Creating Cultures of Pedagogical Caring: Empowering Student Voice Through Historical Inquiry

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In high school settings, the social-emotional needs of students are often seen as a minor focus of attention while secondary curricula and standards are the major areas of interest. Considering recent events related to the pandemic, I suggest that the demand for attending to students' social-emotional needs through demonstrations of caring is more necessary than ever. This study is designed to provide teachers with tools/data to support student-centered approaches in their classrooms that address students' social-emotional needs, their interaction with pedagogical caring, and their engagement and learning through instructional approaches that elicit student agency and voice within a culture of caring.

To test the impact of an emphasis on students' social-emotional needs, this study focuses on the implementation of the *Think & Link* activity, which provides a forum for students' agency as well as a context for students' learning and use of historical thinking practices. Specifically, this study hopes to measure how attempts to engage student voice and agency through *Think & Link* result in a change in students' perceptions of caring in my classroom, how students engage with the *Think & Link* process, and how that engagement was reflected in their learning and use of specific historical thinking practices.

The results of this study find that the Think & Link activity served as a crucial nexus for change in students' perceptions of caring in the classroom, and a development in their social emotional learning. On this basis, the implementation of student-centered activities, focused on

increasing pedagogical caring, should be considered when supporting students at the secondary level.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my family and friends who support me, my mentors who guide me, and my students who inspire me. I am truly grateful for having each of you in my life. As Fred Rogers once said, “taking care is one way to show your love. Another way is letting people take good care of you when you need it.” Without you all, none of this would be possible.

1.0 Introduction

In high school settings, the social-emotional needs of students are often seen as a minor focus of attention while secondary curricula and standards are the major areas of interest. However, considering recent events related to the pandemic, I suggest that the demand for attending to students' social-emotional needs through demonstrations of caring is more necessary than ever. During these unprecedented times, students' routines have been disrupted and their sense of security has been upended. This study is designed to provide teachers with tools/data to support student-centered approaches in their classrooms that address students' social-emotional needs and their engagement and learning through instructional approaches that elicit student agency and voice within a culture of caring.

1.1 Why Caring Matters

Caring is an essential aspect of the success of students, particularly in high school. In my experience working with students for the past six years, I have found that, for many of them, high school is a time of self-discovery, academic exploration, and character development. If students feel that they are cared for, and supported, teachers could help create positive and supportive rapport which help build an environment where learning and personal growth can prosper. Ryan and Deci (2000) posit that care, or as they define "relatedness," is believed to be an essential part of student success according to Self-Determination Theory. They theorize that *relatedness* is vital for the development of student adjustment and well-being, and that Relationship Motivation

Theory, one of the six cornerstones of Self-Determination theory, supports the empowerment of student autonomy.

Several other scholars (Barber, 2002; Brown, 2007; Ferreira & Bosworth, 2001; Garza, Alejandro, Blythe, & Fite, 2013; Scales & Taccogna, 2000; Wolfgramm; 1995) have been arguing for the importance of caring in schools for nearly two decades. Unfortunately, these scholars agree that the home is no longer a place of security and love for many students. Rather, homes are often the frontline of financial and emotional stress (Wolfgramm, 1995). Therefore, in some cases, the supporting of students' social-emotional wellbeing falls to caring adults outside the home to provide the necessary supports students need to grow into caring adults themselves. Ferreira and Bosworth (2001) collected students' perceptions of caring adults and discovered that "caring, reciprocity or mutuality was absent from the educational context experienced by many of these students," and as a result, there was a noticeable lack of caring behavior within the school community (p. 28).

Over the past few decades, schools have become the primary source of mental health supports for students from ages 12 through 17 (Golberstein, Wen, & Miller 2020). Thus, the implementation of approaches to support students' social-emotional needs at the secondary level has become even more critical. My goal is to address such needs through approaches that focus on student voice and agency.

1.2 The System

Labaree (1997) has argued that the "democratic" nature of schools, which strives for equity and holistic education, seems to primarily focus on status attainment and social mobility. This is

seen in his examination of the meritocratic ideology, which "embodies the liberal vision of free choice and limitless possibilities that have helped make capitalist democracy such an appealing model for the organization of political and socioeconomic life" (p. 60). Therefore, in schools today, students feel they are pressured to meet expectations of a model that is often dominated by those in the majority who tend to focus on maintaining the status quo.

When examining my place of practice through the lens described by Labaree, it becomes evident that, historically, many schools in the area maintain a traditional set of expectations that rely on comparing students to those in the majority – upper middle class, White families. An understanding of the shortfalls of those approaches and expectations has led to the creation of a school mission statement that aims to create a supportive environment that will carry all students to graduation and into the working world. As a result, there have been several district policies enacted that focus on emphasizing student choice, the customization of education, and the development of supportive and innovative classroom settings. Therefore, this district is an ideal setting to begin to develop a democratic classroom model that characterizes students as partners in their education rather than products of the education system.

My problem of practice is centered around creating cultures of caring in my classroom by empowering students' voices. I have been a teacher for six years and have taught a variety of courses including Pre-AP History, Senior English, Seminar 9th Grade History, Anthropology, Psychology, and Film Studies at a small district in Central Pennsylvania. However, I was recently hired by a district in the Pittsburgh region, and I am now teaching four sections of Honors 11th American History and a section of AP US History in Benjamin Franklin High School (pseudonym). These courses are conducted in a hybrid block scheduling model due to the modifications made in response to the pandemic. Therefore, I will only see each group of students

in person two days a week and engage with them virtually one day each week. Within the high school there are approximately 1,400 students currently enrolled with about 15% identifying as students of color.

Before beginning my teaching at Benjamin Franklin High School, I had the opportunity to sit down with Mr. Roosevelt, principal, to discuss the students and how the pandemic might be affecting them. I also wanted to explain how my research interests might support positive change in the school. After a fruitful conversation, Mr. Roosevelt informed me of the changes the district had been making in recent years to support student agency prior to the pandemic.

For instance, Mr. Roosevelt described that, like most students, the students at Benjamin Franklin High School were excited about their return to school but also had their reservations. He emphasized the importance of developing meaningful and supportive environments. To begin to make these changes, homeroom teachers had been asked to implement the "4C Model" which focuses on developing a classroom community that is centered on caring, connections, coping, and cheerfulness. I then described how the goal of my inquiry is to develop similar settings in the classroom—cultures of caring-- by supporting and empowering students' choice and voice grounded in course content.

Mr. Roosevelt then told me about a student-created committee called the "QuaranTeam" that is focused on supporting communication and students' social-emotional health throughout the 2020-2021 academic year. Mr. Roosevelt invited me to sit in on a meeting with John, the student who founded the team, to learn about the concerns of the student body at large. In that meeting, John described the reservations his classmates had about returning to school and their desire to work with faculty and staff to create a caring and supportive environment for their peers. After another productive conversation in which I shared examples from my review of scholarly

literature, John asked me to serve as one of the faculty advisors of the committee so we could work together to develop positive experiences for students this year. Each faculty advisor was assigned a specific area of student life to manage, including academics, activities, athletics, and counseling services. My specific role is to manage the academic committee in the hopes of examining, gauging, and supporting students' feelings of academic accomplishment during the global pandemic.

The goal of the "QuaranTeam" is to implement open and timely communication between the students, faculty, and staff of Benjamin Franklin High School in hopes of developing a collegial spirit of unity during these difficult times. The team will be comprised of twelve students, three from each grade level, and members of the faculty and staff. The students will then partner with the Student Council to release information or respond to questions through a weekly newsletter. John's goal in developing this committee is to try to assuage the reservations the students, faculty, and staff may have in returning to school this year.

1.3 Stakeholders

When examining the stakeholders for my study it is important to note that not only is it my goal for students to benefit from this intervention but also the district's faculty and staff, administrators, and parents/community members. However, in my current position as a classroom teacher, several stakeholders are outside the realm of my sphere of influence. As a result, I will be examining the stakeholders that my actions can directly influence--students and faculty/staff.

Due to the power distribution within this district, the administration, principals, superintendent, and the school board may be affected by this change, but they are realistically out

of my sphere of influence. These groups have all indicated their support for my efforts to improve school climate; however, the changes I make within my classroom will only have auxiliary effects on these groups.

