blame the distance-learning environment and technology issues for this. They also feel spending considerable time responding to email, recording lectures, and handling technology issues, reduces their ability to alter their traditional activities for the blended environment.

**Reflections on the Frequently Assigned Tasks.** In the students’ minds, the tasks assigned by Smith focus primarily on *grappling with and understanding complex content* which slightly outpaces *learning and memorizing specific content* by only three students (see Figure 4.5). The order is reversed in terms of what the students see as second most important, but the difference is only one student. This was a shock to Smith in their think-aloud. They claimed, “I'm not a memorizer and I don't believe memorizing facts is beneficial for students.” In addition, Smith said they never uses the term *memorize* when talking about learning the content and is convinced that their students were confused by the inclusion of both terms in that category because they feel that before you can engage
in a deeper analysis of a topic, you have to have a basic knowledge of it. As a result, the
two “kind of go hand in hand.”

Figure 4.5 Reflection on Most Commonly Assigned Tasks – Smith

*Tasks that focus on developing the skills of a historian* ranked third among the
students. Smith was not terribly surprised by this ranking but was hoping it would have
ranked second. In a traditional classroom setting, Smith believes they would have been
able to better drive home the connection between how the document analysis they do
relates to the work of a historian. Smith seemed perfectly content with *tasks that focus
on allowing students the freedom to learn about topics of their own choosing* ranking last.
They said allowing students some individuality in what they are learning has never been a
strong suit for her.

140
When asked in the SPL Survey about the message their teacher was sending regarding what is important, Smith’s students repeatedly talked about understanding (36%) more than any other category (see Table 4.11). For instance, one student said, “I feel they are sending the message that critical thinking about the course content is more important than memorizing specific facts and dates.” Six students mentioned memorization or basic knowledge of the content, such as one comment that “[Smith is] wanting us to get as much information read and memorized as possible so that we can move on to the next unit. I also think that they want us to just get the basics remembered.” Only three students discussed the development of social studies skills, and two students wrote about the importance of individual perspective and connection to historical events. When seeing those comments during the think-aloud, Smith remarked that while they had been thinking of individuality in the study of history as selecting their own topics to learn, applying what they learn to their individual lives or drawing their own conclusions could also count.

Table 4.11 Student Perspective on Message Teacher is Sending - Smith

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Student Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memorization</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill Development</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment/Engagement</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Development</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Tasks Most Useful for Learning History and Being a Historian.* When sharing the types of tasks they thought would be most helpful for learning history, Smith’s students gave a wide variety and relatively balanced set of answers (Table 4.12).
Watching videos, reading primary sources, lecturing, and answering questions all garnered at least five marks. Smith believes it is because watching videos and reading primary sources are two of the most common tasks they assign, so that is what the students think would be best.

Table 4.12 Best Types of Tasks – Smith

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Best for Learning History</th>
<th>Best for Learning How to be a Historian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watching videos</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading about the topic (secondary)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures (with notetaking)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering questions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working at our own pace</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative work</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze primary sources</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing research</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying historians</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with maps</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphic organizers/timelines</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hands-on tasks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous or off-topic responses</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In their think-aloud, Smith took to heart the number of students who said answering questions would be helpful.

I don't put questions in my lecture videos, I just try to put content forward, but I suppose I mean several kids have questions with those and I have other videos that I do that do have questions him. Maybe they are saying if I ask questions about the lecture videos, it would help them pay more attention because they're looking for something to do with it rather than just listen to it.
She also had one student mention the use of graphic organizers to help make sense of content and another that said it would be helpful do hands-on tasks but did not elaborate on what those tasks would be. Several of the miscellaneous comments focused on specific content, such as “how are political governments formed, or simply “more memorization,” rather than tasks. In their TBP Survey, analyzing primary source documents was the only type of task that Smith identified as beneficial to learning about history.

Regarding the types of tasks most beneficial to learning how to be a historian, Smith’s students once again gave a wide range of answers, dominated by analyzing primary sources (nine comments). They had six students claim that watching videos would be helpful. Doing research and reading a secondary source about an event also scored fairly well with four comments each. Smith did not notice it in their think-aloud, but two students made comments regarding memorization of facts, which is a task that they claim to not assign or emphasize. Four students commented that they did not know what types of task would be best. Humorously, one student said, “I don’t want to become a historian…so I really don’t know.”

**Discussion of Smith’s Data.** Overall, in response to the research question, Smith’s perceptions of the tasks they typically assign are reflective of their students’ perceptions. However, Smith said that maybe they are just doing what the students are accustomed to doing in a history class, so they think that is the best way to learn history. They both repeatedly discuss analyzing primary sources as common tasks as well as being important to learning about history and being a historian. There was a significant drop-off between in the students’ overall rating between the top two tasks and numbers
three through six. This also indicates that the students were in relative agreement regarding the most commonly assigned tasks. There was also a large span in the overall student rankings of task six and the rest of them. This may indicate Smith provides little variance in the tasks they assign their students.

She seemed content with their students’ overall perception that the development of skills earned a third-place ranking. This is interesting because four of the top six most frequently used tasks as rated by the students are considered skill-based tasks. These include *read and analyze a primary source; answer a document-based question using several sources; read, analyze, and interpret a table or chart; and read and interpret and image or political cartoon*. However, in regard to the perception of learning based upon the tasks, the students seem to be unable to make the connection between analyzing primary sources as well as working with graphs, charts, images, and political cartoons with the skills of being a historian since only three of thirty-four students said it was most important and the same amount said it was second-most important. Overwhelmingly, 59% of the students said they felt skill development was third-most important to Smith.

In addition, despite Smith’s recurrent claims that memorization is not important in their class, it still rated high regarding the students’ perceptions on their teacher’s intent behind the tasks assigned with over 82% of the students ranking it most or second-most important to Smith. In addition, while it was not the most common response regarding the categorization of tasks (Table 4.10), 18% of the students’ comments mentioned memorization or basic knowledge. Double that number of students discussed deeper level understandings and 88% stated they believed it was most or second-most important to Smith. This means that while there is some evidence to support Smith’s claims that
students are engaged in deeper learning tasks and historical thinking skills, there is still evidence they are sending the latent message that students also need to focus on memorizing a significant amount of factual content.

It is also noteworthy that of the seven miscellaneous comments regarding the types of tasks students felt Smith thought were important, three students talked about the importance of following directions. This was the same amount of comments as the categories of skill development and application of content. In neither their TBP Survey responses, think-aloud, or interview did Smith mention anything about the importance of following directions. This suggests students perceive this as an important part of performing well in the class.

Summarizing their thoughts about the tasks beneficial to learning history as well as learning how to be a history, Smith said,

I'm not surprised by any of their answers…if the goal was to look at what I felt like I was doing and then to assess if the students were, for the lack of a better term, picking up what I was putting down…I'm not disappointed in the job I'm doing this in this environment, and but you know, with the exception of some of the things we talked about, more project learning and more things for the students to get to interact with other students.

Smith’s students gave a wide range of answers regarding the types of tasks most beneficial to learning history and how to be a historian, but their answers for both were dominated by analyzing primary sources and watching videos. In their responses to the TBP Survey, analyzing primary source documents was the only type of task Smith identified as beneficial to learning about history. This could also be connected to the
students’ perception that analyzing primary source documents is the second-most commonly assigned task for Smith. Smith did not notice it in their think-aloud, but two students made comments regarding memorization of facts, which is a task they claim to not assign or emphasize. Considering the dominance of lecturing as an instructional task in the eyes of both Smith and their students, the number of students who identified it as helpful for learning history was relatively low (14.7%).

**Research Question One General Discussion.** Entering this study, I expected to see moderate to vast differences between the teachers’ perceptions of the learning tasks and those of their students. Instead, I discovered three teachers, each with their own unique issues. For the most part, the teachers and their students were in agreement in terms of the tasks assigned, which was expected. However, there was a lack of agreement and clarity regarding the perceptions of learning based upon those tasks. This is where I was expecting moderate to vast differences.

For all three teachers, their students rated *tasks that focus on grappling with and understanding complex parts of the course content* as being most important to their teacher. This was universally followed by *tasks that focus on learning and memorizing course content* as second-most important. Third-most was *tasks that focus on developing the skills of a historian/political scientist*, although King’s civics students rated it higher than the other teachers’ students as well as the students in their Holocaust class. Finally, *tasks that focus on allowing students the freedom to learn about topics of their own choosing* was always rated by the students as distant fourth-most important to their teachers. Each teacher claimed to stress the importance of understanding the complex issues of their course, although Hall seemed to put less emphasis on it. However,
students seem to agree in general in only two of the four cases, King’s Holocaust class and Smith’s American History class.

Despite the common order, with some variance as to actual percentage of student responses for each category, as well as confirming evidence, other evidence also contradicted that data for each teacher. For Hall, their students’ open-ended responses repeatedly suggested memorization was more important to their teacher. In addition, Hall themselves also repeatedly stated in their think-aloud that students need to memorize the basic knowledge first before they can move onto grappling with the complex content. Hall also said that they focus on the basic knowledge to help their students pass the once-required but now defunct, end-of-course test. King believes they are instilling an interest in understanding the content to much greater depths, particularly with their Holocaust class. Even though their students provided some confirming evidence, they cannot seem to articulate how the tasks they assign help to support that belief. Especially in civics, the students’ responses to the open-ended questions indicate they perceived memorization and basic level knowledge were most important. Finally, Smith, who claims to shun the memorization of content, had several students who repeatedly referred to memorization as an underlying purpose behind the tasks they assign. In addition, even though their students recognize they are asked to do skill-based tasks regularly, analyzing primary source documents in particular, they did not see that as the work of a historian.

All three teachers identified skill-based tasks as being among their most commonly assigned. All teachers had at least one skill-based task identified in the top five from their students’ perceptions, with Smith’s students identifying four skill-based tasks within the top six assigned by their teacher. In their TBP Survey responses and
think-alouds, they all talked about the importance of skill development. However, tasks that focus on developing the skills of a historian/political scientist rated third among the students’ perceptions. When asked to respond to that phenomenon, each teacher said perhaps the students were unaware they were developing the skills of a historian or political scientist. This may indicate a lack of communication between the teachers and their students regarding the purpose of their lessons and assigned tasks.

Regarding the types of tasks best suited to learning history or political science, every teacher noticed their students typically gave responses that were reflective of the types of tasks each of the teachers assigned most often. The responses from the students’ in King’s different course further exemplified this. While their Holocaust provided responses that reflected King’s emphasis on deeper-level understandings, the civics students’ responses echoed the importance on surface-level knowledge.

Research Question 2

To what extent are teachers aware of the messages they transmit through their hidden curriculum? The answer to this second research question is based partially upon the answer to the first question. I needed to attempt to ascertain what message the teacher thought they were sending regarding their curriculum. To help teachers also try to connect their practices with their beliefs, as part of the TBP Survey, they were asked to complete Schiro’s (2013) curriculum ideologies inventory, which “presents and contrasts [an] educator’s beliefs about instructional purposes, teaching, learning, knowledge, childhood, and evaluation” (p. 266).

I also needed to determine what messages the students thought their teacher was sending. This was based upon their responses in the SPL Survey. After recognizing any
differences in perceptions, I attempted to decipher from the qualitative data if the teachers were aware of the messages they latently transmitted and/or became aware through this process. To answer the question, I used the qualitative data provided by the teachers in the TBP Survey, their think-aloud, and their interview. As a starting point, I looked for words such as “surprised” to indicate that a teacher was not aware of the messages they transmitted or “expected” to indicate they may have been aware. The data for each teacher will be analyzed separately, followed by any general observations about the data.

**Hall.** A substantial number of Hall’s students (52%) thought Hall was placing the greatest emphasis on deeper level understandings (see Figure 4.2). Based solely on the tasks, they said during their think-aloud, “I think it looks pretty accurate. They do know what we’ve been doing. So that's good. It matches my thoughts with theirs.” Just a short time later, they said, “I definitely am trying to help them understand if I think it’s you know more complex material, so that looks good to me that they've rated that item highly.” But then in the next breath, they claimed, “There is a good bit of it that focuses on learning and memorizing.” They then spent several minutes discussing the various types of tasks, such as mnemonic devices and songs, which they use to help students memorize content. When reading a student’s comment, “I feel like my teacher really wants me to memorize and learn the material,” Hall responded, “Yeah that is true. Well, they are hitting on the idea that they need to memorize it. Someone said they need to pull it off the top of their head.” When I asked Hall to respond to these two sets of student data, they stated that rather than contradicting each other, in Hall’s mind, they supported each other. They claimed students need to memorize something before they can understand it.
When the students were asked in the SPL Survey why they thought their teacher assigned them the various typical tasks (Table 4.2), most made a comment alluding to memorizing the content, particularly to pass the class. In their think-aloud, Hall said, “at least they understand that I want them to learn the material.” However, they did not comment on the fact that they saw memorization as the major purpose for the tasks they assign. When I asked Hall about this in the final interview, they still held onto their claim that they definitely need to memorize content, primarily because of the state standards and end-of-course exam.