To gain a better understanding of what potential effects my study will have on groups within my sphere of influence, I have used the examination of scholarly literature and empathy interviews.

1.3.1 Students

Students are the most obvious beneficiary of my inquiry, as they are the focus of the change. My goal, as practitioner-researcher, is to help students within Benjamin Franklin High School believe that they are partners in their education rather than products. The ideal outcome of my inquiry would be an increase in student satisfaction with their school experience with specific references to the instructional approaches and classroom culture that I strive to create. I hope to develop an empowering ethnographic study that gives students important roles in the courses that I teach.

1.3.2 Faculty/Staff

Other stakeholders that will be affected include the faculty and staff of the school. To properly implement a shift toward student empowerment, teachers and staff would be required to examine specific aspects of their daily instruction, including positive feedback, rapport building, classroom management, and professional development. Ideally, if positive changes are made to the culture of the building, teachers and staff would see an increase in participation and student

involvement within the school. Additionally, teachers would ideally see fewer referrals, as students become more invested in their studies.

Rogers and Webb (2016) explore the impact of advances in the field of education on the role of the teacher. They suggest that current reform efforts are beginning to shift from the student-centered to content/standards-centered approaches. As a result, the relational nature of secondary education has been devalued. However, an "ethic of caring [can] provide[s] a way to reclaim the affect in education," and "with caring at heart…all of [teachers'] actions should be considered in terms of their impact on the welfare of their students" (p. 175). This call to action served as a launch point for my study.

1.4 Problem Statement

My problem of practice focuses on the potential for student-centered approaches to positively influence students' social-emotional experiences in my courses. Specifically, I seek to create a culture of caring in my classroom to support students' agency and voice, their feelings of well-being as well as their engagement and learning.

2.0 Review of Scholarly Literature

As previously stated, student-centered education has been the subject of decades of research, but in many cases, has not been implemented with fidelity (Brown, 2007; Ferreira & Bosworth, 2001; Garza, Alejandro, Blythe, & Fite, 2013; Scales & Taccogna, 2000; Wolfgramm; 1995). However, with the increase in school violence and student self-harm, this topic has assumed critical importance — researcher Nel Noddings advocates for the development of a culture of caring to mediate these concerns. Noddings (2005) defines caring as "tak[ing] into account [students'] feelings and desires…and respond[ing] as positively as teachers' values and capacities allow" (p. 2). She argues that teachers must create caring, reciprocal relationships with students. Therefore, I believe that teachers can play an integral role in helping students achieve both their academic goals *and* their personal goals, even if those goals do not align with the established curriculum.

In my review of scholarly literature, I examined how the creation of cultures of caring relates to eliciting and honoring student voice (Mitra, 2018; Simmons, Graham, & Thomas, 2015) and restorative justice practices (Blood & Thorsborne, 2015; Vaandering, 2014). I believe that by including these pedagogies, the implementation of cultures of caring will be more applicable to the needs of students currently going through high school.

2.1 Purpose of Review

To understand how to address the issue related to students' negative experiences in the school culture in which I teach, I consulted the scholarly literature to explore:

1. What academic and historical perspectives explain the nature and development of cultures of caring in educational settings?
2. How have cultures of caring been developed and assessed in educational settings?

I examined the above questions to develop an academic framing for the creation of cultures of caring. In this review, I explored historical and scholarly perspectives while identifying how to implement them in the current education system. I have concentrated on research focused on adolescents since I intend to support students in grades 7-12. I additionally explored successful social-emotional education programs so that I could generate ideas for connecting to the content in my Honors American History classes. I also examined research on the empowerment of students' voices in the classroom. Finally, I focused on practitioner research to understand currently implemented classroom practices that impact student agency.

To include multiple notions of "care," I located relevant works from databases (e.g., PittCat Portal, EBSCO, Google Scholar) with a variety of search terms, including care, empowering students, holistic education, restorative justice, social-emotional learning, and student voice. I also consulted seminal works that were identified through cross-reference searches, which provides broader perspectives on caring and related concepts.

2.2 What Scholarly and Historical Perspectives Explain the Nature and Development of Cultures of Caring in Educational Settings?

A variety of perspectives on caring in educational settings can be defined. These perspectives range from exploring care from a historical or philosophical perspective (Acker, 1995; Dewey, 1893; hooks, 2003; Noddings, 2005) to exploring care education's application in secondary schools (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2016; Rogers & Webb, 2016) with the goal of determining how these concepts foster student growth in a way that spans the development of the field. Creating cultures of caring means creating an environment in which students feel accepted in the classroom, are comfortable taking risks in their education, are kind and respectful to one another, and can appreciate the differences they have and the commonalities on which they can build. Care has been an essential part of the education process for more than 100 years; yet, in that time, the way scholars define care and its effects on students has dramatically evolved.

2.2.1 Evolution of Care

The philosophy of John Dewey serves as a foundation of care in education. Through his arguments for ethical and holistic education for students, Dewey called for drastic changes in the "current" education system and for teachers to take up the mantle of change. He felt that the education system had become too industrialized and that the system was too focused on moving large numbers of people through school and promptly transitioning them into the workforce.

Dewey (1893) called for the end of standardized, industrial education and suggested a focus on supporting the vital relationship between teachers and their students. He believed that there was a need for the art of teaching to return to a practice that focused on quality and not quantity. The

education system would become student-centered; and as a result, he developed the concept of holistic education. Dewey (1924) asserted that the educational system needed to focus on teaching the *subjects* of the teacher rather than the *subject* of the course. Nearly a century later, the implementation of care in education continued to develop as a facet of the feminist movement in education.

In the 1990s, scholars provided additional historical analyses that further examined the foundational movements of caring in education. Acker (1995) defined the act of caring in school as a trend in the feminist movement, and that caring is often found in places of practice run by female administrators. Over time, she emphasized that this work could be done by any educator who is passionate about who want student to feel cared for in all aspects of their school experience.

Like Acker, bell hooks (2003) asserted that teaching is, in its most natural state, a caring profession. However, hooks believes the current education system overlooks care in favor of standardization hooks (2003) calls for caring teachers to be witnesses for their students and guides through their educational journey with the students' goals as the compass. hooks also called upon teachers to dismantle educational systems that oppress subordinated students such as students of poverty or students of minority backgrounds. According to hooks, when "teachers teach with love, [and] combin[e] care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect, and trust, we are often able to enter the classroom and go straight to the heart of the matter, which is knowing what to do on any given day to create the best climate for learning" (p. 134).

hook's passion for student-centered, caring education was taken up by Nel Noddings. Noddings (2005) analyzed the impact of a caring philosophy on both the student and the teacher. She provided a definition of care that requires teachers to step outside of their comfort zones to help their students' extracurricular needs by participating in a simple task -- listening. Noddings

(2005) claimed that teachers must listen to their students' needs and then apply these strategies to their style of teaching. She observed that being a content expert is no longer enough to be a competent educator, and it has become the responsibility of the teacher to learn about their students' interests, aspirations, reservations, and goals.

Isenbarger and Zembylas (2016) posited that caring is as vital to the success of students as intellectual and professional behaviors within the classroom. They consider caring in school to be an "emotional labor" that influences students and transforms the educational experiences of those who participate in the process. Isenbarger and Zembylas (2016) also believe that there are three kinds of caring in schools: (a) pedagogical, which focuses on caring about students' academic success; (b) moral, which examines the focus on values and ethics in learning; and (c) cultural, which emphasizes the importance of sharing the norms of the culture that the school resides. These definitions of care in education can support a change from a static perspective to an actionable methodology of improvement science.

2.2.2 In Summary

Although it is not directly stated, caring education has been a foundational part of public schooling. As the American educational system has adapted over time, so has the application of care in the classroom. Researchers have documented a movement from general considerations to practical approaches to address the need for caring classrooms. Those practical approaches are the subject of the next section.