When asked to reflect upon their students’ answers regarding the most beneficial task for learning history (Table 4.3), Hall’s students returned to the main types of tasks they typically assign them, such as watching videos and lectures. Conversely, when discussing the types of tasks most beneficial for learning how to be a historian, their students’ most popular responses included doing research and analyzing primary sources. These tasks were not commonly identified by Hall’s students as ones regularly assigned by her, which Hall admitted to. Even though several students did say that answering document-based questions involving multiple documents was a recurring task, Hall said they had yet to assign a document-based question to their students. Hall had led the students through a document-based question, but had not asked them to complete one on their own. They also said

I really don't think that we're training them to be historians. Does that make sense? It's not what many of them want to do and it's not what we are being tested on. So I think it tends to get pushed to the back. It’s like if you have time for that. If you can figure out something, some way to work that in, we do. But I
know it's not the focus of my course...I think overall it looks like they know what we've been doing. And I think that they most of them seem to have an understanding that this is the purpose of the assignments and the learning.

The results of Hall’s curriculum ideologies inventory (Figure 4.6) do not depict an overwhelming tendency to any one of the ideologies and little consistency. To read the chart, if a line in the section of the graph below is high (mostly ones and twos), the respondent favor the ideology corresponding to that line. If the line is low (threes and fours), they do not favor that particular ideology. If the line zig-zags from high to low they have mixed feelings about that ideology (Schiro, 2013). It is also helpful to award points based on the following formula: one point for every mark in the top row, two points for every mark in the second row, three points for every mark in the third row, and four points for every mark in the bottom row.

Since there did not appear to be a dominant ideology based upon the lines, I opted to tally the points. The results (see Figure 4.6) show Hall’s ideology most closely resembles social efficiency (11 points). The key focus for social efficiency is the development of skill necessary for the learner to lead a productive life and to help perpetuate a well-functioning society (Schiro, 2013). The next closest likeness is the learner centered ideology (13 points), which emphasizes the needs and concerns of the individuals rather than the academic discipline or the needs of society (Schiro, 2013). Scholar academic (16 points), which emphasizes acquiring the predetermined academic knowledge of a culture (Schiro, 2013), ranked third for Hall. With the exception of one particular item, social reconstruction was the lowest-rated ideology for Hall. Social
reconstruction stresses the recognition of the inequalities in society and the facilitation and construction of a more just society (Schiro, 2013).

Figure 4.6 Curriculum Ideologies Inventory Results - Hall

In their initial statement of beliefs from day one of the study, Hall proclaimed, I want students to better understand the world around them and understand why things are the way they are today. And particularly as a world history teacher understanding the past and help students and I hope that it helps students to understand maybe why things are the way they are. And I hope that it helps students to appreciate the things that they have today because they can see how
things have changed over time. And as a teacher I want to make lessons understandable for students. I hope that they feel like they are successful with learning. And I want to make it interesting to them so they are drawn to social studies and history.

In their final interview, Hall’s first comment after having a week to review the student data was,

I noticed one student's response was “I think she's trying to make our virtual and in-school experience as fun as possible. [They] also work with us to make sure we're getting the information we need.” I liked that because I said that pretty much completely captures what I'm trying to do. I thought it reflected my philosophy on teaching and learning. I do want them to learn what is required, but I want them to enjoy it, you know, and maybe even someday they will say they love history. So I think it's kind of important to try to lay a foundation for them where they feel like they like it.

When I asked Hall why they thought more students did not respond like that, they replied that “Well, I'm not saying necessarily that they didn't. I think that one just said it so nicely. I think a lot of ’em said I'm trying to help them learn. They that it's, I think, it's important there's stuff I want them to know.”

When asked if they noticed any differences between their perspectives and their students, Hall said, “a lot their answers seem to match up with my perception of I wanted to make it something they can do.” I pointed out some inconsistencies, such as the development of skills appears to the students to be more important to Hall than it does to Hall. They said maybe their students were confused what skills were. However, they
also admitted to leading the students through two large document-based questions, incorporating map skills on a regular basis, and trying to bring in primary sources as often as possible. Hall then returned to the importance of memorization. “I don't really know how to explain their answers. Memorization is a huge part of it. I mean it, it's a huge part of learning history and sometimes you just have to tell them that.”

**Discussion.** Even though in one data set (Figure 4.2) Hall’s students think the tasks they assign are focused on grappling with the more complex understandings, the various questions from the SPL Survey that allowed for open-ended responses contradict that message. Hall repeatedly discussed how the study of history in their class is primarily about the memorization of content. Their students’ responses seem to support that idea. Their students also seem to perceive the development of skills as of higher importance to Hall than they do.

Hall’s curriculum ideologies inventory results contradict much of their statements and indicate that they lean most towards social efficiency and learner centered curricula. This means Hall should be emphasizing skills the most in their classroom and allow their students greater freedom to study topics of their own choosing. Their repeated statements about the importance of memorizing content indicate a scholar academic ideology, which Hall ranked third. As a result, there appears to be disconnect between what Hall believes in terms of teaching and learning as opposed to their actual pedagogical practices.

To what extent is Hall aware of the hidden messages they are sending by operating under that belief? Throughout their think-aloud and interview, Hall did not seem surprised by the student-provided data. They repeatedly made comments like “that looks good to me” and “at least they understand I want them to learn the material.” It is
confounding to me that at one point in Hall’s think-aloud they thought the students’ identification of tasks that focus on understanding complex parts of the content as most-important was accurate. Minutes later, they were applauding their recognition in their open-ended responses that memorization was vital to her. The students also seemed to distinguish an importance of learning skills based on the tasks Hall assigns, as well as possibly the content embedded within their lectures. I find it interesting that Hall recognizes they often incorporates skills like document analysis and map reading, but also says, “we’re not training them to be historians.”

Overall, Hall is attempting to send the message that memorization and basic factual knowledge are most important, although this does not seem to match their ideologies. However, their students are able to overcome that narrow perspective on the learning of history and see value in tasks that develop skills or allow them to grapple with the more complex pieces of content. Perhaps their curricular ideologies are unknowingly seeping through into their instruction. While I expected teachers to say they advocate for complex understandings and skills while their students believed their teacher emphasized memorization and knowledge-level content, Hall’s data indicate the opposite of what I was expecting.

King. King repeatedly emphasized her aim in both their Holocaust and Civics classes for the students to develop a deeper understanding the content, much beyond the memorization of factual details. Students stated they thought the tasks assigned to them predominantly focus on grappling with and understanding complex parts of the course content, followed by memorization of specific content and then the development of skills. In their open-ended responses as part of the SPL Survey concerning what message they
felt the teacher was sending regarding what is important about the class, 55% of their Holocaust students and 29% of their civics students provided answers qualified as understanding deeper aspects of the curriculum. While only 10% of their Holocaust students made comments alluding to the importance of memorization of basic-level knowledge, 47% of their civics students did mention a more surface level of knowledge, although they often did not specifically use the term memorize. In terms of the student responses qualified as application-based, 15% of the Holocaust students provided those types of responses compared to 6% of the civics students. This lone civics student said, “She wants us to understand the concepts and importance of the events in the past and what is currently happening with government.” No Holocaust students, and only one civics student, mentioned anything about skill development in response to that prompt. Students in both courses provided off-topic responses like “because it’s their job,” “to help us learn civics,” or that King assigned the various tasks because they just wanted them to “get a good grade.”

King’s curriculum ideologies inventory results (Figure 4.7) show the learner centered ideology most closely resembles their belief (8 points), indicating they should be providing their students more freedom in what they are learning. King’s beliefs are least representative of the scholar academic ideology (22 points), meaning they should not be emphasizing learning the content simply for the sake of learning it. Social efficiency and social reconstruction were tied in the middle (15 points each). As a result, King should see some value in skill development as well as helping their students to recognize the issues within our society and encourage them to take action to address those issues.
Figure 4.7 Curriculum Ideologies Inventory Results - King

King’s curriculum ideologies inventory matches the verbal summary of their social studies teaching philosophy that they gave at the outset of the study. They said,

For me teaching social studies is showing connection and showing that relevance to the students’ lives. For me it’s not hardcore fact driven. It is more or less that common thread throughout all things, cause and effect, changes that occur, that lead to other things. If I can get the students to critically think of why this is happening right now, what were the building blocks, the foundations that led to such an event or such a time period, then for me, that’s the approach I take to
teaching. Even addressing the conflict and harder, sensitive raw subjects, I would say that those prove as relevance of humanity and the relevance of our content is driven often times because of circumstances and situations but they’re all connected in some way.

**Holocaust.** In their think-aloud, King was encouraged their Holocaust students primarily saw *grappling with and understanding complex content* as being most important to her. However, in response to the number of students who thought they placed more emphasis on memorization and factual knowledge, King said, “Still, that's pretty high up, which again I don't want this course necessarily to be that. We have to get through some just very specific content, but I don’t want that this course to be beyond memorization of numbers and dates.”

When reflecting on their Holocaust students’ open-ended responses to the prompt on the SPL Survey asking for their perceptions of the messages their teacher was sending, King was pleased with the first comment, “I'm getting that they really want us to know what happened and how it happened so that it doesn't happen again. They honestly are passionate about it and that's good. It's more important to actually learn during class time,” but responded that King gets the impression from their students that they see school, including their class, during this blended-learning as boring, busy work. Discussions or collaborative projects have had to be altered to make them more independent tasks. They was very discouraged by one student’s response, “I think she’s trying to tell us about history and course content for the exam.” King’s response was, “I purposely don't create a hard final exam. Most kids can exempt the exam [because it is an elective]…I don't want it to be fact based. I really want them to think through a
human side of the Holocaust.” They said they even allow the students use their notes on the exams. King wished more students had mentioned they are trying to convey “the importance of this issue of hatred and even making it applicable to today’s society.”

Overall, they said,

They drank the Kool Aid…I'm not ecstatic, but I'm not wallowing in oh crap and even revamp everything. It's pretty even keel. What I seem to be presenting to them is what they feel we're doing. And you know, they don't quite see the connection yet. Their putting everything in a box, compartmentalize, and they don't see that, well, I don't know, maybe I'm not doing it as much as I thinking them I am…So that leaves me OK. Keep doing what I'm doing. There's no need to necessarily drastically alter. Tweak a few things, but not revamp the whole the structure and curriculum.

**Civics.** Regarding the message they felt their teacher was sending through the types of tasks they were assigned, King’s civics students provided comments that can be grouped into two main categories. The dominant category, memorization and basic knowledge, contains remarks like “my teacher assigns busywork,” “I do assignments that are just completion grades,” and “have a basic understanding.” In response to these comments, King replied, “these are the responses of sophomores that don’t like government, don’t like learning it ‘cause they don’t see it relevant in their current lives.” In addition, “they see what I’m doing as busywork to get them through the course. They don’t see the relevance.” In the second grouping, which was not as common, were observations such as “to understand historic events that are still affecting us,” “to understand how government works,” and “teaching us different sides of our
government.” King at this point seemed so frustrated with the other responses that they did not acknowledge these comments as being a better representation of the message they were trying to convey. Overall, their evaluation of the civics students’ comments was [It is], probably what I was expecting, although a little more disheartening than Holocaust because they do, I think overall they see it as fact based. I have to do this. It's all just give me notes memorize these facts, respond and not, um, connectivity, relevance, impact. I think more of civics sees it as busy work, a box to be checked off and that being a historian is boring and lecture-based, note-based, not a problem solver, not a critical thinker, not a questioner. It's just study and memorize and regurgitate. But, but from sophomore perspectives I think it's also to be expected to take in where they are maturity wise, where they are academic wise as sophomores.

After having a week to reflect upon the data, King said they were encouraged by their Holocaust students’ responses because “a significant number saw it as a reflective course where you learn from the mistakes of the past, more than as a high-rigor academic course.” However, for their civics class, while they want the students to connect with the content, it is significantly more content driven.

Unfortunately I think that's how I do approach it. Here's information. Here's what you need to know. And they see it as I need to take notes in this class I need to, um, you know, know this information and there's really not much connectivity to the overall relevance and impact of the material in their everyday lives.

Because the civics class is required with state-mandated standards, and the Holocaust class is not, they feel like they have to teach it that way, explaining, “I do
agree that in Holocaust I have a lot more emphasis on understanding and I feel in civics it is, ‘here's information I really want you to know this.’”

I pointed out how King’s civics students generally perceive skill development as being emphasized, but the students did not provide any specific evidence. They agreed that they ask their students to do some skill development-type tasks, but they are usually embedded with their lectures, “such as let’s look at this political cartoon. Tell me what you see. Tell me what you think the author’s perspective is.” They does not specifically tell the students at those times that they are doing the work of a historian or political scientist.

Discussion. The students in King’s two different courses seemed to agree that deeper-level understanding of the content was most important to their teacher, followed by memorization and factual knowledge, then developing skills, and finally individual freedom to learn topics of their own choosing. However, there is a stark contrast between the consistencies of the open-ended responses in the two classes used to triangulate that data. Their Holocaust students were able to provide overwhelming evidence to support that belief through their open-ended responses. King was pleased and expected those responses, but still found the few that mentioned memorization of lower-level knowledge disturbing.

However, the students enrolled in the civics course, are unable to agree upon how the tasks King typically assigns support their beliefs. Instead, a slight majority of the students made comments like “she wants us to remember the content to do certain assignments,” and “…to help you pass.” This does not mean students were not able to recognize King was trying to help their students understand the content so they could
apply it to what is happening in the United States today. King was disappointed such a large number of students talked about memorization and basic learning, but also understood why they held that perspective.

King acknowledged their students were correct in their assessment of why they assigned the various tasks. King repeatedly discussed how the activities assigned to the Holocaust class were designed to help the students reach a deeper level of understanding about the topic. Conversely, King also talked on several occasions about how they felt they needed to teach the civics course in a way that reinforced factual knowledge. As an extension of this, King noted in their interview that while the civics students are getting the message that they just need to learn the content for the sake of the class, the Holocaust students understand that in addition to being important for the class, their learning has a significant impact on their lives beyond the classroom.