2.3 How Have Cultures of Caring Been Developed and Assessed in Educational Settings?

In the current education system, students are provided supports to help them grow and prepare for critical transitions in their lives such as moving from kindergarten to first grade and elementary to middle school. Unfortunately, these supports seem to disappear in many districts when students reach secondary school, mainly because teachers and administrators believe such support to be too juvenile for their students. Therefore, to create buy-in, it is necessary to define caring in a way that holds to high school expectations. Two approaches that address this issue are restorative justice practices and the honoring of student voice.

2.3.1 Restorative Justice

In many secondary schools, teachers are restricted by standardization and are losing their autonomy to develop meaningful activities based on localized assessments of student needs. As a result, teachers must get creative in their determination to engage students in the discussion of real, sometimes historical, situations. Many scholars call for the implementation of restorative justice practices to develop a caring atmosphere for their students (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005; Dover, 2015; Milner IV, Cunningham, Delale-O'Connor, & Kestenberg, 2019; Vaandering, 2004).

Milner (2019) claims that teachers must work to create caring classrooms in hopes of turning their management style to a restorative discipline approach, rather than a punitive approach. The implementation of restorative strategies will allow students to feel as though their teacher is meeting them where they are and is responsive to their situation (Milner, Cunningham, Delale-O'Connor, & Kestenberg, 2019). To promote restorative justice, teachers must create a

student-centered classroom environment focused on helping students feel as though they are heard, seen, and appreciated for who they are.

One way of implementing restorative practices is for teachers to ground their instruction in community values, which in turn will make their classrooms more culturally responsive (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005). For example, students do not live in isolation. They are immersed in influenced by their family and community norms. Therefore, the more teachers understand and connect to students' contexts, the more they will be able to develop a responsive curriculum, build strong relationships with students, and create caring classroom environments. Teachers could build a bridge with community values by participating in extracurricular activities, spending time in the community, speaking with community members, and examining the community norms.

Another restorative strategy that can help create a positive and inclusive classroom culture is the use of circles and conferences to mediate issues within the classroom, such as disruptions or lack of participation. Circle processes and discussions motivate students to visualize the interconnectedness and equality of each person and develop a sense of mutual responsibility for the wellbeing of their community. If instructors provide students with opportunities to have input on the shared values and expectations for the classroom, there is a real possibility that student investment in the community will increase.

2.3.2 Honoring Student Voice

At its heart, caring education is about placing the needs of the students first and focusing on how to create the best school experience for them. Caring is a process that requires mutual respect, trust, and honesty. Therefore, the adoption of a student-centered pedagogy may be necessary to create cultures of caring in schools (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2016; Simmons,

Graham, & Thomas, 2015). For empowering student voice to succeed, it is vital to place the decision-making in the hands of the students. Student-centered pedagogies, focused on caring education, must be built on a genuine interest in students' needs, interests, and goals, which sometimes requires teachers to develop a caring environment that supports modeling, conversation, and reinforcement. This model often challenges teachers to rise to their students' expectations and educate themselves on their students (Mitra, 2018; Rogers & Webb, 2016). One example of how these changes are being implemented is through the empowerment of student voice in the classroom.

When educators focus on the empowerment and honoring of student voice, students become stakeholders in the creation of cultures of caring not only within their classrooms but within the entire school. Faculty and staff who acknowledge students as stakeholders develop better student-centered, working relations. For that reason, like good parents, good teachers must build relationships that enhance the likelihood that students will thrive in a caring climate (Mitra, 2018; Noddings, 2012; Simmons, Graham, & Thomas, 2015). In the end, this kind of change could provide each student with a fulfilling and meaningful school experience.

Teachers who are committed to the empowerment of student voice are developing specific ways to make it happen. A notable example is *Lit4Life* (Storm & Rainey, 2018). *Lit4Life* is an instructional routine developed by Scott Storm, who is a veteran high school English teacher in New York City. The routine focuses on providing opportunities for students to connect course content to their interests and to celebrate their individuality and voice in the classroom. Specifically, Storm asks one student per week to bring in a text that is important to him/her and share it with the class. These sources can range from poems, works of art, music videos, film clips, news articles, or more – as long as it has meaning to the student. As the student presents their

source to the class, their peers will take notes on the text and then discuss their initial responses with a peer. After their first discussion, a different student will read the source aloud, and their peers write their thoughts on the piece as it connects to the course content by providing contextual evidence. Finally, students come back together and construct interpretive arguments for the piece as a class community.

The *Lit4Life* routine was designed to help Storm's students develop their voices as readers, audience members, and student leaders while participating in a safe, supportive classroom environment. *Lit4Life*, according to Rainey and Storm, may also allow students to engage with a variety of sources that are meaningful to them, encourage divergent literary interpretation, and support critical consciousness.

2.3.3 In Summary

Based on my review of literature, I want to implement approaches that promote student engagement and learning through creating opportunities to empower student voice and choice. I am specifically influenced by Isenbarger and Zembylas's notion of pedagogical caring which focuses on caring about students' academic success. For me, pedagogical caring is manifested in the classroom environment and the activities in which I invite students to participate. The activity, *Think & Link,* is based on the *Lit4Life* approach but with a focus on history inquiry. This approach will provide a forum for students' agency as well as a context for students' learning and use of historical thinking practices. My research questions related to this effort are:

- Do my attempts to engage student voice and agency through *Think & Link* result in a change in students' perceptions of caring in my classroom?

- How do students engage with *Think & Link* and how is that engagement reflected in their learning and use of specific historical thinking practices?

3.0 Methods

The following sections describe the context and participants, the *Think & Link* intervention, and data collection and analysis procedures for my inquiry.

3.1 Context and Participants

This year I taught 95 eleventh graders over four sections of the course in both synchronous and asynchronous classroom settings. Participants in my inquiry were the students enrolled in one of my sections of Honors American History. These students received teacher nominations and met the criteria to be accepted in the honors program. There were 25 students within my sample section with 48% identifying as male and 52% identifying as female. In this section, students' racial identities were comparable to the high school's data with 15% identifying as learners of color.

This study was divided into two five-week cycles in which student pairs presented their *Think & Link* activities to the class. At the time the project began, students were also beginning to work on their History Capstone Research Papers. The History Capstone Research Paper is a district designed benchmark that allows students to investigate a topic that they are interested in by posing an arguable claim and using an application of research and historical thinking skills to support their argument. The paper was divided into five sections that are centered on the historical thinking skills, including the contextualization of the era that students are studying, the application of close reading and sourcing skills to discern the arguments for or against their claim, and the corroboration of sources to craft a meaningful narrative that explains their thesis statement.

It was my hope that the *Think & Link* activity would not only support students' perceptions of caring in the classroom but that it would also provide students with the kinds of learning experiences that support their completion of the History Capstone Research Paper. As such, I represented *Think & Link* as a tangible example of a pedagogical caring philosophy which focused on caring about students' academic success.

3.2 *Think & Link*

I designed the *Think & Link* activity by incorporating key aspects of the *Lit4Life* (Storm & Rainey, 2018) approach but with a focus on historical inquiry rather than literary. I chose the title *Think & Link* to emphasize to my students the importance of critically *thinking* about their understanding of historical figures and events and *linking* the application of historical thinking skills to creating a more holistic understanding of how people and circumstances are represented in multiple texts.

Like Lit4Life, in *Think & Link*, students select texts that will be the focus of attention in a class discussion. Unlike Lit4Life, the discussion will engage students in applying historical thinking practices to the texts rather than critical literary analysis. Specifically, *Think & Link* is designed to provide students with opportunities to learn about and apply the historical thinking practices of contextualization, corroboration, close reading, and sourcing as described by the Stanford History Education Group (See Appendix A). The Stanford Historical Thinking chart provides students with prompts to guide their analysis of historical texts. I introduced this chart to students and engaged them in applying the thinking skills to a variety of historical topics, figures, and events so far this year.