Ideologically, King should be transmitting the message that the students’ interests are significantly more important than learning for learning’s sake. This does not seem to be the case, particularly for their civics classes. Their civics classes seem like the perfect place for their social efficiency and social reconstruction ideologies to shine through. A study of the American political and economic systems seems like the perfect opportunity to allow students to explore issues they are interested in, recognize problems that exist in our society, then plan and take action to improve them. Developing the skills of a political scientist (and historian) also appears to be a perfect fit for this type of class. However, the scholar academic ideology seems to be the predominant message they are sending in their civics class.
Smith. For Smith’s honors-level American History II students, there is only a slight difference between what the students feel is most important to their teacher with tasks that focus on grappling with and understanding complex parts of the course content \((n = 16)\) slightly out-distancing tasks that focus on learning and memorizing specific course content \((n = 13)\). Tasks that emphasize skill development held a dominating third position followed by tasks that allow students freedom to learn topics of their own choosing. Of the students’ valid open-ended responses, 44\% related to the importance of understanding the more complex aspects of the content, as exemplified by the student who said “understanding the cause and effect relationships in history is crucial. History don’t just happen without a reason.” Meanwhile, 22\% of them focused more on memorization and knowledge-level content, such as “memorizing important times, people, and vocab.” 11\% discussed social studies skills like “how to take in information and draw conclusions from primary sources.” There were three students who made comments regarding the importance of following directions and one talked about the importance of “submit[ting] the work even if we don’t understand it.”

As Smith reviewed the students’ open-ended responses, they made comments like “this kid gets it” or “yeah, we talk about that extensively” whenever a student discussed the deeper understandings of the content. However, in response to the students’ comments that they emphasized memorization and knowledge-based content, Smith said, “I've never said the word memorized anything... I just can't let this child says believing commit them to memory... [I’m] Not about memorizing details and dates, but rather how to take any information and draw conclusions from primary resources.” A few students commented about learning from history to not repeat the mistakes of the past. Smith said
he does not talk about “this is a mistake or that is a mistake, but maybe that's what they're hearing when, um, we're studying history.” In response to the few students who discussed the development of skills, Smith replied,

I like the fact that the students, uh, quite a few I would say, enough of them, that made me feel good about it and understood why I choose primary resources and that analysis is expected and they think deeply about stuff. Enough of them said that that we're serious about responding that I feel like that affirms the other things. I think there's a theme there that you can be seen in my in my practice.

On the curriculum ideologies inventory (Figure 4.8), Smith rated highest in terms of social efficiency (8 points) garnering the top spot in every category except knowledge. This was followed by scholar academic (12 points), then social reconstruction (18). Learner centered occupies a distant fourth place for Smith (25 points). According to this inventory, Smith should emphasize skills, content knowledge, social improvement, then individual interests and needs.

On the first day of this study, when the teachers were asked to provide a public declaration of their social studies teaching philosophy, Smith’s response was,

A drum that I beat all the time is how essential that in living in a democracy, a free country, it is the role of the social studies teacher to help students to understand how the constitution is set up and how imperative it is for students to understand how our system is supposed to work. My specialty is American history and then seeing how that has been applied throughout 200 plus years of American history, how it’s essential that they take that seriously, and how participatory democracy requires participants and how they need to understand
what’s going on, understand the issues, understand their role as informed citizens. That’s something I take very seriously. I talk about it all the time, and rather than just going and try to memorize a bunch of random facts, let’s see how you take the Constitution, you take our founding documents, and you overlay that with the things that are going on and us working towards a more perfect union. It sounds cliché, but it’s something I believe in very strongly. That it’s the foundation of my philosophy as a social studies educator and I seek to bring that to the classroom every day.

<table>
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<th>Curriculum Ideologies Graphing Guide</th>
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<tr>
<td>Part I Purpose</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scholar Academic</td>
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<td>Learner Centered</td>
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<td>Social Reconstruction</td>
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<td>Social Efficiency</td>
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Figure 4.8 Curriculum Ideologies Inventory Results – Smith
In their interview, Smith began with “I know myself reasonably well anyway, and uh, they see me as trying to do what I think I'm trying to do and so if that's what you were trying to get out with this with the study, yes, this I think it showed that, at least to my understanding.” I mentioned some inconsistency in the data regarding why their students saw skill development as being of relatively low importance to her, yet in their opinion two-thirds of the most frequently assigned tasks involved skills. Smith replied that they do not draw much attention to how the work the students are doing is skill-based, using the analogy that, “it doesn't matter where you drive a car or truck, you still get to where you're going when you get there,” and the students “just see that the overwhelming overriding goal was the content rather than the skills.” Smith also thinks they are more learner centered than the students noticed. Smith admitted to making plenty of adjustments to their instruction and activities according to the student abilities, but the students would not recognize that since they do not broadcast those changes.

**Discussion.** Smith believes their students, for the most part, are receiving and internalizing their basic message about learning history, that to truly understand history is a complex task beyond the memorization of facts. The students rated grappling with and understanding complex aspects of the content as being most important to Smith and provided significant support through their open-ended responses that this was critical. In their think-aloud and interview, Smith frequently recognized those types of comments and remarked that the students were “picking up what I’m putting down.”

However, there does not seem to be as much difference between the number of students who see grappling with and understanding the complex parts of the content as Smith’s main focus and those who see the focus being on learning and memorizing
specific course content. Those numbers are much closer than Smith would like to see. They repeatedly denied emphasizing memorization or learning content to pass a test, yet almost a quarter of their students mention it in their open-ended responses.

In the case of memorization it appears Smith’s students are seeing more of it than they are. However, in the case of skill-development, the students are seeing less of it than Smith is, while according to their identification of the tasks most frequently assigned, four of the six most frequently used tasks that their students selected incorporate the use of social studies skills. This suggests Smith assigns activities to develop the students’ social studies skills. However, skill-development ranked third in terms of the students’ perspective of what they thought is important to Smith and only about 10% specifically mentioned skill-based tasks in their open-ended responses. Interestingly, while their students recognize they are frequently being asked to complete tasks that are skill-based, they do not see that as being important to their teacher. This is intriguing since, according to their curriculum ideologies inventory results, social efficiency easily out scored the other options as to their dominant ideology. Instead, the students seem to be picking up on Smith’s scholar academic ideology, which they identified as second on the curriculum ideologies inventory.

**Research Question Two General Discussion.** The initial statement of the philosophy that the teachers provided on the first day of the study strongly resembled the results of their curriculum ideologies inventory. However, the implementation of those ideologies met various roadblocks, such as the existence of a mandated curriculum or the maturity level of the students, causing teachers to abandon their philosophies and assign tasks that diverged from their ideals.
Hall and Smith seem to have difficulty grasping the latent messages they are transmitting through the tasks they typically assign. Both focus on one aspect and tend to overlook others. For Hall, it is their repeated insistence that the students need to memorize the content. While many of their students agree, the data suggest they are also receiving other messages, in particular that 52% of the students believe grappling with and understanding the complex parts of the course content was most important to their teacher. They also picked up on a greater level of importance being given to skill development and individual learning they acknowledge. Meanwhile, Smith believes the deeper-level understandings are most important. The students gave some evidence to support that but provided other evidence suggesting that they see memorization and skill-development as being more important than Smith believes they are transmitting.

For King, their Holocaust students seem to grasp the key message they are sending, which is that they must be willing and able to grapple with the deeper-level concepts to learn the content. The students’ ranking of the rest of the types of tasks fall right in line with their expectations. However, the message King’s civics students perceive is more mixed. For those students, there is conflicting student data as to what they feel is most important to their teacher. In the summary of types of tasks, complex understanding rules, but in their open-ended responses, most students discussed the importance of memorization of factual-based content. King agrees the students correctly identified how facts and memorization are important in that class, but laments that it has to be that way. In addition, those same students who see memorization and factual content occupy the spot of second-most importance to their teacher also believe that King
is transmitting skill development is almost as important. This is quite surprising to King since they feel they hardly emphasize skills at all in that class.

Each teacher had differences between their top-rated curriculum ideologies and the messages their students are receiving. The students of all three indicate that elements of the scholar academic ideology prevail in the classroom, even though none of the teachers identified it as their main ideology. This was based upon the students’ open-ended responses in the SPL Survey. Also, the students in each class were able to internalize, to at least some extent, the ideologies that their teachers did believe were more important than just content knowledge. For Hall, they lean towards social efficiency and learner centered ideologies, but their instruction more closely resembles a scholar academic approach. Their students are receiving that message, although other messages, particularly the importance of skills, might by sneaking through. In King’s case, the ideology they ranked last, scholar academic, is dominant in their civics class as evident by King claiming they have to teach that way due to the maturity level of the students and also because it is a required course with a mandated curriculum. Their students echoed the sentiment that memorization and basic knowledge are most important. However, there is still some evidence they are also seeing the importance of skill-development. Smith rated scholar academic higher than the others, but it was still second to social efficiency. According to some of the evidence, their students are recognizing the importance of developing skills even though they do not think they are broadcasting that message.

Overall, while the teachers seem aware of the main messages they send regarding their views on learning the content through the tasks they assign, they may not be fully
aware of the entire message. However, is that difference enough to spark a desire to improve?

**Research Question 3**

*How does the revealing of student perceptions of learning impact teachers?* This research question will help determine whether the process developed in this study is valuable in terms of encouraging teachers to want to improve or alter their practices and/or beliefs. The final research question, while ultimately the most important of the three, has the least amount of data associated with it. This is because I was able to directly ask questions and record the participants’ responses. This data was derived entirely from the final interview I had with the teachers after they had a week to analyze and reflect upon their student data. Included in that interview, before I asked them how motivated they were to change, was the dissonance thermometer adopted from Devine et al. (1999) to measure participants’ level of emotional distress caused by recognition of opposing cognitions. It does this by asking them to identify the extent to which they are experiencing certain feelings, such as shame, disgust, optimism, and anger, while reflecting on those conflicting thoughts (Devine, et al., 1999). Just as a temperature thermometer goes up and down in relation to the temperature, the dissonance thermometer changes according to the reported amount of dissonance experienced. A rating of “1” means that the emotion is not experienced, while a rating of “7” means the emotion is being highly experienced.

The interview was semi-structured, allowing me to ask each participant the same questions, but also to tailor additional questions to each participant’s responses. In focusing on this research question, I directly asked:
• To what extent does reflecting upon the students’ responses motivate you to alter your instructional practices?

• To what extent does reflecting upon the students’ responses motivate you to alter your core pedagogical or curricular beliefs?

It was not originally planned, but since I noticed differences between the teachers’ curricular beliefs, as reported in the curriculum ideologies inventory, and the tasks they typically assigned, I also asked them if the process of reflecting upon their curricular beliefs motivated them to change their instructional practices.

Hall. During the final interview, Hall and I first reviewed the student data to clarify what messages the students were receiving and to see if they had any additional reflections or thoughts about it. Next, I administered the dissonance thermometer. The results of Hall’s dissonance thermometer (Table 4.13) shows they rated themselves at a score of “1” for all of the negative emotions such as uncomfortable, uneasy, disgust, and disappointed. Conversely, they rated themselves high, “6s” and “7s,” for every positive emotion, including friendly, optimistic, happy, and energetic.

I pointedly asked Hall about their response to the question “In reflecting on the data your students provided, how motivated are you to change your practices?” Hall replied

I feel this myself when I keep seeing that I have, you know, I know I use am using a lot of PowerPoint and I'm instructing and here we're stopping and asking questions, and everything is very repetitive. It gets old to me, so when I think it's old, then I start wanting something different. And so, and you know they start to feel it too because I think that the change in the variety is what makes it more
interesting. OK, so obviously I’m stuck and using some of the same things. So I keep searching for some things we can do differently in ways we can do it differently and I really would like that more to be said of my class. But, but, I know we’re creatures of habit, and we use what works and we have to, right? So it’s motivating.

Table 4.13 Dissonance Thermometer - Hall

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feeling</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncomfortable</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry at myself</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uneasy</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disgusted with myself</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embarrassed</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bothered</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimistic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annoyed at myself</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disappointed with myself</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energetic</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Good</td>
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Note. Scale of “1” = not experienced to “7” = highly experienced.

She said it was good to hear the students’ feedback and they appreciated even if they told Hall they were just memorizing the material. They said, “that makes me feel like I’m teaching them something.” They went back to the single student who said they enjoyed their class and stated, “I think, ‘good, that’s what I hoped I hoped it would be.’
Not just work you have to do and something you have to learn, but maybe you would like it a little bit in the process.”

When I asked Hall if looking at the student-provided data was motivating to change their teaching philosophies, they gave a quick response of “No, I think it’s pretty good. I’m happy with it.” I prodded Hall more by bringing up various aspects of the student-provided data, particularly that they emphasized memorization and factual content over all else, but their students were still seeing that they possibly believed skill-development was also important. I asked the question again, and they said, “no, I’m good.”