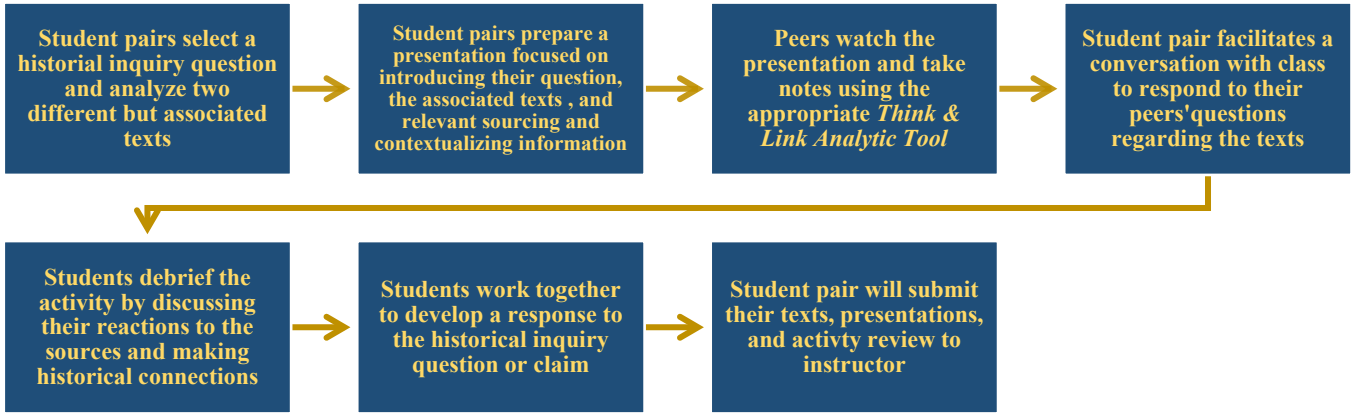
Another important resource is a suite of analytical tools developed by the Library of Congress. The tools are designed to provide students with a roadmap to analyze sources by engaging in three tasks: observing, reflecting, and questioning. Each tool focuses on a specific historical source, including artifacts, audio sources, political cartoons, photographs and artwork, video sources, and written texts. I have adapted the tools so students can use them in the *Think & Link* activity (See Appendix B).

Think & Link invites student-presenters to select texts that will become the focus of collaborative analysis and discussion. Presenters will work in pairs to determine a guiding question or claim that addresses perspectives on a historical figure, topic, or event. Potential texts include political cartoons, film, photographs, paintings, as well as poems, songs, newspaper articles, and other primary and secondary sources. The presenters will then complete the appropriate analysis tool, (Appendix B), to be prepared to guide their peers in the same analysis. They will also locate sourcing and contextual information about their texts to share with their peers. The presenters will then create a presentation to be shared with their peers to allow them to perform a close reading of the selected sources.

The presentation will begin with a brief explanation of the question or claim that the presenters aim to discuss. Each presenter will then share their text with their peers and share relevant source and contextual information. The peers will then work in small groups to complete the analytic tool related to each text for the purpose of determining a response to the presenters' claim or question. Following that process, the students participate in an academic discussion in which students share their close reading and corroborate with the sourcing and contextual information to develop a response to the presenters' question or claim.

Table 3.1 explains the process of the *Think & Link* activity. Appendix C provides the assignment that students will receive to guide their work and the rubric I will use to evaluate it.

Table 3.1. ***Think & Link*** **Process**



Presenters will then be assessed using the provided *Think & Link* rubric. This rubric focuses on the selection of an appropriate inquiry question or claim, the students' application of the sourcing, contextualization, corroboration, and close reading, historical thinking skills, the quality of evidence provided, and their presentation skills. Each of these categories will be rated on a Exceeds Expectations (5), Meets Expectations (3), and Needs Work (1) scale – making the activity worth 35 points.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Table 3.2 summarizes the research questions, data sources, and proposed data analysis for my inquiry. The primary data sources include recordings of *Think & Link* class sessions, student PowerPoint presentations, an initial survey (see Appendix D), and a final survey (see Appendix E). The surveys were designed to gauge student perceptions of the support and caring that they experienced both in the *Think & Link* sessions and the class in general.

Table 3.2. Research Questions, Data Sources, and Proposed Data Analysis

Research Question 1: Do my attempts to engage student voice and agency through *Think & Link* result in a change in students' perceptions of pedagogical caring in my classroom?	**Research Question 2:** How do students engage with *Think & Link* and how is that engagement reflected in the learning and use of specific historical thinking practices?
Data Sources: • Cultures of Caring Questionnaire • Classroom Culture Reflection • Recordings of *Think & Link* sessions • Field notes	**Data Sources:** • Recordings of *Think & Link* sessions • Student PowerPoint presentations and rubric • Table of Topics • Field notes • Final Survey
Proposed Data Analysis: • Use rubric to assess student presentations • Code survey responses specifically looking for: perceptions of caring (Cultures of Caring Questionnaire and Classroom Culture Reflection) and understanding of historical thinking skills – contextualizing, close reading, corroborating, sourcing (Final Survey) • Triangulate with field notes	

4.0 Findings

This section contains the results of the two PDSA cycles designed to answer these research questions:

- Do my attempts to engage student voice and agency through *Think & Link* result in a change in students' perceptions of pedagogical caring in my classroom?
- How do students engage with *Think & Link* and how is that engagement reflected in the learning and use of specific historical thinking practices?

4.1 Research Question 1: Do My Attempts to Engage Student Voice and Agency Through *Think & Link* Result in a Change in Students' Perceptions of Pedagogical Caring in My Classroom?

The data sources related to this research question include student responses to the Cultures of Caring Questionnaire (Appendix D), Classroom Culture Reflection (Appendix E), and my field notes.

4.1.1 Cultures of Caring Questionnaire

Upon arriving at Benjamin Franklin High School, it was important to develop an understanding of how students in this context viewed cultures of caring in relation to my last place of practice. To gather this information, I asked students in all the sections of Honors American

History to complete an anonymous two-question questionnaire to gauge their perceptions of what caring looks like and how teachers show they care.

4.1.1.1 Question 1: What Does Care Look Like in a High School Setting?

Before administering the questionnaire, I asked students present in class to participate in a *Turn and Talk* activity in which they were asked to consider what caring looks like in a high school setting and how it may be different from how someone may describe caring in an elementary school. Students started by taking a minute to consider how they defined caring and then shared their ideas with a classmate, or classmates, around them. Then, I asked students to complete a Cultures of Caring Questionnaire (Appendix D) with two questions: (a) What do you think caring in the classroom looks like at the high school level? (b) What are examples of how teachers show their care for your wellbeing and concerns? Table 4.1 includes the student responses for the first question from students in the Honors American History class.

Table 4.1. Student Responses to Question About What Caring Looks Like in High School

Student	Student Answer
1	"I think caring in the high school looks like catering to your students' needs and going above and beyond in today's world."
2	"I think that caring looks trying your best for both teachers and students."
3	"I don't want to give the stereotypical, "helping students with everything they need." That is not what matters. What matters is looking like you want to be there, looking like you truly care about your job, looking like you like the students, and yes, that you want to help them."
4	"At the high school level, caring in the classroom is simply making sure the students are learning and gaining knowledge from the teacher but also making sure the students are at the capacity to do so mentally and in other regards."
5	"Stating that you are concerned about the students because oftentimes students are not brave enough to speak out when being prompted to."
6	"Trying to balance the schoolwork and homework is definitely a big aspect of caring in the classroom."
7	"Caring in the classroom is like how you are for your friends. You reach out if you notice something is up, make sure they know you are genuinely there for them, and ask them how their day is going or how they are feeling."
8	"I think caring at a high school level is about being there every day and showing signs of kindness. Checking in on them makes a huge difference in someone's day."
9	"I think passionate teachers are ones who convey their care the best. I think students who behave respectfully also demonstrate care for the class."
10	"Being willing to learn and work with everyone and respect other way of gaining knowledge. By respecting people around you, learning is easier."
11	"Asking for feedback, making sure the teaching style is effective, making sure the material is making sense, making sure test questions are fair."
12	"I think caring in the classroom is directly associated with teacher's ability to demonstrate that they have the best interest in their students."
13	"I think caring in the classroom is when teachers take into account the students' workloads for other classes."
14	"Giving us chances to interact without stress."
15	"Showing openness so if someone is having a problem they feel comfortable talking about it."
16	"Understanding each others' goals and trying to help each other to achieve them."
17	"Focusing more on the wellbeing of the student rather than the grade."
18	"Listening to students and being willing to help."
19	"I don't know… you just know. You know?"
20	"Showing interest in students' personal lives."
21	"Asking about their day and week."
22	"Being open to new ideas."

Student comments about what caring looks like in high school revealed several themes related to Isenbarger and Zembylas's (2016) notion of pedagogical caring, the respect and trust emphasized by hooks (2003), and Noddings' (2005) emphasis on the impact of a caring philosophy on both the student and the teacher.

Pedagogical Caring

As Isenbarger and Zembylas (2016) suggest, caring education at its core is about showing students that you care about their success academically and that you develop a classroom culture that is centered around their success. As shown in Table 4.1, two of the student comments directly alluded to aspects of pedagogical caring: "making sure students are learning and gaining knowledge"; "making sure the teaching style is effective, making sure the material makes sense."

Most of the comments, however, related to the importance of attending to students' mental well-being and the respect and trust emphasized by hooks (2003) and Noddings (2005).

Respect and Trust

hooks asserts that teaching is, in its most natural state, a caring profession and that by focusing their attention on implementing student-centered approaches in the classroom teachers are displaying care for their student's well-being. This caring is built on respect and trust.

In the questionnaire, several students noted the importance of teachers not only speaking with their students about their day, situation, or experience but also the importance using that information to foster and develop a meaningful rapport. One interesting response a student gave stated, "caring in the classroom is like how you are for your friends. You reach out if you notice something is up, make sure they know you are genuinely there for them, and ask them how their day is going or how they are feeling." Other related student responses include: "listening to students and being willing to help," "focusing more on the wellbeing of the student rather than the

grade," and "being willing to learn and work with everyone and respecting the other way of gaining knowledge. By respecting people around you, learning is easier."

Impact of Caring Philosophies

Noddings (2005) states that the impact of caring philosophies relates to both teachers and students alike. One student remarked that "students who behave respectfully also demonstrate care or the class." Another noted that "By respecting people around you, learning is easier."

Students also noted that trying your best, either as a teacher or student, is a way to show a mutual level of care and respect towards each other. For teachers, students thought this was shown by being present, engaged, and passionate about the subject. One student said that,

"What matters is looking like they want to be there, looking like they truly care about [their] job, looking like [they] like the students, and yes, that they want to help them." Other students commented on a teacher's showing "interest in students' personal lives," and "signs of kindness…checking in on them."

4.1.1.2 Question 2: How Do Teachers Show They Care?

The second question on the Cultures of Caring Questionnaire asked students to provide examples of how their teachers helped them to feel valued, supported, and heard. Table 4.2 presents student responses to this question.

Table 4.2. Student Examples of How They Felt Valued, Supported, and Heard by Teachers

Student	Student Answer
1	"He always talks to us after class. He talks about his personal interests, and laughs, it makes us think he's human, and in today's society that's amazing! If I ever have any questions, he responds immediately with an outstanding amount of humanity answering the question and providing an extra bit of happiness in his response like he wants to be there. He talks about what he likes after class, and relates to what we like as well, it's, again, amazing to have someone to talk to, especially a teacher during all of this. This is his first year in the high school, and I don't think I've really had a cooler, more down to earth teacher."
2	"Ask students how their lives are outside of the course, check in with the students and get feedback on assignments, tests, and rigor, try to be understanding and aware of the difficulties with virtual learning and the state of the country currently"
3	"I like how Mr. T always asks how we are doing and if we need anything. I feel the most supported and important in this class. Most teachers don't make a relation with their students and you end up feeling a little neglected"
4	"asking how weekends were/personal conversation"
5	"Doing extra things, like drawing a diagram or answering a question really well."
6	"Talking with students sometimes when classwork is done."
7	"You ask us how we are feeling every day and how our weekends are."
8	"So far, everything has been going well for me, so I have not had any need for intervention from my teachers. For small concerns over assignments, I have emailed teachers and gotten fairly fast responses, so I believe the teachers are all very helpful."
9	"In this class, you always ask us if we are okay in tough times like these. The thought itself is more than enough for us to know that you care. You are also very mindful about our homework load as a junior in high school, and you make sure you assign a reasonable amount that won't stress us out more."
10	"Many teachers post the unit agenda ahead of time, ask students about their day, and are available when students have questions."
11	"Always asking us about how we feel about the courses, our interest and thoughts about what we are learning. these surveys also show how he cares about how we would like the class to go."
12	"Office Hours"
13	"Once again, I think that teachers' care for our wellbeing and concerns are shown by their attempts to reach out and make sure that the students are responding well to the online learning. I also think it is important for teachers to genuinely take into account the requests or suggestions from students if they are made. The surveys concerning our wellbeing and health are important, but I also think maybe there should be a bigger emphasis or acknowledgement about mental health."
14	"Being sure each student in their classes understand the subject good enough"
15	"Most of my teachers give multiple days to do assignments."
16	"Adjusting tests to our concerns, allowing us to go the classes that we need right now."
17	"They ask how I am doing and wish me well. (EX: I hope you have a great weekend, etc.)"
18	"Email us before a big test or units asking us how we are feeling."
19	"Responding to emails with care and detail or explaining how they want you to progress as a student if you're struggling in an area."
20	"Genuinely asking about we are we doing, not giving us massive amounts of homework just for their class considering we also have homework for the majority of our other classes, etc."
21	"They understand if something is late due to events outside of school that they may not know of, and they show their willingness to want everyone in the class to do well."
22	"For example, in this class, you always ask us if we are okay in tough times like these. The thought itself is more than enough for us to know that you care. You are also very mindful about our homework load as a junior in high school, and you make sure you assign a reasonable amount that won't stress us out more."

After examining the results of this question, it was also evident that students' responses aligned with the same themes from Isenbarger and Zembylas's (2016) notion of pedagogical caring, the respect and trust emphasized by hooks (2003), and Noddings' (2005) emphasis on the impact of a caring philosophy on both the student and the teacher.

Pedagogical Caring

One important theme across student comments was the impact of creating a classroom environment that is structured, supportive, and rigorous. Several students responded that they like when the content and lectures are organized and available to them on Canvas, the district's educational management software. One student stated that, "the time teachers put into organizing their website shows that they want us to do well and be able to find the materials we need." Another student noted that they appreciate when teachers create additional diagrams to explain content, respond thoroughly to their questions, and are aware of their students' workloads.

Responses to the questionnaire also showed that students see their teachers' use of rigorous materials as a way of showing the faith they have in their students' abilities. Assigning difficult work and guiding student through challenges along the way made students feel that teachers were willing to support their academic goals. One student noted that "seeing the teacher put in the extra work to help us do pass makes us want to put in the extra work to not let them down. I think this makes me a better student."

Respect and Trust

Comments about teachers listening to students were the most frequent. as an essential part of building the feeling of mutual respect. Listening could involve being responsive to students by "responding to e-mails with care and detail," "genuinely asking how [they] are doing," or "talking to students when the work is done."

Another way several students noted that their teachers were showing care, by building respect and trust, was through genuine and authentic conversation. Several students noted that they appreciated the fact that the teacher "talks about his personal interests, and laughs, it makes u think he's human" and that "If I ever have any questions, he responds immediately with an outstanding amount of humanity – answering the question and providing an extra bit of happiness in his response like he wants to be there."

Other responses explained how by respecting students' stressors in the design of the course and its assignments was a way that teachers specifically show care to their students. Whether this be through changing deadlines, altering assignments, or strategically assigning work based on the feedback from students shows a respect for student time, stress, and overall well-being. For instance, students thought that it was important for their teachers to recognize the stress they may be feeling with the pandemic, virtual learning, and the "state of the country at this time."

4.1.1.3 Classroom Culture Reflection

The Cultures of Caring Questionnaire provided initial student ideas about caring in general. After the *Think & Link* projects were completed, I wanted to have students reflect about specific aspects of caring as they experienced them in the course. This goal influenced the design of the Classroom Culture Reflection (Appendix E). The reflection had four questions that asked to students to (a) describe their experiences in the class, (b) explain how I supported, valued, and responded to their work and to them as individuals, (c) tell how the course activities allowed them to explore their interests and express their ideas, and (d) describe the classroom culture that developed throughout the year.