Next, we moved onto a discussion about their curriculum ideology and reflecting upon it as compared to the tasks they assign and the student responses. In their initial TBP Survey, the prompt “To what extent does completing and reflecting upon this survey inspire you to want to alter your core curricular and instructional beliefs or practices?” yielded a simple “not very much.” In the interview, Hall admitted they did not think their philosophies on teaching and learning had changed over their twenty-six years of teaching. In addition, regarding the tasks they assign, Hall said, “I think I mean a lot of I guess a lot of the strategies are the same. The technologies changed so much of what you can do, like completing worksheet on the computer instead of on paper.” Hall said they would like to make some changes, particularly in making their class more learner centered and maybe focusing more on skills, but “it can be even vague to me of what type of skills am I supposed to be teaching them.” These changes match the results from their curriculum ideologies. However, Hall said they sees themselves in survival mode and
spends a significant amount of their time looking for lesson plans online rather than creating their own.

**Discussion.** Hall’s dissonance thermometer indicates they do not feel negative emotions at all, only positive, when reviewing the student data. To her, the students’ recurrent comments that they are trying to get them to memorize content to pass the class, validates that they are doing their job well. If they are doing their job well, then why would they be anything but happy about it?

The student-provided data were not enough to inspire Hall to want to change their practices. There was little discussion from Hall on that issue during the interview, falling back on their observation that the students are recognizing they are learning content, which is their goal. They were even briefer in their denial that the data was inspiring to alter their ideologies. Hall appears set in their ideologies, claiming they have not changed in twenty-six years of teaching and the data provided by their students is not enough to change them now.

Hall did not seem to be concerned that their ideologies and practices are not aligned. While their curricular ideology is more closely associated with social efficiency and learner centered approaches, the tasks they assign are typically scholar academic in nature. Had I not known Hall better, I would have been shocked that they seem content with what they are doing because their students are aware that they are trying to get them to learn the basic content to pass the class and/or a test. In the past six years, through numerous classroom observations and professional learning experiences, Hall has demonstrated to me that they want someone else to decide what to teach and how to teach it. They provided evidence of this in the final interview when they talked about how
much time they spend in searching online for lessons and activities to use to convey the content and/or help the students memorize the content. To me, this translates to, “while I would like to be more skill-based and student-centered, I need someone to build those types of lessons for me and show me how to use them.”

Throughout this entire process, including their TBP Survey, the think-aloud, and the interview, Hall reiterated that the mandated curriculum and testing drove what they were doing in the classroom. Now that the required testing has come to an end in the state, the pressure to drive home the state curriculum has quelled. In addition, the world history curriculum that Hall teaches is also changing. Instead of twelve-thousand years of history around the world, the course will now focus on only the past eight-hundred years. I would hope those changes would offer Hall the perfect opportunity to break free from the shackles of what they have been doing and cross the threshold into a new way of teaching and learning. When I pointed this out to her, they were still hesitant because it seemed so different from what they were used to, even though it seemed to match their ideologies better. I think the opportunity is there to get Hall to progress in their teaching, but they would need a significant amount of direction and assistance to accomplish it.

King. At their own request, King completed the dissonance thermometer twice (Table 4.14). Their initial responses, compiled after they reviewed the student-provided data, are marked with a “1.” They reported the negative emotions as having little to no impact on her. The positive emotions were all scored in the higher portion of the thermometer, but none at a seven. The responses identified as “2” followed a discussion comparing their ideologies to their practices. Some of their ratings of the negative emotions stayed the same, for example shame, uneasy, disgust, and embarrassed.
Meanwhile, *uncomfortable* and *angry* increased by one whereas *bothered* and *annoyed* jumped up by two. Other than *friendly*, all of King’s scores for the positive emotions decreased by one or two the second time. They did state that if there were a category for discouraged, they would have rated that one a “5” or “6.”

Table 4.14 Dissonance Thermometer – King

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<th>Feeling</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
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<td>Friendly</td>
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*Note. Scale of “1” = not experienced to “7” = highly experienced.*

When asked to what extent the student-provided data inspired King to want to alter their practices, they responded, “it won't be, uh drastic really, to reevaluate my instructional method of giving them content materials, such as lecture based…I feel pretty well in Holocaust, but I fail in civics…I was ranked just so low on collaborative work, and I think that's primarily because we're on a remote learning experience.” King said they would like to move to more collaborative work based on what they are seeing, but admits, “I think I don't trust the students enough. Trust is a hard thing for me in
general and so I don't trust the students enough to get the material on their own.” While it appears there is motivation to change, there are other factors holding them back.

Having only taught eight years, King said their ideologies about teaching and learning have not changed. Teaching is their second career, after a decade of doing missionary work around the world. King claimed their training to become a teacher helped to solidify the beliefs about teaching and learning they had developed in those previous experiences.

My academic training has been in learner centered. My personal travel and experience has just created me to see a broad range of individuals globally. So I've been exposed to so much and I think to see people as individuals, so that's I will I think I do, I think I've always approached learning with the learner centered perspective.

As a result, King said they still feel comfortable with learner centered being their dominant ideology and scholar academic at the bottom. We discussed that the student data showed, at least for King’s civics students, they were not adhering to their core beliefs. It was at this point that they asked to take the distance thermometer again, after which I asked King again how they felt about changing their practices or philosophies. They replied,

Looking at my philosophes then to the task I assign, 'cause they are, they're pretty different. I think looking at what the, my reflection on what I do to students, I don't think that was as drastic as me looking at my philosophy to what I actually do. Alright I think the student data in my perspective we're off, but not, not that
far off, right. Whereas, um, my philosophy or ideology to actually what I do is pretty different.

**Discussion.** Based on the first time the dissonance thermometer was implemented, it does not seem there were enough negative emotions to inspire King to change their practices or ideologies. The negative emotions were all rated low and the positive ones rated high, although *good* was the only one above a “5.” However, the second time King completed the thermometer, they were experiencing more negative emotions and fewer positive ones. *Bothered* and *disappointed* even ranked higher than *optimistic* and *energetic.*

While King admitted that looking at the student-provided data gave them some pause, especially from the civics students, they felt like they had to teach in that particular manner due to the maturity level of the students and the requirements of the curriculum. As a result, it did not seem like it was sufficient motivation for them to change. However, when I brought King’s philosophies into the discussion, their attitude toward change experienced a major shift. They grew discouraged at what they were seeing in themselves as a civics teacher based upon the student data coupled with their reflection on their ideologies. They conveyed a purposeful intent to want to change their practices so they are more in line with their ideologies.

**Smith.** In completing the dissonance thermometer (Table 4.15), Smith reported feeling generally low amounts of the negative emotions and high levels of the positive emotions. For instance, they reported a level “1” for the emotions of anger and disgust, a level “2” for shame, embarrassment, annoyance, and disappointment, and level “3” for uncomfortable and bothered. The highest rating they gave a negative emotion was a “4”
for uneasy. Other than happy, which was rated at “4,” the other positive feelings, happy, optimistic, energetic, and good were rated relatively high.

Table 4.15: Dissonance Thermometer – Smith

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<tr>
<th>Feeling</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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*Note. Scale of “1” = not experienced to “7” = highly experienced.*

Following their completion of the dissonance thermometer, I asked Smith to what extent they felt the student-provided data motivate them to change what they do in the classroom. Their response was,

Just my first blush as I know it doesn’t. I don't sense a lot of motivation, I don't. Responses I feel like I knew what I wanted them to do and I feel like they knew what I wanted to do and so speaking along those lines, you know, I don't have a great sense of need from that aspect of it to change.

I refocused Smith’s attention to some of the incongruities in the student data, but they said it still did not increase the desire to change, although they added “it would be
interesting to me to see how they may write it differently if it weren't this environment this unique year we have.” They said the student data were not any motivation to change their philosophies about teaching either.

However, when I asked if they were inspired to change their practices based upon comparing the student data with their ideologies, they answered, a goal of mine is to have students interact with one another and it being, it feel, more learner centered than it is currently. I like to see kids and have kids, you know, learn from one another that way, but it's just such a struggle in this environment. It in fact one of my goals beginning semester, and we still do it, is to have a Microsoft Team. The first couple of weeks there. I probably averaged five or six kids in each class. Now I have one kid that comes every day.

Smith then talked for several minutes about how they once again wish we could have done this study in a traditional setting because they feel the students would have provided an extensively different set of data. Then they reiterated that they did not feel like this process motivated them to change their practices at all because they felt their practices this year were different from years past. Smith said they have changed over the past twenty-seven years, but still clung to the old-school philosophies as much as possible. Smith did say they recognized that “you can’t team them today like we did back, you know, when I started…Things have to be more learner centered now.” Smith said they felt the alterations that have occurred in their practices and philosophies were because of the changing needs and desires of the students, specifically mentioning the social-emotional needs and the infatuation with technology.
Discussion. Interestingly, Smith rated the negative emotions as low-to-mid range on the dissonance thermometer, even scoring uneasy as high as the positive emotion of friendly, yet proclaimed they did not feel motivated to change their practices or teaching philosophy. This obstinacy remained despite my highlighting contradictions in the students’ perceptions of the tasks assigned and their perceptions, such as different views regarding the importance of skill-development, as well as the differences between their philosophies and their practices. Smith responded, “I think I know what I’m trying to do and the students are picking up on it, so there isn’t a need for me to change right now.”

I have seen Smith teach in person several times over the past six years. To the best of my recollection, their teaching methods have not changed much in that time. They still rely heavily on lecture, what they refer to as storytelling, but they cannot use large, whole-class discussion like they used to because they have only a small fraction of students in the classroom at any one time. The blended-learning environment has caused them to modify their tactics to limit their usage of one of their favorite strategies and they cannot seem to wait to get back to a traditional setting.

Research Question Three General Discussion

The data from the dissonance thermometers varied from the data obtained in the individual teacher interviews. For Hall, they indicated feeling all positive emotions and no negative ones, theoretically due to their viewpoint that their students are recognizes they are trying to help them learn the mandated content for the next test. In their mind, this makes them a success. However, in their interview, they indicated at least some chance they would be open to changing their practices with assistance. For Smith, the results were the opposite. They reported having feelings of negative emotions, but
repeatedly claimed they were in no way motivated to change their practices or beliefs. Only with King was there a correlation between the data from their dissonance thermometer, both occurrences, and their interview. When King focused solely on the student data, both the dissonance thermometer and their interview indicated they were not motivated to change. However, when also reflecting on their philosophies, the ratings of the emotions on the dissonance thermometer shifted moderately and their attitude toward changing their practices, especially with their civics class, also changed.

None of the teachers seemed motivated at all to change their philosophies based on the student-provided data. They were also hesitant to change their practices centered solely on that data. However, pairing the data with reflection upon their beliefs increased their motivation to change, especially for King, who had a look in their eye about how they could change what they were doing almost immediately. Hall was open to the possibility of change but hinted that they would need some guidance and assistance. A possible explanation why both Smith and Hall were most hesitant is that they are teaching veterans of over twenty-five years, referring to themselves as “old-school.” King, even though they are not too different from the others in age, has only eight years of teaching experience and was trained in an environment with a difference emphasis. Their experiences in the decade before becoming a teacher also exposed them to a wide range of ideas and people while the other two teachers are living in the same area of the country in which they were born.

Every teacher identified what they saw as barriers to growth, particularly the current blended-learning environment. All three believed it has altered their teaching methodology and the types of activities they would normally assign, hindering group
discussion as well as collaborative and creative activities. While I can vouch for their prior use of whole-class discussion, based on numerous classroom observations over the past six years, I cannot confirm their prior use of collaborative and creative assignments. King and Hall also discussed the influence of the state-mandated curriculum as a major impediment to teaching and learning in their current classrooms. They feel the tasks they assign, which they characterize as, simple, self-paced, and knowledge-based, as well as the means they use to transfer content, predominantly lecture, is the most efficient method of delivery. Smith also has a mandated curriculum, but did not mention that being a barrier to change. King also discussed the maturity level of their students and the fact that their civics class is a required class as obstacles to teaching the way they want.

**Interpretation of Study Results**

This section contains a combined analysis of the individual research questions. As noted above, that the final research question, while ultimately the most important of the three, has the least amount of data, while the first research question has the most data. I felt it was important to collect a significant amount of data to provide triangulated data to the teachers. While teachers could possibly overlook a single data source, multiple sources would hopefully increase the impact of revealing the hidden curriculum. However, for every teacher, the different student-provided data sets proved somewhat contradictory rather than congruent.

The various pieces of student-provided data proved troublesome because at times they contradicted each other for each of teachers. For instance, in the students’ general characterization of the message their teacher was sending through the tasks assigned, each set of students believed their teacher was sending the message that deeper
understandings were most important to their teacher. However, the other pieces of data, including the student ratings of the most commonly assigned tasks and their open-ended responses designed to provide specific support, contradicted that message. The teachers latched onto whichever segment of data seemed to best fit what they felt they emphasized, be it the deeper-level understandings or the memorization of knowledge-level content. This possibly calls into question the validity of using this tactic as motivation for growth, but is also indicative of trying to identify, define, and utilize specific elements of the hidden curriculum.

Purposeful identification of the teacher’s curricular ideology proved to be a helpful factor in inspiring teachers to want to change. Teachers’ individual statements of belief from when we met as a small group reflected the results of their curriculum ideologies inventory. These results, however, revealed contrasts between each teacher’s core beliefs and their pedagogical practices. While revealing the student perspective on the assigned tasks was not enough to motivate teachers to want to grow on its own, incorporating a reflective element was enough to highly motivate one of the teachers and at least crack open the door to change for another.

The results show that external factors could have a significant impact on a teacher’s desire to alter their core instructional practices, even if that overrides their curricular and pedagogical beliefs. This perhaps provides the teachers with an excuse to not change their practices, especially if they have a strong external locus of control. It may also justify why their practices do not match their ideologies. I sense, based on prior observations of these teachers, that had all the barriers they mentioned been removed, at
least two of them would still not alter their core instructional practices. After all, mandatory testing has ended, yet two teachers still mentioned its impact on what they do.