The Classroom Culture Reflection was administered two weeks after the conclusion of the *Think & Link* presentations and was introduced and conducted by a substitute teacher to avoid any

influence of my presence. The reflection was sent to all 25 of the students in the class via a Canvas class announcement, and students earned participation points if they completed the reflection.

Students' description of their experiences in the course

The first item on the reflection asked students to provide four to five words that they would use to describe their experiences in the course. After compiling student responses, I generated a word cloud which is displayed in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1. Words to Describe the American History Honors Course

The most prominent words in the word cloud are *supportive, interesting, helpful, caring, considerate, welcoming,* and *engaging*. *Supportive, helpful, caring, considerate*, and *welcoming* connect directly to the themes found in the work of hooks and Noddings. The words *interesting* and *engaging* connect to pedagogical caring in the sense that assignments in the course were perceived to be of worth students' attention and investment.

Specific Examples of Instances When Students Felt Valued, Supported, and Heard

The second question in the reflection asked students to provide specific examples of instances in which they felt that they were valued, supported, and heard within the classroom. Student responses to this question are provided in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3. Specific Examples of Instances When Students Felt Valued, Supported, and Heard

Student Answer
Mr. T has focused on more than just history in his class; he focused on our lives as students as well. He always asked us how we were doing. He went beyond the surface level "how are you." He followed up to our responses and it was obvious he wanted to find out why we were feeling how we were. He then took his understandings of our current situations and formed his class content and culture around that. We, students, really appreciate that. We have lives outside of your class and teachers need to recognize that. Mr. T does.
Mr. Torquato always takes into account the students' work for other classes and adjusts any due dates accordingly. The projects for this class are very open-ended and allow the students to pick their own topics. Mr. Torquato often checks in with us to see how we're doing.
my teacher has helped me understand the importance of history and why we learned it. he also helped me provide proper formatting techniques and proper usage of words in an essay.
Mr. T has given many extensions on deadlines because many people have said they were stressed. He also has asked us for input on the format of the tests.
Constantly asking for students' opinions, allowing flexible due dates due to other class projects, talking with us not at us.
always responds back to my emails. is willing to listen to any ideas you might have even if they don't pertain to the subject. always finds a solution.
One example of a time when my teacher helped me was during my research paper. I emailed him a couple of times about difficulties understanding the directions and supported me in helping understand them to make my paper the best it could be. Additionally, I think that during a couple of our group projects my teacher has made sure that everyone is working together fairly well by coming into our breakout groups and checking up on us during the process.
yes, he is always open when we need help and very understanding if we need more time on something.
1: Pushing back due dates that would not have physically been able to meet. 2: Constantly asking for feedback and doing surveys like these.
Mr. Torquato is a great example of a teacher who cares about his students. He constantly asks his students how they are emotionally and mentally whether it be inside or outside of his class. He makes sure his students have to chance to express their opinions and knowledge even when he is giving instruction.
Yes. When I needed extra time, he was extremely understanding, and he was very compassionate when I came to him regarding personal issues that interfered with my performance.
We as students have been given the opportunity to make decisions on what the class would be like in some cases (tests, projects) and also given many needed extensions and guidance on our research papers.
he is always very understanding about the deadlines, and he mentioned me in his other classes
Mr. T has made me feel heard throughout this year by always asking if we feel that an assignment is too long, or a due date is too soon to make sure we can be successful in his class. He has also helped me feel supported and valued by consistently checking in with the class about how we are really doing, in and out of school.
Mr. T.'s quick responses to emails definitely make me feel supported. The abundance of surveys like this asking what we want from the class and how it could improve makes me feel as though my voice is being heard.
I like how Mr. T was patient and waited to call on everyone so everyone's point of view could be heard. I also liked how we did class collaborative classes/projects where we could share our ideas and reach a common goal.
The class constitution included Wednesday Kahoots that the class voted for. He would ask us about test formats if they were demanding enough for us throughout the year.
Mr. Torquato has done an absolutely amazing job of making myself and other students feel valued, supported, and heard throughout the year. One of the main things that I remember is a small pep talk that he gave to us that was worked into one of our lesson plans. He told us that although we are younger and students, we still matter and have worth. He also emphasized that our voices still deserve to be heard despite the fact we are younger and should not let adults tell us differently. Another thing was that he always was understanding if I needed an extension or extra help, and I know that this was the experience my classmates had, too. This year was so difficult in many ways outside of school, so Mr. Torquato routinely checked in on us and our mental health, and he saw that as a priority and not grades. I hope he understands what an amazing job he has done this year for us as students. I truly cannot think of another teacher who has ever cared so much about his students and made us feel so comfortable. Thank you so much, Mr. Torquato.
When he gave me time to catch up in my work and when I get answers to my questions.
Mr. Torquato has assisted me on several occasions, making me feel valued and supported. He has answered several questions on my research paper and has made sure I was comfortable during group projects.
The first way is by pushing back assignments if we have a lot of homework or tests across multiple classes. Another way is by cancelling tests if we have too many for other classes and just giving us a project instead. Finally, by letting us create our "constitution" around finals.
Mr. Torquato helped his students feel valued, supported, and heard by truly listening to his students, being understanding of students' situations, and giving us sporadic motivational speeches and check-ins on how we are feeling (surveys/class discussions/etc.).
Mr. Torquato has been sure to support everyone by overall being reasonable to those who made mistakes, for example extending due dates and grading fairly. He always responds to any emails and is avidly prepared to help his students no matter what.
Mr. Torquato treats us like humans rather than students and he provides amazing personal stories of his hilarious/treacherous experiences at museums, state parks, and a lot of other places. He is real with us and that means a lot.

An analysis of student responses revealed two common themes: the features of a democratic classroom, and consistent, mutual, communication.

Democratic Classroom

Throughout the course of the year, I felt that it was essential to allow students to voice their concerns regarding class material, workload, and planning. Student responses showed that they noticed and appreciated these features of a democratic classroom. One student stated that the teacher, "took his understandings of our current situations and formed his class content and culture around that. We, students, really appreciate that. We have lives outside of your class and teachers need to recognize that." Other related comments include "[our teacher] constantly asks for students' opinions, allowing flexible due dates due to other class projects, talking with us not at us," "by letting us create our 'constitution' around finals," and "Mr. Torquato treats us like humans rather than students … He is real with us and that means a lot."

I began to assign projects every other unit to provide students a break from a test heavy curriculum and to allow them to investigate their interests and share their creativity. This idea was suggested by a student in response to the scheduling of an exam during a particularly busy week for students. Once it was suggested, I solicited student input in each class and students voted via a survey. Student responses were in favor of the schedule, so I used the projects after every other unit.

A final example of the creation of a democratic classroom and the impact it had on student experience was the creation of a classroom constitution. At the close of the American Revolution unit students were asked to work together to draft a classroom constitution based on the needs and expectations they had for the course. The results from each class were used to simulate the input from the different colonial regions in American history and students from all classes had to vote and ratify a constitution that met the needs of each class. This activity provided students not only the opportunity to engage with an important experience in the nation's history but also an outlet to

share their voice and agency in a way that allotted them the chance to make meaningful changes in the classroom.

Communication

Weekly check-ins, surveys, conversations, and feedback from students created an open and line of communication which included not only communication between student and teacher but also student to student. Several student responses made note of the way I responded to their emails. Responding to student inquiries in a reasonable amount of time, and providing additional context, may seem like a simple task in the day of a teacher but to a student it can be seen as the mark of someone dedicated to their success. Email also is an important means of building a rapport with students who may be timid or who may not speak up in class or stay after to ask questions. By providing prompt, thoughtful, responses to students, I tried to show an elevated respect of students' concerns and time.

Another important finding from the analysis of student responses to this question was the importance of collecting student feedback and input on their classroom experience. Throughout the course, students were provided opportunities to share their opinions on assignments, exams, and the classroom culture, and their input was then used to make changes to the classroom environment. One student stated that,

> [the teacher] always asked us how we were doing. He went beyond the surface level 'how are you.' He followed up to our responses and it was obvious he wanted to find out why we were feeling how we were. He then took his understandings of our current situations and formed his class content and culture around that.

A final example of the power of open communication came after the events of January 6, 2021, when the Capitol was invaded by an angry and destructive mob. In class, students were given

the opportunity to journal about their experiences and share what they were feeling in a safe and understanding atmosphere. After students had the chance to get their feelings on paper, I spoke about the importance of their becoming civic-minded, critical consumers of information, and finding their voice. One student shared her perspective of this conversation in the survey explaining that,

> Mr. Torquato has done an absolutely amazing job of making myself and other students feel valued, supported, and heard throughout the year. One of the main things that I remember is a small pep talk that he gave to us that was worked into one of our lesson plans. He told us that although we are younger and students, we still matter and have worth. He also emphasized that our voices still deserve to be heard despite the fact we are younger and should not let adults tell us differently.

Opportunities for students to express their ideas, interests, and empower their voices

The third question on this survey asked students to share specific opportunities that they had throughout the course that provided them the chances to express their interests and ideas, while empowering their choices. Student responses have been compiled in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4. Opportunities for Students to Express Their Ideas, Interests, and Empower Their Voices

Student Answer
The Think and Link Activity and the Shark Tank Presentation brought our class closer together. They gave us chances to express our ideas and listen to each other. We bonded by empowering our collective voice as a class. Mr. T was essential in creating this environment.
Think and Link and Giving us time to write down our thoughts after the riots in D.C.
probably the think and link and the shark tank have helped me emphasize my voice in the class and spread my opinions and share my thoughts
There were many projects when he allowed us to select our own topic. The think and link activity was especially good for letting the class show their interests. My only criticism is that some of the projects had preassigned partners, which restricts the topics that you can pick for a project since partners have very different ideas of what they want to do.
The relaxed nature of the class allowing for students to jump in with questions or opinions. Mini projects that allow the students to guide themselves and have fun with the assignment.
allowing us to write what we want on the research paper. allowing us to decide what we feel is the right number of questions on a test and how we feel toward certain questions. giving us presentations on what we feel we should present on for American history.
The Think & Link project was a really good example of me using my voice along with my partners to talk about a topic that we chose on our own. Additionally, this was a great way for everyone in class to participate and share their voice on what they thought of everyone else's topics they chose. Another good example has been through the year-long research paper, as we were all able to choose our own topics within American History and express our interest
We have done many projects which let the student take control and use their own voice which i really liked. It made the class more interesting because you could pick topics you liked.
1: Allowing for students to pick their topics on multiple different assignments. 2: Doing interesting group projects rather than tests.
The number of projects that were given during school this year gave students the chance to have fun and use their voice while gaining knowledge on a certain topic. While Mr. Torquato is teaching, he makes sure to ask if any students have thoughts on the topic and is always willing to listen.
Mr. T is very vocal about the importance of us using our voice. Also, he tells us a lot of details about his childhood which teach a lot of lessons.
Our Wednesday presentations have been a great way to express our ideas and interests whether it was through picking a song we love from history and sharing information about the time period of it with the class and explaining and having an analyzed discussion about an important historic topic that still applies to our society today.
I am allowed to share my thoughts and I feel heard since I will always get a response. Mr. T always greets me with "pip pip cheerio."
The Think and Link assignment has allowed me to express my opinions in both my presentation and my classmates' presentations. For example, I was able to research police brutality in the BLM movement and the Capitol raid for my presentation, and I am also able to share my opinions on other important but sometimes controversial topics in others' Think and Link discussions.
All of the projects we've done have really allowed us to express our ideas and interests. For example, the main essay we wrote could be on any US history topic, which allows students to pick something they are passionate about. In other projects too like the think and link we have been able to choose what we want to talk about. Lastly, the open-endedness of many projects allows for expression of creativity that I think is quite valuable.

Think & Link was the most mentioned activity in response to the question about opportunities for students to express their ideas and interests. One student responded that "the *Think & Link* project was a really good example of me using my voice along with my partners to talk about a topic that we chose on our own. Additionally, this was a great way for everyone in class to participate and share their voice on what they thought of everyone else's topics they chose." Other examples of student responses included:

Students also mentioned the Shark Tank project. This project gave students the chance to research an invention from the Second Industrial Revolution and present a sales pitch to their classmates. Students in the class would then invest in the products they felt would have the greatest

impact on the lives of average Americans at the time. Students researched and implemented a variety of marketing and sales technique to try to convince their classmates to invest in their item.

Descriptions of the Class Learning Community

The final question on the Classroom Culture Reflection was focused on the type of learning community that had developed throughout the year. During the 2020-2021 school year, students at Benjamin Franklin High School were faced with challenges that they, and their teachers, never would have anticipated because of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the traditional routines were disrupted by the use of remote learning and a hybrid model, as previously explained. Student responses to this question are displayed in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5. Descriptions of the Class Learning Community

Student Answer
I look forward to Mr. T's history class every day. I look forward to seeing Mr. T in the halls. Mr. T created a learning community that makes students excited to learn. This stems from what type of teacher you have and not what class it is.
The students feel more comfortable sharing their opinions because of the Think and Link discussions. I think the students are more comfortable with each other because of all of the projects we do.
I think I have learned a lot from you as you have taken this class in a different approach then most of the other history classes of taken. this class has helped a lot in learning different methods and ways to improve my understanding of history as we know it.
I've always been an outsider, but I have one person I can rely on to ask question to.
This class allows me to take what I've learned and use to develop ideas further through projects and discussions. The teacher made it clear that we can have a fluid learning environment which allows us to ask questions easily and dive deeper into certain areas.
it interesting. you sort of fall into a routine that one is comfortable in and you feel like you can ask questions without being embarrassed. it may just be our class, but people are open to learning so I think it's been great.
I think that one thing my teacher has stressed about this new and evolving learning environment is that we can always reach out to him for anything, whether it be in or outside of school. If I had to choose one word to describe learning community, it would be accepting. Some examples of this would be sometimes that my teacher gave us extensions on certain sections of our research paper if something had happened outside of our control or giving us guidance on how to solve problems within our group projects that would be frustrating us.
I would describe the learning community as awkward at first but as everyone kind of got used to this year and thing being different very helpful. My teacher was beyond kind and there for whatever you needed. I felt like he wanted to see you do well.
1: Think and link project 2: Group projects with classmates
I feel that we have grown as a class educationally along with seeing progress in comfortability within the classroom. Every student has made sure to listen to their peers are they give opinions, present, or even express their knowledge.
Close. I feel as though my whole class is friendly with each-other. Understanding. This class is able to listen and understand opposing views without creating conflict
I would say a majority of the learning was through discussions, presentations, and notes, rather than tests and homework. Discussions provide a more meaningful conversation about the information and allow us to contribute and bring in our own ideas and thoughts. I also thought some of the tests were better learning wise because they required our knowledge and analysis of the units rather than memorizing facts and picking multiple choice answers. I liked the writing of the short paragraphs because they better reflect what we have learned from the unit.
very fun and peaceful, respectful. Everyone provides helpful suggestions towards one another.
The learning community we have developed this year is one of acceptance and fun. I feel comfortable answering questions even when I'm not sure if my answer is correct because I know Mr. T will not care if my answer is wrong as long as I'm trying my best. Mr. T's classroom is a fun space where we can be serious at times and laugh during others, which makes the class enjoyable to be in.
If I'm interpreting this correctly and learning community means our class, I would describe our class as talkative. For example, whenever we have discussions there is always good conversation relating to topics. There are usually never too long of pauses after questions are asked.

In their responses to the final question in the Classroom Culture Reflection, students described a learning community that was supportive, accepting, connected, and safe. One student said that "the learning community that has developed in this course during the school year has definitely been one of the safest I have ever been a part of. I have truly never had a teacher that took the time and consideration that Mr. Torquato took to ensure all of the students were doing okay, both in and out of school" and that "I have always felt that I could participate or ask questions because there is a total lack of judgment and just a total kindness from [my teacher] that made me comfortable enough sharing my opinion without fear of being wrong."