For research question one, to what extent do student perceptions of learning based upon the assigned tasks align with the teacher’s perceptions, the data show some alignment. However, enough discrepancy remains regarding the perceived purpose of the assigned tasks that it should cause some cognitive dissonance in the teachers. Typically, the teachers focused on the elements of the data that supported their perceptions and overlooked or minimized the contradictory evidence.

Regarding research question two, to what extent are teachers aware of the messages they transmit through their hidden curriculum, there is evidence the teachers are at least partially aware of their message. However, some of the data indicate students are absorbing more than their teachers think, such as the importance of skill development.

For the third research question, How does the revealing of student perceptions of learning impact teachers, the data suggests the student-provided data by itself is not enough to inspire change. A reflection on the teacher’s core curricular and pedagogical beliefs needs to be accompany it to be effective. However, even with that additional element, one teacher remained unmotivated. The main limiting factor for all the teachers was an external element they believed precluded them from teaching how they wanted.

Chapter Summary

Students completed a survey in which they shared their views on the message their teacher was sending regarding the tasks typically assigned to them. I shared student data with the teachers, allowing them to compare it to their own perspectives on the assigned tasks as well as their core curricular and pedagogical beliefs. The goal was to
motivate teachers to improve their instructional practices as a result of this process.

While the data show there was some difference in the student and teacher perspectives of
the tasks assigned, it was not enough on its own to inspire teachers to change. However,
when combined with teachers’ reflection on their curricular ideologies, it provided
enough motivation for one teacher to be strongly motivated to change and one to
entertain the idea as long as they could receive assistance. The third teacher did not seem
motivated at all to change. External factors seemed to impact all of the teachers’ desire
to change.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Motivating teachers, especially veteran teachers, is an issue facing school leaders across the nation. I regularly encounter this issue as an instructional coach. This action research study addresses that issue by creating a procedure designed to motivate teachers to improve their core curricular and pedagogical beliefs and practices. To accomplish this task, this study sought to address the following research questions:

1. To what extent do student perceptions of learning based upon the assigned tasks align with the teacher’s perceptions?

2. To what extent are teachers aware of the messages they transmit through their hidden curriculum?

3. How does the revealing of student perceptions of learning impact teachers?

The process hinged on creating a state of cognitive dissonance to act as a disorienting dilemma, which would cause the participating teacher to engage in a reflective process, perhaps leading to a change. Festinger (1957) noted that people react differently to cognitive dissonance. While some may feel motivated to alter their future behaviors or their ideals, others engage in tactics designed to minimize the dissonance without addressing the overarching issue directly. The disorienting dilemma for this study was revealing one aspect of the hidden curriculum, the students’ perspective of the tasks typically assigned to them. The slippery nature of identifying and defining a unified hidden curriculum proved challenging, providing some conflicting results. As a
result, the participating teachers were not particularly motivated to change based upon the student-provided data alone. However, when engaging in additional reflection that included their core curricular and pedagogical beliefs and practices, the level of motivation increased.

This chapter will include a discussion of the results of the study, particularly as they relate to the theoretical framework and existing literature. As this is an action research study, this chapter also contains actionable recommendations as well as a detailed plan for action and sharing of the results. There is a reflection on the process and a discussion of limitations and suggestions for future studies.

**Results**

This section discusses how my findings are both consistent and inconsistent with existing literature organized by the three pieces of my theoretical framework: hidden curriculum, cognitive dissonance (specifically the hypocrisy paradigm), and transformative learning. I will also discuss new literature in terms of how it relates to the findings.

**Hidden Curriculum**

Hidden curriculum is the distinction between what is meant to be learned, as evidenced by the official curriculum and school policies, and what the learners actually learn as a result of the intellectual, emotional, and social experience of being in school (Sambell & McDowell, 1998). For Giroux and Penna (1979), a detailed examination of any contradictions between the official or intended curriculum and the hidden curriculum is necessary for improving teaching and learning in the classroom. This study collected three pieces of evidence in an attempt to identify the students’ perspectives of the tasks.
assigned to them. The data, all collected through the SPL Survey, included student identification of the most frequently assigned tasks, a general statement from the students regarding the message they believed their teacher was sending through the tasks they assigned, and a series of open-ended questions designed to gauge the students’ thoughts about the tasks assigned to them.

My study focused on the students’ perceptions of the tasks typically assigned to them, which constitute but one element of the hidden curriculum in a typical classroom. Martin (1976) cautioned about the difficulties of identifying the hidden curriculum partially because there are numerous factors that could influence it such as the classroom setup, the behavior of other students, the teacher’s demeanor, the tasks they assign, or their rules, policies, and procedures. Even factors outside of the classroom might have an impact such as previous classroom experiences and the students’ home life.

This slippery nature of defining and identifying the hidden curriculum is evident in my study since my procedure yielded varying results for every participating teacher. Undoubtedly, other elements could have impacted the students’ responses. Smith noted in their think-aloud that perhaps the students were reporting what they traditionally experienced in a social studies class rather than their class in particular, although this occurred while Smith was trying to rectify the differences between the students’ perceptions and their own.

Making the hidden curriculum even more elusive, the messages transmitted “may be contradictory, non-linear, and punctuational and each learner mediates the message in her/his own way” (Skelton, 1997, p. 188). Scholars widely agree on this point (MacLeod, 2014; Martin, 1976; Sambell & McDowell, 1998). In other words, each
student might have a different reaction to the hidden curriculum even if they agree upon the particular elements of the hidden curriculum itself. This explains why some students’ open-ended responses provided information that others’ did not. For example, some students in Smith’s class reported they were trying to get the students to understand the more complex portions of the curriculum while several others said they were trying to emphasize the importance of memorization of facts. One of Hall’s students felt Hall had assigned the various tasks to help make learning fun. Just because no other student mentioned this does not mean it is not true for that lone learner. I had hoped that teachers would recognize trends as well as contradictions. Typically, however, they focused on comments that supported their views rather than challenged them.

Because hidden curriculum is an individual phenomenon to a great extent, the end point is not simply altering one’s practices and explicit curriculum to elicit a change in the hidden curriculum. Teachers must be prepared to regularly seek out the hidden impact of their instructional and non-instructional decisions because any changes they make may have unintended consequences. Dewey said teachers need to be made aware of what is occurring unconsciously to have a deeper understanding of the act of curriculum planning (Hlebowitsh, 1994). Unfortunately, only one participating teacher openly considered conducting regular surveys or discussion with their students to improve their practices. Martin (1976) cautioned that altering one’s practices to improve the hidden curriculum actually may result in a worse one.

Martin (1976) also said teachers need to recognize the hidden curriculum is not merely the result of influences beyond their control. Simply referring to the hidden curriculum as a normal outcome of schooling makes it seem that the hidden curriculum is
beyond a teacher’s control, which he felt was not accurate. Each participating teacher was quick to find an external factor forcing them to teach the way they currently did, whether it was the blended-learning format, the mandating of the curriculum, or the maturity level of the students. The influence of these external factors also played a role in lessening the cognitive dissonance each teacher experienced.

Due to the blended scheduling structure put in place because of the Coronavirus pandemic, the teachers were only willing to allow me a limited time with their students. Typically, the teacher had less than a quarter of their students on any given day until the week I began the study. This impacted the study. First, it is safe to predict that in a traditional school year, I would have been able to obtain survey data from a significantly larger percentage than I was able to get during the pandemic (42.7%). Since hidden curriculum is so individualized, the few outliers were able to draw the teachers’ attention from the larger trends. Second, it limited my ability to acquire other forms of data, particularly student interviews. Researchers who used student interviews alone (Margolis & Romero, 1998), or student surveys alone (Cotton, Warren, Maiboroda, & Bailey, 2007) recognized how these methods might not provide the level of depth required. A combination of interviews and observations would have more likely provided the triangulation necessary to get a more complete understanding of the hidden curriculum (Cotton, Winter, & Bailey, 1993).

Martin (1976) identified four possible responses once a teacher becomes aware of the hidden curriculum: the teacher may do nothing, abolish those practices, change their practices, or embrace the data as justification for their practices. For the participating teachers, King seemed most determined to change the hidden curriculum after
recognizing that how the students’ perspectives did not reflect King’s core beliefs about teaching and learning. Hall partially embraced the hidden curriculum whenever they declared their students were identifying it was important to memorize content. However, if additional assistance were offered to her, they indicated they would be willing to make some changes in their methods. Smith, on the other hand, embraced the hidden curriculum since it justified in their mind what they had been doing for many years as an educator.

**Cognitive Dissonance and the Hypocrisy Paradigm**

According to Festinger (1957), an unpleasant condition of cognitive dissonance occurs whenever a person has two inconsistent cognitions, typically when facing new information that is inconsistent with previously held beliefs. Since the dissonance is uncomfortable, it motivates the individual to attempt to reduce or eliminate that discomfort through psychological work. While Festinger’s cognitive dissonance theory focuses on the mental work individuals do when their existing beliefs fails to match their behaviors, the hypocrisy paradigm is concerned with using cognitive dissonance to alter future behaviors (Fried, 1998). In essence, individuals are made aware of already existing inconsistencies between their actions and their beliefs (Fried & Aronson, 1995). I hoped to create enough dissonance to encourage teachers to altering their teaching practices as a means to reduce the discomfort.

The amount of dissonance depends on various individual factors. These include the amount of importance of the cognitions, the amount of discrepancy between the cognitions, and the amount of choice the individual has (Harmon-Jones, Harmon-Jones, & Levy, 2015). Research since the inception of the theory of cognitive dissonance has
revealed additional strategies for reducing the discomfort of cognitive dissonance, such as the denial of personal responsibility, misattribution, and trivialization.

The denial of responsibility refers to the individual’s ability to rationalize away their dissonance by believing their actions were forced, making them not responsible for those actions. Denial of responsibility allows individuals to disassociate themselves from their own behavior (Gosling, Denizeau, & Oberlé, 2006). Research has shown there must be an element of personal responsibility to spark dissonance (Greenwald & Ronis, 1978). Unfortunately, each participating teacher was quick to identify external factors, such as mandated curriculum and the blended learning environment, which limited their ability to teach the way they wanted. These arguments reduced their amount of personal responsibility and by extension, their cognitive dissonance.

There is evidence of trivialization as well. Trivialization occurs when the individual minimizes the importance of either their beliefs or behaviors in an attempt to minimize cognitive dissonance. Smith and Hall were particularly prone to rationalize away student data that may have caused dissonance. For example, during Smith’s think-aloud they referenced a student comment about how Smith just tries to get the students to memorize the content for the test by saying, “I don’t know what that kid is talking about. I never do that.” They trivialized that student’s comment rather than going through the mental exercise of trying to determine why that particular student would have made that remark even though Smith believed they did not emphasize memorization.

Hypocrisy (and cognitive dissonance) does not impact all people the same way. While some are disturbed greatly by it, others are unfazed (McConnell & Brown, 2010). In particular, the amount of self-complexity the teachers had may have played a role in
the amount of dissonance experienced by my participants. A person with a higher self-complexity may have numerous self-aspects such as spouse, parent, friend, employee, artist, and athlete. Someone with low complexity has fewer self-aspects. McConnell and Brown (2010) determined that people with lower self-complexity report feeling larger affective responses because the particular feedback occupies a larger percentage of their overall self-concept. The opposite is true for high self-complexity individuals. As a result, those with greater self-complexity showed a greater propensity to bolster their attitudes than those with lower self-complexity, who weakened their attitudes to put them more in line with their contradictory behaviors. I had not thought much of it at the time, but during their interview, King mentioned they are single and living alone with no children. They are the epitome of someone who matches the phrase “teaching is my life.” Meanwhile, Hall and Smith are both married with several children each. Smith has also been a coach for their entire teaching career until this year. If Smith and Hall have greater self-complexity, the cognitive dissonance may not have had the same impact upon them as with King, who may have a lower self-complexity.

There has also been research regarding the impact of a collectivist approach on a person’s behaviors in response to hypocrisy. Hypocrisy has been shown to be more effective if people make an initial public declaration of their pro-attitudinal stance (Stone, Aronson, Crain, Winslow, & Fried, 1994). This was why I asked each teacher to make a somewhat public declaration of their beliefs concerning social studies instruction at the inception of the study. However, I think it was the later reflection that had a greater impact, especially on King, than this initial and public pronouncement. Perhaps the final initial statement of the teachers’ beliefs, which occurred almost two weeks prior to the
final interview, had already faded too far in the distance to be impactful. Also, I was careful not to make any aspect of the individual teacher’s student data public to the other participants. This was due to Fried’s (1998) research, which showed that pointing out contradictory behaviors and making that information public, would be less likely to result in behavioral change when compared to keeping those transgression private.

**Transformative Learning**

According to Mezirow (1990), learning is “the process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation and action” (p. 1). It involves a series of steps that are grouped in stages of disorienting dilemma, critical reflection, rational discourse, and praxis. For Mezirow (1991), learning to be analytic and reflective of meanings, purposes, and values is critical for adult learners (Mezirow, 1991).

Based on constructivist thinking, the theory of transformative learning holds that our understanding of the current external world is a function of our past experiences (Mezirow, 1991). Mezirow claimed our perspectives might not be well articulated or even apparent as they often derive from a set of casual assumptions ingrained into our way of thinking. As a result, it takes an event of significant power, commonly referred to as a disorienting dilemma, to surface them (Christie et al., 2015). With my study, I attempted to create a disorienting dilemma by revealing the hidden curriculum which I hoped would be powerful enough to motivate a teacher towards further reflection and action.

Although my efforts fell short, according to Mezirow (2000), a disorienting dilemma does not necessarily have to be a single epochal event. In can be a series of
small, incremental experiences that spark transformative learning. When I added the element of asking the teachers to reflect on their ideologies, it was enough to inspire one teacher to immediately start to question some of their practices since they did not match their beliefs, even as another, Smith, only solidified their perspective. Taylor (2000) noted scholars do not fully understand why some dilemmas lead to transformative learning while others do not.

Although my goal was to inspire the teachers to want to reflect further upon their perspectives, the scope of the study did not include the elements of critical reflection, rational discourse, and praxis as designed by Mezirow (1991). To adhere to the full process of transformative learning, the teachers would have reflected deeper into their beliefs. Mezirow (1991) likely would refer to the small amount of reflection they did as introspection rather than reflection. Critical reflection involves not only identifying our meaning perspectives, but also their origins. Transformative learning occurs whenever critical reflection results in new or modified meaning schemes or premises (Mezirow, 1991). The participating teachers did not engage in the level of critical reflection necessary for transformative learning. Had they done so, they would have reflected upon their perspectives such as King’s belief that their civics students are not mature enough for a different type of instruction, Hall’s belief that memorization was most critical for understanding world history, or Smith’s belief that their system of lecturing (storytelling) was effective at reaching students of all interest and ability levels.

Experiences can strengthen, extend, or call into question our existing perspectives. While people tend to acknowledge and accept experiences that support their existing perspectives, those that contradict those perspectives are minimized to
avoid anxiety and distress, resulting in a blind spot (Mezirow, 1991). Contradictory experiences may be ignored or written off as anomalies, making their integration into our meaning system less likely. Even in the face of seemingly overwhelming evidence, people tend to accept the idea that the exception proves the rule if it supports their current perspectives (Mezirow, 1991). In addition, Mezirow explained that our understanding and interpretation of experiences is based upon our current meaning perspectives, which therefore determine the scope of our attention and their influence. As a result, this can lead to a distorted view of reality. Two of the teachers in my study were significantly more willing to discuss elements of the student data that supported their beliefs and perspectives. King was the only one who not only noticed students’ claims that were contradictory to their beliefs, but also remarked that they found them troubling.

Conclusions

Revealing the student perspective on the tasks their teacher assigns does not appear to have been effective in motivating the teachers to alter or improve their teaching practices. To the question of to what extent reflection on the students’ responses motivates them to alter practices, each teacher responded to the question with *not at all* or *not much*. They were even more strongly disinclined to admit the student data motivated them to alter their core beliefs about teaching and learning. The student-provided data may not have been powerful enough to have sparked cognitive dissonance or qualify as a disorienting dilemma, thereby precluding critical reflection or change.

I mistakenly expected the initial oral and public statement of each teacher’s beliefs on the teaching of social studies to have brought each teacher’s beliefs to the forefront of their thinking. Consequently, as part of their final interview, I also asked the
teachers to reflect upon the results of the curriculum ideologies inventory they completed as part of the TBP Survey. This additional element, combined with more purposeful reflection on it, seems to have been more successful in achieving the intent of the study. As evidence, one teacher became highly motivated to reevaluate their pedagogical practices, while a second teacher seemed inclined to alter their practices, but only with additional guidance or assistance. The third teacher remained confidently secure in their practices and beliefs.

The teachers’ differing responses may have been the result of various dissonance-reducing strategies at play, such as denial of responsibility or trivialization. They each blamed external factors, such as the blended-learning environment or the state-controlled curriculum, for why they taught in a particular manner. Each teacher in their think-aloud or interview made comments to minimalize student responses that contradicted their own perspective, although one teacher did seem to be impacted by some of these comments. The teacher’s level of self-complexity may have also played a role in how the teachers responded. The one teacher who would be identified as having a lower level of self-complexity was the one who was more willing to rethink their practices and make changes.

The hidden curriculum data proved to be too contradictory, allowing teachers the ability to easily locate and highlight evidence that supported their point of view while overlooking and discounting data that contradicted their perspective. The addition of focus groups or individual student interviews may have provided deeper data that inspired teachers to alter their practices or beliefs.
New Literature

This research study has sparked a greater interest in the process of teacher critical reflection, leading me to Brookfield’s (1995) four lenses of becoming a critically reflective teacher. According to Brookfield (1998), the “critically reflective practice is a process of inquiry involving practitioners in trying to discover, and research, the assumptions that frame how they work,” employing “the lens of their own autobiographies as learners of reflective practice, the lens of the learners’ eyes, [and] the lens of colleagues’ perceptions, the lens of theoretical, philosophical, and research literature” (p. 197). These elements align with the theory of transformative learning, particularly the critical reflection phase.

Of the four lenses, reflection through the lens of the student is most applicable to this study. I was attempting to use the SPL Survey as a window into the student experience. While I was relying solely on the survey, Brookfield (1995) recommends using a variety of methods including student evaluations, answers on assessments, student journals, and interview responses. Additional elements, particularly student interviews as already mentioned, would have led to deeper data for teachers to explore. We could have also conducted a deeper exploration into the teacher’s recent assessment data through the students’ eyes.

The student lens will reveal “those actions and assumptions that either confirm or challenge existing power relationships in the classroom” (Brookfield, 1995, p.30). Brookfield (1998) says reflection through the students’ eyes is one of the most consistently surprising elements of a teacher’s career. By uncovering the students’ perceptions, teachers gain some evidence if the students are hearing and seeing what we
want them to see. While this sometimes provides reassurance that the teacher is accomplishing what they intended, it can also return inconsistent or contradictory evidence. Through subsequent reflection growth can occur.

Brookfield (1998) said the main challenge with attempting to see through the student lens is they may be understandably reluctant to be honest and complete in their responses. Anonymity is crucial, but the students need to recognize the teacher intends to use their feedback to alter instruction. If not, they might view the process as pointless and be reluctant to be forthright in the future. While my study collected student data anonymously, since it ended with revealing the student perceptions to the teachers, unfortunately there is no guarantee the teachers will continue with the process to alter instruction. As a result, the students may feel as if their voices were not heard. Continuing the conversation through instructional coaching could change that outcome.

Being a critically reflective teacher is more than simply looking through the various lenses. According to Larrivee (2000), it also takes a commitment to essential practices. The critically reflective teacher must purposefully set aside time to reflect and perform it regularly. Regularly reflecting allows teachers to incorporate the changing experiences and attitudes of their students over time. They must be willing to critically reflect on all aspects of their practices and look for evidence that both supports and contradicts their own perceptions. If not, the teacher may be more willing to accept that certain elements of their classroom are beyond their control. For my participating teachers, this was the first time they had ever participated in an experience like this in terms of purposefully gaining student perception data. After twenty years of experience without regular reflection, they likely have succumbed to a strong external locus of
control, especially when it comes to critically evaluating their teaching. King, who has less than a third of the experience of the other two teachers, still was willing to attribute inconsistencies to external factors, but they seemed more willing to incorporate student feedback in the future.

**Action Plan**

This section describes the application of the action research process towards future activities. Contained herein is a connection between my findings and various practical recommendations as well as the implications of my results.

**Recommendations**

Cognitive dissonance theory, specifically the hypocrisy paradigm, has been shown to be effective in influencing future behaviors, especially when combined with reflection on one’s beliefs. However, to encourage meaningful change to teachers’ beliefs, this process needs to be extended to include the full transformative learning framework. The typical teacher, not trained in this type of data analysis or critical reflection, may need additional supports. Plus, conducting this level of deep analysis can be troublesome and painful as one comes face to face with cognitive dissonance.

I recommend that the core process contained in this study be adapted and adopted by individual teachers and instructional leaders. Individual teachers, having greater control over scheduling and access to students, would be able to modify the process described in this study to collect data of greater breadth due to access to assessment and assignment data as well as being able to collect data over a longer period of time. Their access to students would also allow teachers to obtain data of greater depth by using focus groups and student interviews, formal or informal. The teacher may need
additional training in developing effective instruments for gathering the student data as well as in methods for analyzing the data. They may also need assistance, particularly with the focus group or interview process, to provide student anonymity to ensure more honest and complete feedback. If they truly want to improve, I believe this process would be more rewarding than the vast majority of canned professional development.

The process discussed in this study could effectively inspire teachers to make short-term changes, particularly to the tasks they regularly assign. However, to increase the chances of meaningful, long-term changes, the process should also include critical reflection and rationale discourse to become embedded in the teacher’s praxis. Without the extension, teachers may react like my participating teachers did upon first reviewing the student data by focusing on the complementary data while minimizing the contradictory. Teachers may need guidance and training in being critically reflective of their core curricular and pedagogical beliefs and practices to accomplish this. Depending on the individual, guiding teachers through the process of being critically reflective may be accomplished through a series of provided thinking prompts or through partnering with an instructional coach. The instructional coach could also serve as the vehicle for the rational discourse step and incorporating the new ideas and practices into the teacher’s praxis.

I selected veteran teachers for my study because they appear to be the ones most solidified in their core curricular and pedagogical beliefs and practices. As a result, I believe they should be the ones targeted for this process by instructional leaders. However, this should not be mandatory because it may be met with disparagement and pushback, ultimately resulting in a less than half-hearted attempt at the process in order to
simply say they completed what was mandated. Instructional leaders should recommend and encourage their veteran teachers to embark on this type of journey, perhaps as part of their yearlong professional development plan.

Like other instructional coaches in my school district, I use a coaching cycle in which the first step involves capturing the current reality of the classroom, typically through video recording a segment of the class or classroom observations. However, the student lens is often missing from the process. Collecting student data needs to be as important of a tactic for seeing the current reality as video recording. Even though video recording may provide an accurate picture of what is occurring in the classroom, from a constructivist perspective, it is the meaning making within the students that matters most. By not taking the student perspective into account, the current reality picture is distorted. I understand that sometimes it is simple behavioral change on the teachers’ part that can yield desired results, but if an instructional coach recognizes more significant changes are justified, revealing the hidden curriculum may be warranted. As an instructional coach myself, I had previously overlooked the power of the student perspective. This study provides a basic structure I can modify as I work with individual teachers.

**Implementation Plan**

I am one of eight secondary-level instructional coaches in my district. I will share my findings with the other coaches, as well as with my immediate coaching supervisor. As a group, we meet once every two weeks for a full day. Part of that time is set aside to discuss the work we are doing, including the effectiveness of various strategies, and receive training on aspects of instructional coaching in which we feel we are lacking. This environment will afford me with the perfect opportunity to share my process and
findings with my fellow coaches. The focus of this presentation, which should not take more than twenty minutes, will be on process with little discussion of the theory. Also, since I truly respect their opinions and expertise, by sharing with the other instructional coaches, I will be able to solicit their feedback on the process to improve it. I can follow up with the other coaches at these bimonthly meetings to determine how many coaches are using it, how effective it is in leading to growth, and how we can continue to improve it. Hopefully, it will become part of our coaching playbook of strategies that we use when working with teachers.

I will also share the process and findings with the administration teams at each of my schools, being careful not to divulge specific information about the particular teachers who were involved. This will occur at one of the weekly meetings of the administrative team. I will recommend they encourage their veteran teachers to mimic the process with their students, offering my services as a guide. I do not plan on sharing the process and findings with the entire teaching staff at either of my schools unless directed to do so by the administration.

I will follow up with the teachers who participated in the survey, first to determine if they have experienced any negative effects. I will also be interested in whether they have had any additional thoughts about the student-provided data or the process itself. For those willing to engage in additional reflection or growth, I will offer my services as an instructional coach, mentor, or whatever else they need on that journey.

Reflection on the Research Process

While some aspects of the study turned out as expected, others did not. I was hoping for more encouraging results regarding the immediate impact of revealing the
hidden curriculum on altering the teachers’ practices. While I was not expecting that all of the participating teachers would walk away saying “Wow! I need to change x, y, and z!” I was hoping they would at least say, “Hmmm. I need to think more about that.” While having the teachers reflect upon the results of their curriculum ideologies inventory in conjunction with the student perspective, did result in one teacher’s strong desire to change their practices and one “only if I get help,” I was unable to get the teachers to truly start to question their core curricular and pedagogical beliefs. Instead they used their beliefs to rationalize away the student-provided data. I realize now that encouraging veteran teachers to start to question their long-held beliefs may require an event more epochal or a series of smaller, incremental events.

I expected the veteran teachers to be hesitant to recognize student-provided data that conflicted with their perceptions, but I did not expect that all of them would so fervently blame external factors for their teaching practices. In the beginning part of the TBP Survey, I asked the teachers to identify the elements that controlled what and how they taught. Interestingly, the two who said the mandated standards exerted significant control over them were the ones more open to change at the end of the process. Meanwhile, the teacher who felt they had greater freedom to teach what and how they wanted was the most obstinate when it came to the desire to change.

I was somewhat disappointed in the dissonance thermometer’s ability to identify each teacher’s level of discomfort as a way of predicting who would be willing to change their practices. The only teacher who actually showed a reasonable amount of dissonance was Smith, who eventually stated they were not willing to make any changes. King asked to complete the instrument a second time after we had reviewed the results of their
curriculum ideologies inventory. The results were significantly different, so perhaps I should have repeated that process with the other teachers. I expect that it would have also shifted Hall’s responses, but probably not Smith’s.

In hindsight, I think conducting student interviews or focus groups would have strengthened the student-provided data by allowing me to probe deeper into their perspectives. This may have made it more difficult for the teachers to overlook the student data that challenged their perspectives and would have also afforded me the opportunity to clarify any confusion students might have had during the SPL Survey.

I would have also preferred the opportunity to conduct the surveys while all the students were in front of me. Since each teacher only had only a single 82-minute block of face-to-face time with their students per week, I felt rushed to conduct the survey in a timely manner to minimize the loss of their instructional time. As a result, I sense some of the students may not have completely understood all the items on the SPL Survey despite my offering to answer any questions or clarify any confusions they may have had. I think the students would have benefitted from my providing more complete explanations of each question. Follow-up interviews and focus groups could have also served this purpose.

For me, this process has been a valuable learning experience. While I have frequently solicited student opinions regarding my teaching practices in the past, I have never followed such a formal procedure. I recognize now that the methods I followed in the past may have resulted in incomplete or incorrect findings. As an instructional coach, I have led teachers through the coaching cycle, but never with this level of importance placed upon the student-provided data. I have helped teachers create surveys for their
students as part of the coaching process, but it was always paired with video recording and observations. In hindsight, this may have resulted in minimizing the student data.

Conducting the amount of theoretical research necessary for this study was eye-opening. I erroneously thought I had a decent understanding of the theories of hidden curriculum and cognitive dissonance, but then I started doing real research. Every new study or article I read not only deepened my understanding and informed my procedure, but also led me down another path. In particular, I was drawn to transformative learning, which eventually became one of the core theories for my study. It has also led me to conduct additional research on critical reflection. I have enough literature downloaded on those topics to keep me busy for months to come. In the future, I would like to do a single-case study in which I assist and follow a teacher through the entire transformative learning process.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Due to the limited scope of this study when compared to the expansiveness of the theories encased within it, the purpose was not to reveal elements of hidden curriculum that can be applied to all students in all settings. It also was not designed to provide significant and generalizable evidence concerning all teachers’ reactions to cognitive dissonance and transformative learning regarding their ideals and their practices. However, the results of this study are of value to me and possibly other instructional coaches as we search for strategies and processes that may help us to inspire teacher growth. In this era of mandated standards, high-stakes testing, and effect sizes (Hattie, 2012), logic and rationalized decision-making seem to rule, turning the practice of teaching into a science rather than an art. Undeniably, some teachers respond positively
to logic. However, for others, teaching is an emotional endeavor. I do not believe that many teachers entered the field because it was logical, but because it was an emotional calling. In part, this study provides some evidence regarding the effectiveness of using an emotional rather than a logical component to encourage change in teacher practices.

Individuals respond to dissonance inducing events and cognitions in diverse ways (Festinger, 1957; Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones, 2007; McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001). Whereas revealing the hidden curriculum associated with the tasks the teacher assigns may induce high levels of dissonance in one teacher, it may produce low levels of dissonance in others. In addition, that same level of dissonance may not occur if the hidden curriculum associated with other aspects of the classroom experience, such as the teacher’s classroom rules, policies, and procedures, were exposed. The reasons for these differences could include various social, intellectual, and emotional factors (McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001), which are beyond the scope of this study. As a result, the data gathered in this study may only apply to the participants of the study in these contexts.

This study focused on only a single factor (student perceptions of the tasks assigned to them) to create cognitive dissonance. This may not be effective in causing a significant enough amount of cognitive dissonance in teachers to override their dissonance reducing measures and motivate them to grow. Considering more aspects of the teachers’ praxes, such as their assessment and feedback procedures, their classroom rules and policies, and their selection of content would likely provide greater opportunities to locate areas of dissonance. While collecting such vast amounts of information may be useful, it may be impractical since each student maintains their own perspectives of the hidden curriculum as it relates to them (Martin, 1976).
The hybrid learning model in place during this study may have impacted the study in a few ways. First, the teachers were forced to provide instruction in a manner different from what they and the students were used to. Eighty percent of the “instructional time” was provided through distance-learning, which requires some modifications to regular instruction. For instance, the in-person lecture was replaced with either pre-recorded videos of the teacher talking through their presentation or a video recording of live-instruction. Since teachers were not allowed to issue textbooks, and only the American History II course has an online version of their textbook, the teachers had to locate and provide digital, content-based readings. Another staple of social studies instruction, the whole class discussion, could no longer occur due to the asynchronous nature of the instruction. These are modifications that each of the teacher participants identified in the TBP Survey regarding how their instruction is currently different from a traditional schedule. Because of these changes, it might be easy for a teacher to use a dissonance reducing strategy like trivialization or denial of responsibility rather than address the issue and alter their practices. To negate or reduce this cognitive dissonance strategy, it might be helpful to provide examples of teachers at the school or in similar situations who are able to incorporate other teaching practices despite the mandated curriculum. It would be prudent to repeat this study in a more traditional setting, either with the same participants or new ones to validate the findings.

Future studies should not simply collect student data as a disorienting dilemma in isolation and expect it to have a significant impact on its own. While the hypocrisy paradigm studies demonstrated a likelihood of altering future behaviors, and transformative learning shows that a disorienting dilemma increases the likelihood of
altering beliefs, it needs to be embedded within the full framework transformative learning of critical reflection, rational discourse, and praxis. Without the full structure that requires the teachers to probe deeper into their beliefs and ideologies, including their source, there likely will not be significant change. My participating teachers were quick to identify external factors that limited their ability to teach the way they wanted. However, a more complete examination through guided critical reflection of their core curricular and pedagogical beliefs may have resulted in significant changes to those beliefs and their associated practices.

The quantity and quality of data was another limitation. While over one third of the students in each teachers’ classes completed the SPL Survey, higher numbers of respondents may have led to more reliable data. Also, additional data sources, such as student interviews or focus groups, would have provided deeper data and increased my ability to triangulate the data. Regarding teacher data, I obviously did not reach saturation. Analysis of each teacher’s data produced different results.

Teachers who participated in the study may choose to replicate the process to reflect on other facets of their instructional practices. Sharing their experiences about the process with other teachers may encourage them to embark on a similar journey. As I plan to share the study results with the other instructional coaches in my district, I hope it will encourage them to try this strategy as a supplement to our current dialogical coaching model. The data generated may seem limited to these few experiences, especially regarding the individualized nature of hidden curriculum and the unpredictability of cognitive dissonance. However, I believe efforts to help teachers be
more reflective of their practices, especially considering the student perspectives and the hidden curriculum, are valuable undertakings in the mission to grow the teachers I serve.

**Conclusion**

Inspiring veteran teachers to change their core curricular and pedagogical beliefs and practices seems like a herculean task. However, I chose to attack that problem because as an instructional leader, I wish to help free teachers from the stagnated reliance on strategies of the past to improve the teaching and learning for their students who are floundering in disengagement. The purpose of this study was to create an instrument that could motivate teachers to question and perhaps improve their core curricular and pedagogical practices and beliefs.

The study was built upon a theoretical framework of hidden curriculum, cognitive dissonance, and transformative learning. Hidden curriculum is the theory that teachers unknowingly or unintentionally transmit latent messages to their students (Martin, 1976). Cognitive dissonance is the theory that when an individual encounters two contradictory or opposing cognitions, they experience negative feelings and their mind engages in various tasks to reduce that dissonance (Festinger, 1975). The hypocrisy paradigm suggests such cognitive dissonance can impact a person’s future behaviors (Fried & Aronson, 1995). Transformative learning is a multistep process by which someone experiences a disorienting dilemma, which results in critical reflection and rational discourse, ultimately resulting in a change in praxes (Mezirow, 1990).

I guided three veteran social studies teachers through a process of peering through one keyhole of their hidden curriculum, in this case their students’ perspectives of the tasks assigned to them. Their students completed a survey in which they identified the
main tasks assigned to them as well as what messages they felt their teacher was sending in general, about the study of history or civics, and about learning to be a historian or political scientist. The teachers completed their own survey in which they reflected upon their perspectives of the tasks they assign as well as their curricular ideologies. The teachers then reflected on and compared their students’ responses with their own. I hoped this experience would be a disorienting dilemma with enough power to spark cognitive dissonance, thereby increasing the teachers’ desire to grow.

The results showed simply reflecting upon the student-provided data was not significant enough to motivate the teachers to want to change their teaching practices. With the addition of reflection on their current curricular and pedagogical beliefs, one teacher became highly motivated to change their practices, one was slightly motivated provided they would receive assistance in the process, and one remained uninspired. All the teachers engaged in dissonance-reducing strategies designed to limit the impact of the student-provided data. The teachers exhibited denial of responsibility to justify their current teaching practices. In particular, they blamed the distance-learning scheduling as well as the mandated curriculum. They also trivialized their students’ responses or failed to notice those that contradicted or challenged their perceptions. The use of student perspective could be effective in inspiring teachers to change their practices. However, motivating teachers to challenge and change their core curricular and pedagogical beliefs would require a more complete process like transformative learning to succeed.

The most effective professional development is that which is personal, relevant, focused, and cyclical. The process described in this study, with proper modifications, incorporates those elements and can be an effective tool for those who wish to motivate
and engage with teachers in the growth process. Change is a process and even though the teachers in this study may not have said they are willing to change, the seeds planted in this process may lead to change in the future. More time might be necessary to see the ultimate result of what I have sown.

While the recurring “beep, beep, beep” that Sputnik transmitted as it orbited the Earth might not seem epochal, the underlying message inspired the United States to critically reflect on its own beliefs and practices, resulting in significant changes to business and industry, science and technology, and education. If teachers can only learn to translate their students’ messages, it might result in significant changes to teaching and learning in their classrooms.
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APPENDIX A: DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Thank you for participating in this research study. There was some information about the study that I was not able to discuss with you prior to the study because doing so would have influenced your actions and thus biased the study results. This is a full explanation of the study’s purpose.

In this study, I was interested in understanding the impact of revealing the hidden curriculum on teachers’ motivation to improve their practices and/or core curricular and instructional beliefs.

You were told that I was studying the student and teacher perceptions of learning. However, this is only part of the study’s purpose. This deception was necessary because of the concern that if you knew the real purpose, you might alter your teaching practices.

I hope this clarifies the purpose of the research, and the reason why we could not tell you all of the details about the study prior to your participation.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research study contact me at (XXX)XXX-XXXX or email me at XXXXXX@gmail.com.

Questions about your rights as a research subject are to be directed to, Lisa Marie JOHNSON, IRB Manager, Office of Research Compliance, University of South Carolina, 1600 Hampton Street, Suite 414D, Columbia, SC 29208, phone: (803) 777-7095 or email: LisaJ@mailbox.sc.edu.

Thank you again for your participation!

Jeff Schneider
APPENDIX B: STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNING SURVEY

Implementation Note: This survey will be completed via Google Forms during class time while the teacher is not present in the room. The researcher will not read each item but will be available to answer specific questions regarding the meaning of terms. Data from Section I will not be shared with the teacher, but might be used for comparative purposes.

I. Background Information: Students, please answer these questions as completely and honestly as possible. The information from this section will not be shared with your teacher.

1. What is your grade level? _____

2. To the best of your knowledge, what letter grade are you currently earning in this class? _____
II. Tasks Typically Assigned to Students:

Instructions: Identify the five (5) most common activities that your teacher assigns to you either while you are in class or for completion outside of regular class time. List most often assigned task first followed by the next four most assigned tasks in order of how often they are assigned. Use the list at the bottom of this page for possible suggestions, but feel free to add items that are not on the list.

1. (Most assigned) __________________________________________________________
2. (2nd Most assigned) _____________________________________________________
3. (3rd Most assigned) _____________________________________________________
4. (4th Most assigned) _____________________________________________________
5. (5th Most assigned) _____________________________________________________

List of Commonly Assigned Tasks in a Social Studies Class

- Listen to the teacher lecture (can be through video) and take notes
- Read a secondary source (i.e. textbook) and take notes
- Read a secondary source and write answers to questions
- Watch a video (not of your teacher)
- Watch a video (not of your teacher) and take notes or write answers to questions
- Teacher demonstrates/models how to complete a task
- Students are given a task or problem and asked to figure it out on their own
- Participate in whole group discussions
- Participate in small group or partner discussions
- Participate in role-playing and/or simulations
- Learn in collaboration/cooperation with fellow students
- Use an online instructional program for learning
- Read and analyze a map
- Read, analyze, and interpret a table or chart
- Read and analyze a primary source
- Analyze and interpret an image or political cartoon
- Answer a document-based question using several sources
- Create graphic organizers to help understand information
- Create concept maps to help understand and connect information
- Create a map to reflect content information
- Create a table or chart to reflect content information
- Create an image or political cartoon to reflect content information
- Create a secondary source to summarize content information
2. Reflecting upon your answers above, rank each of the following types of tasks from 1 (most important) to 4 (least important) based upon what you think your teacher feels is important. Use each of the numbers only once.

___ Tasks that focus on learning and memorizing specific course content
___ Tasks that focus on grappling with and understanding complex aspects of the course content
___ Tasks that focus on developing the skills of a historian / political scientist
___ Tasks that focus on allowing students the freedom to learn about topics of their own choosing

3. Based upon the tasks your teacher typically assigns and/or does not assign, what message do you feel your teacher is sending regarding what is important about the class?

4. Think about the tasks that are typically assigned by your social studies teacher, whether graded or not. Why do you think your teacher asks you to do them?

5. What types of tasks do you think would be most useful for learning about history / civics?

6. What types of tasks do you think would be most useful for learning how to be a historian / political scientist?
APPENDIX C: TEACHER BELIEFS AND PRACTICES SURVEY

Implementation Note: Teachers will have two days to complete this survey via Google Forms at a time and setting most convenient for them.

Teachers, please complete the survey as accurately and honestly as possible. Please complete each section in the assigned order.

Part I: Background Information
1. How many years of teaching experience do you have (overall and at this school)?

2. What do you enjoy most about your job?

3. What do you enjoy least about your job?

4. What do you feel are your strengths as a teacher?

5. What do you feel are your weaknesses as a teacher?

6. What do you feel controls what you teach on a regular basis?

7. What do you feel controls how you teach on a regular basis?

8. What factors have had the greatest influence on who you are as a teacher?
Part II: Pedagogical Practices

Instructions: Identify the five (5) most common activities that you assign to your students either while they are in class or for completion outside of regular class time. List the most often assigned task first followed by the next four most assigned tasks in order of how often they are assigned. Use the list at the bottom of this page for possible suggestions, but feel free to add items that are not on the list.

1. (Most assigned) ____________________________
2. (2nd Most assigned) ____________________________
3. (3rd Most assigned) ____________________________
4. (4th Most assigned) ____________________________
5. (5th Most assigned) ____________________________

List of Commonly Assigned Tasks in a Social Studies Class

- Listen to the teacher lecture (can be through video) and take notes
- Read a secondary source (i.e. textbook) and take notes
- Read a secondary source and write answers to questions
- Watch a video (not of your teacher)
- Watch a video (not of your teacher) and take notes or write answers to questions
- Teacher demonstrates/models how to complete a task
- Students are given a task or problem and asked to figure it out on their own
- Participate in whole group discussions
- Participate in small group or partner discussions
- Participate in a formalized debate
- Participate in role-playing and/or simulations
- Work on completing tasks individually
- Learn in collaboration/cooperation with fellow students
- Use an online instructional program for learning (not created by the teacher)
- Read and analyze a map
- Read, analyze, and interpret a table or chart
- Read and analyze a primary source
- Analyze and interpret an image or political cartoon
- Answer a document-based question using several sources
- Create graphic organizers to help understand information
- Create concept maps to help understand and connect information
- Create a map to reflect content information
- Create a table or chart to reflect content information
- Create an image or political cartoon to reflect content information
- Create a secondary source to summarize content information
1. What is your rationale for the selection of the practices that you use most often?

2. What is your rationale for not or rarely using some of the other practices listed??

3. What types of tasks do you think would be most useful for learning about history / civics?

4. What types of tasks do you think would be most useful for learning how to be a historian / political scientist?

5. In what ways is your teaching during the blended and/or online learning environment different from your traditional face-to-face instruction?

**Instructions:** In each of the following sections you will find four statements with a blank in front. Read each statement carefully and then rank the statements from 1 (agree with the most) to 4 (agree with the least). Use each of the numbers (1, 2, 3, and 4) only once in each section of the inventory. Place the numbers on the lines to the left of each statement. There is no one right answer. Take your time.

**Section A**

___ Schools should provide children with the ability to perceive problems in society, envision a better society, and act to change society so that there is social justice and a better life for all people.

___ Schools should fulfill the needs of society by efficiently training youth to function as mature constructive members of society.

___ Schools should be communities where the accumulated knowledge of the culture is transmitted to the youth.

___ Schools should be enjoyable, stimulating, child-centered environments organized around the developmental needs and interests of children as those needs and interests present themselves from day to day.

**Section B**

___ Teachers should be supervisors of student learning, using instructional strategies that will optimize student learning.

___ Teachers should be companions to students, using the environment within which the student lives to help the student learn.

___ Teachers should be aids to children, helping them learn by presenting them with experiences from which they can make meaning.

___ Teachers should be knowledgeable people, transmitting that which is known to those who do not know it.

**Section C**

___ Learning best proceeds when the student is presented with the appropriate stimulus materials and positive reinforcement.

___ Learning best proceeds when the teacher clearly and accurately presents to the student that knowledge which the student is to acquire.

___ Learning best takes place when children are motivated to actively engage in experiences that allow them to create their own knowledge and understanding of the world in which they live.

___ Learning best occurs when a student confronts a real social crisis and participates in the construction of a solution to that crisis.
Section D

The knowledge of most worth is the structured knowledge and ways of thinking that have come to be valued by the culture over time.

The knowledge of most worth is the personal meaning of oneself and of one’s world that comes from one’s direct experience in the world and one’s personal response to such experience.

The knowledge of most worth is the specific skills and capabilities for action that allow an individual to live a constructive life.

The knowledge of most worth is a set of social ideals, a commitment to those ideals, and an understanding of how to implement those ideals.

Section E

Childhood is essentially a time of learning in preparation for adulthood, when one will be a constructive, contributing member of society.

Childhood is essentially a period of intellectual development highlighted by growing reasoning ability and capacity for memory that results in ever greater absorption of cultural knowledge.

Childhood is essentially a time when children unfold according to their own innate natures, felt needs, organic impulses, and internal timetables. The focus is on children as they are during childhood rather than as they might be as adults.

Childhood is essentially a time for practice in and preparation for acting upon society to improve both oneself and the nature of society.

Section F

Evaluation should objectively indicate to others whether or not students can perform specific skills. Its purpose is to certify students’ competence to perform specific tasks.

Evaluation should continuously diagnose children’s needs and growth so that further growth can be promoted by appropriate adjustment of their learning environment. It is primarily for the children’s benefit, not for comparing children with each other or measuring them against predetermined standards.

Evaluation should be a subjective comparison of students’ performance with their capabilities. Its purpose is to indicate to both the students and others the extent to which they are living up to their capabilities.

Evaluation should objectively determine the amount of knowledge students have acquired. It allows students to be ranked from those with the greatest intellectual gain to those with the least.
Part IV: Reflection

1. What do you notice as you reflect upon the tasks you typically assign to your students in Part II compared with your core curricular and pedagogical beliefs in Part III?

2. How did completing and reflecting upon your answers from the survey make you feel about yourself as a teacher?

3. To what extent does completing and reflecting upon this survey inspire you to want to alter your teaching practices?

4. To what extent does completing and reflecting upon this survey inspire you to want to alter your core curricular and instructional beliefs?
APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT FORM - TEACHERS

Principle Investigator: Jeffrey A. Schneider
Email: 
Phone: 
Project Title: Comparing Student and Teacher Perceptions of Learning

Greetings!
You are invited to participate in a research study at Pseudonym High School in your social studies course during the Fall of 2020. This form details the purpose of the study, as well as a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

The purpose of this study is to compare students’ and teachers’ perceptions of the tasks typically assigned to them. Although this letter outlines the general nature of the tasks that you will be asked to perform during this study, the full intent and purpose of the study cannot be explained because doing so would bias the study results.

Your participation in this study will require the following tasks:
1. Complete a survey in which you reflect upon your core curricular and pedagogical practices as well as tasks you typically assign your students.
2. Allow me approximately twenty minutes from each class period to survey students regarding their perspectives of the activities typically assigned to them in class.
3. Meet with me and the other participating teachers as a group.
4. Meet with me individually so that I may share the raw data from your students and record your initial reactions.
5. Be interviewed by me a week later to share your thoughts and reflections on the student data.

You have no obligation to participate in the study. Your name and all other identifying information will remain confidential during this study and after the study is completed. Please feel free to contact me anytime during this study if you have any concerns or decide to withdraw from this study. If you have any questions, please contact me directly by email or phone before signing this form.

I AGREE   DO NOT AGREE   (circle one) to participate in this research study.

Participant’s Name (please print): ________________________________________________

Participant’s Signature ___________________________ Date: __________
APPENDIX E: MODIFIED THINK-ALOUD PROTOCOL

Implementation Notes: A modified think-aloud protocol was used to collect data containing the participating teacher’s initial reactions to the student-provided data regarding their perceptions of the learning tasks assigned to them. The student data were collected anonymously and any comments that could potentially identify the student were removed or altered. This think-aloud protocol occurred during a private meeting at a time and place of the participant’s choosing.

A typical think-aloud protocol asks participants to bring forth, as much as possible, the inner speech that occurs as tasks are performed with “keep talking” as the only direction from the researcher during the process. However, this protocol allows the usage of verbal prompts such as “why do you think that,” or “how does that make you feel.” Those prompts are used to better understand the rationale behind the teacher’s reflections as well as their emotional responses. This preliminary reaction by the participants will assist in determining the extent to which teachers are aware of the messages they transmit through their hidden curriculum as well as the impact that revealing hidden curriculum has on teachers.

Directions: Read the following statement to participant before starting the think-aloud protocol:

“Thank you for meeting with me so that I may share the student data with you. While you review the data, I ask that you please try to verbalize your thought processes as much as possible. I may ask you to explain your thinking or describe how you are feeling about segments of the data. Please be as honest and open as you feel comfortable. Anything you say will be kept confidential. We can end the session or take a break whenever you desire. Do you have any questions before we begin?”

Protocol:

1. Provide a copy of the student data to the teacher.
2. Ask teacher to slowly read through the data and verbalize their thoughts as much as possible.
3. If there is a pause in the teacher’s speaking, remind them to keep talking.
4. When appropriate, as teacher to explain their thinking or how it makes them feel.
5. End the think-aloud protocol when all of the data has been reviewed or the teacher asks for the session to end.
APPENDIX F: FINAL TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Date of Interview: Location:
Time Started: Time Completed:
Participant Interviewed:

I. General Questions: Questions are read aloud by the researcher. Interview is recorded for transcription, but the researcher will take notes regarding observations that may not be part of the verbal responses. While most of the questions will be asked, the specific questions selected will depend on the participant responses. Additional follow-up questions not listed may also be asked based upon the participant responses.

1. What are your thoughts after having a week to reflect on the data provided by the students in comparison with your own responses?

2. To what extent do you agree with the student responses? Explain.

3. In what areas do you feel the students’ perspectives and your own are most similar/different?

4. To what extent do your instructional and curricular practices reflect your core beliefs?

5. To what extent does reflecting upon the students’ responses motivate you to alter your practices?

6. To what extent does reflecting upon the students’ responses motivate you to alter your instructional practices and or your core beliefs?

7. To what extent does reflecting upon the students’ responses motivate you to seek additional professional learning opportunities to improve your practices?

8. If you are interested in altering your beliefs or practices, how will you do it? Will you engage in some type of professional learning? What types?

9. Which, if any, elements of this experience were most/least motivating to you to want to improve your practices and/or beliefs?

10. How could this experience be modified to instill a greater desire for you to want to change your practices and/or beliefs?
**II. Dissonance Thermometer**: The following activity will be presented for the teachers to complete in written or electronic (Google Form) format.

Below are words that can describe different types of feelings. For each word, please indicate how much it describes how you are feeling right now after deeper reflection of the student data as compared to your perspectives and beliefs about teaching and learning by placing an ‘X’ under the most appropriate number on the scale. "1" means "does not apply at all" and "7" means "applies very much" to how you are feeling right now.

Don't spend much time thinking about each word. Just give a quick, gut-level response.

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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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(Adopted from Devine et al., 1999)
APPENDIX G: PARENTAL NOTIFICATION LETTER

**Project Title:** Comparing Student and Teacher Perceptions of Learning

Greetings parents and guardians! My name is Jeff Schneider. I am the instructional coach at Pseudonym High School as well a doctoral student at the University of South Carolina. For my dissertation, I am conducting a research study to compare students’ perceptions of the tasks typically assigned to them with the perceptions and instructional beliefs of their teachers.

Your child has been invited to participate in this research study at Pseudonym High through their social studies course during the Fall semester of 2020.

Student participation in this study will require them to complete a brief survey in which they share their perceptions about the tasks typically assigned to them in their social studies class this semester. The survey will be completed via Google Forms during their social studies class time or at home depending on their schedule. The survey can be found at: [www.tinyurl.com/SPLPL20](http://www.tinyurl.com/SPLPL20)

Your child’s name or other identifying information will not be collected as part of this study, allowing the information they provide to remain completely anonymous, even to their teacher. Your child has no obligation to participate in the study.

When surveying students, UCPS school board policy requires that I provide parents with a copy of the survey at least 10 days before to provide them an opportunity to review the survey and opt out of having their student complete it.

Please feel free to contact me anytime during this study if you have any concerns or decide to have your child withdraw from this study. If you have any questions, please contact me directly by email or phone.

**Principle Investigator:** Jeffrey A. Schneider
**Email:**
**Phone:**

I **AGREE**  DO NOT AGREE (circle one) to allow my student participate in this study.

Student’s Name (please print): ________________________________

Parent or Legal Guardian’s Name (please print): ________________________________

Date: __________
APPENDIX H: TEACHER REFLECTION GUIDE

Implementation Notes: The following reflection questions were designed to help guide the teachers as they read, analyze, and reflect upon the student data. The teachers are not required to answer the questions or provide written responses to them.

Directions: Teachers, as you continue to reflect upon the student data, feel free to use the following list of questions as a guide if you choose.

Reflection Questions:

1. What parts of the data capture your attention?
2. In what ways was the student data consistent with what you were expecting?
3. In what ways was the student data not consistent with what you were expecting?
4. What key patterns or trends do you notice in the student data?
5. What does the data “say” to you about your students’ perspective on your methods of teaching?
6. What good news is there to celebrate?
7. What conclusions can you draw from the data?