Another student described the learning community as "a very strong learning community for all students of the class. Mr. Torquato has truly made the class viable to the best of his ability and for that reason, has made the class more engaging and exciting, prompting an even greater growth of learning in the school." Another student explained that "a majority of the learning was through discussions, presentations, and notes, rather than tests and homework. Discussions provide a more meaningful conversation about the information and allow us to contribute and bring in our own ideas and thoughts."

Another interesting trend in student responses was in their response that class culture was comfortable and accepting. One student remarked that "I feel we have grown as a class educationally along with seeing progress in comfortability with the classroom," while another claimed that "you sort of fall into a routine that one is comfortable in and you feel like you can ask questions without being embarrassed. It may just be our class, but people are open to learning so I think it's been great."

It is important to note that while the *Think & Link* activity was an important aspect of promoting a culture of caring, there were other factors as well. Thus, I cannot claim that it was

only the *Think & Link* activity that promoted changes in their perceptions of caring. Rather, throughout the year several other student-centered activities were implemented, such as the *Classroom Constitutions*, *Shark Tank, HistoRemix* activities, that may have helped to change students' perceptions of caring. Additionally, throughout the year I would implement appropriate changes that were obtained through listening to my students' experiences based on data collected from surveys. While these other activities and situations may also have had an influence on the changes in students' perceptions of caring, I do feel confident in claiming that the *Think & Link* activity served as a crucial nexus of the change due to the conversations, student input, and impact surrounding the activity as a central activity for ten weeks of our course this year.

4.2 Research Question 2: How Do Students Engage with *Think & Link* and How is that Engagement Reflected in the Learning and Use of Specific Historical Thinking Practices?

The data sources related to this research question include student *Think & Link* artifacts, Final Surveys, and my field notes. First, I will describe the student artifacts.

4.2.1 *Think & Link* Student Artifacts

Throughout two five-week cycles, students in all four sections of my Honors American History course participated in the *Think & Link* activity. The activity involved pairs of students using historical thinking skills to analyze primary/secondary sources centered on a guiding question. Students' guiding questions were to be about any topic in United States history in which both partners shared an interest. Once they decided on a topic, the partners located relevant sources

and analyzed those sources using the appropriate template. (See Appendix B.) Then, students prepared a presentation to engage their peers in using historical thinking practices to respond to guiding questions about the sources.

4.2.1.1 Topics

A list of topics and guiding questions students designed for their *Think & Link* presentations are presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6. *Think & Link* Topics Char

Cycle 1				
Week	**(Pseudonyms)**	**Topic**	**Guiding Question**	**Resources Used**
1	George and John	Civil Rights and BLM Movements	How is the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s similar or different to the Black Lives Matter movement in recent years?	5 photos from the BLM movement and 5 photos from the Civil Rights movement
2	Martha and Thomas	Media Bias	How do American news networks portray the Covid-19 pandemic differently?	CNN Clip on COVID 19 from June 14. 2020, FOX News Clip from June 14, 2020, Johns Hopkins Covid graphs, party affiliation
3	Abigail and Sally	Police Brutality	How did the police response differ between the responses to the Capitol Riot and Black Lives Matter Movement?	7 photos of police response to the BLM protests, 2 gifs of police response from the BLM protests, 6 photos from the Capitol Riot, gif from the Capitol Riot
4	Dolly and James	Martin Luther King Jr.	What impact did Dr. King's message and civil rights work have on current rights movements?	10 photos and quotes showcasing Dr. King's message and leadership philosophy, and an SNL skit in which Dr. King returns on MLK Day to see what changes have occurred in the world (2014)
5	Elizabeth and Andrew	Andrew Jackson	How does the public view of Andrew Jackson's achievements today contrast to the views of his presidency in the 1850s?	Etching from the ceremony for the Andrew Jackson statue's completion (1853), copies of orations from Stephen Douglas, excerpts from the commemoration speech given at the ceremony (1853), photo of protestors trying to topple Jackson Statue (2020), photo of the graffiti on the Jackson Statue (2020)
Cycle 2				
6	John and Martin	Vietnam	How has the legacy of the Vietnam War changed over time?	photo of Vietnam protesting, photo of Gulf War protesting, photo of a peace movement
7	Rachel and Hannah	Louis Zamperini	How has Louis Zamperini's story and the film *Unbroken* drawn awareness to the struggles of soldiers during and after war?	3 photos of Louis Zamperini, quotes from Louis Zamperini, clip from *Unbroken* film
8	William and Julia	Women's Rights	How has the fight for women's rights evolved from its origins to today?	Photo from Suffragette March (1890), photo from Women's March (2020), photo of pregnant woman leading protest
9	Sarah and Zachary	Capitol Riot	Looking back on the Capitol Riots, who is to blame for the events of January 6, 2021?	4 photos of Capitol Riot, political cartoon on Capitol Riot (2021), 3 Tweet from President Trump
10	Margaret and Jane	9/11	How have the behavioral and psychological impacts of 9/11 changed the lives of average Americans?	Photo from Ground Zero (2001), photo of the ruins of the World Trade Center (2001), photo of Ground Zero Memorial (2011), American University graphic on "Did 9/11 Change Your Life," quotes from people who experienced 9/11 in 2001, quotes from people remembering 9/11 today

One interesting finding related to the topics that students selected is that a majority chose to examine current topics in American History. Seven of the ten presentations in this section focused on topics after World War II. When asked about their choice of topics, the students agreed that "modern history" was something that they do not get the opportunity to talk about either due to the way the curriculum is designed or to avoid discussing difficult topics. Students also explained that they liked the idea of using this opportunity to hear what their classmates thought

about modern issues ranging from media bias to the response to 9/11, or even as recent as the events at the nation's capital in January. One student remarked that these are topics that they normally do not get to or are usually scanned over quickly to avoid conflict. These comments emphasized for me the importance of allowing student choice in selecting topics.

Another trend in students' topic selection was their focus on comparing the continuity and change of a historical event or figure. Five of the topics looked at examining the way a perspective has changed over time or led to change over time. One example was Rachel and Hannah's presentation on the impact that Louis Zamperini's story has had on the way we examine the way that society looks at the struggle soldiers face both during and after their tour of duty. Rachel and Hannah led discussions on how the film *Unbroken* drew attention to the plights that soldiers face and used quotes from Zamperini's discussions of his time returning from war to examine the challenges he described. They then provided statistics showcasing the increase in programs designed to support returning soldiers and their transition back into civilian life. This focus on the continuity and change of historical events and figures has been a cornerstone of the Honors American History curriculum and the selection of topics related to this theme indicates their ability to make use of the analyses they have been learning about and using throughout the year.

A final noteworthy finding is about the sources that students identified and used. After analyzing the presentations, the most frequently used sources were photographs, with nine of the ten groups using them as either their primary or supporting sources. Students noted that photographs were their preferred source due to their ability to put both images on the same slide so that they could easily apply the historical thinking skills and compare them. Abigail and Sally used a series of graphics interchange formatted (GIF) images to showcase pivotal moments from scenes of the use of police brutality.

In their presentation, Abigail and Sally embedded a series of GIFS showcasing the differences between the police response to the Black Lives Matter protests and the Capitol Riot. These looped images were a powerful look at how the participants in the two events were treated differently, how violence was used, and what precipitated the responses. The use of GIFs was well received by their classmates as it provided a real time look at the reactions and the responses of those involved in ways that a still photo cannot capture. One student remarked that the GIF loop was more powerful than a video clip as a camera lens often pans over violence quickly, but a continual loop traps you in that moment over and over.

Presentations

The student presentations involved leading the class through the following process: (a) posing a guiding question, (b) introducing the historical context of their question, (c) providing sources that explore both sides of the topic, (d) completing the analysis tools, (e) asking supporting questions to lead students through the application of historical thinking skills, (f) facilitating dialogue in response to their guiding question, (g) conducting a summary explanation of what the class discovered through their conversations.

The presentation by Martha and Thomas demonstrates how the *Think & Link* process played out. These students chose to examine the bias in media sources in relation to the COVID 19 Pandemic. Their main sources were two videos, one from CNN and one from FOX News, that focused on the media coverage on June 14, 2021. To begin their project the students posed their question to the class, as seen in Figure 4.8.

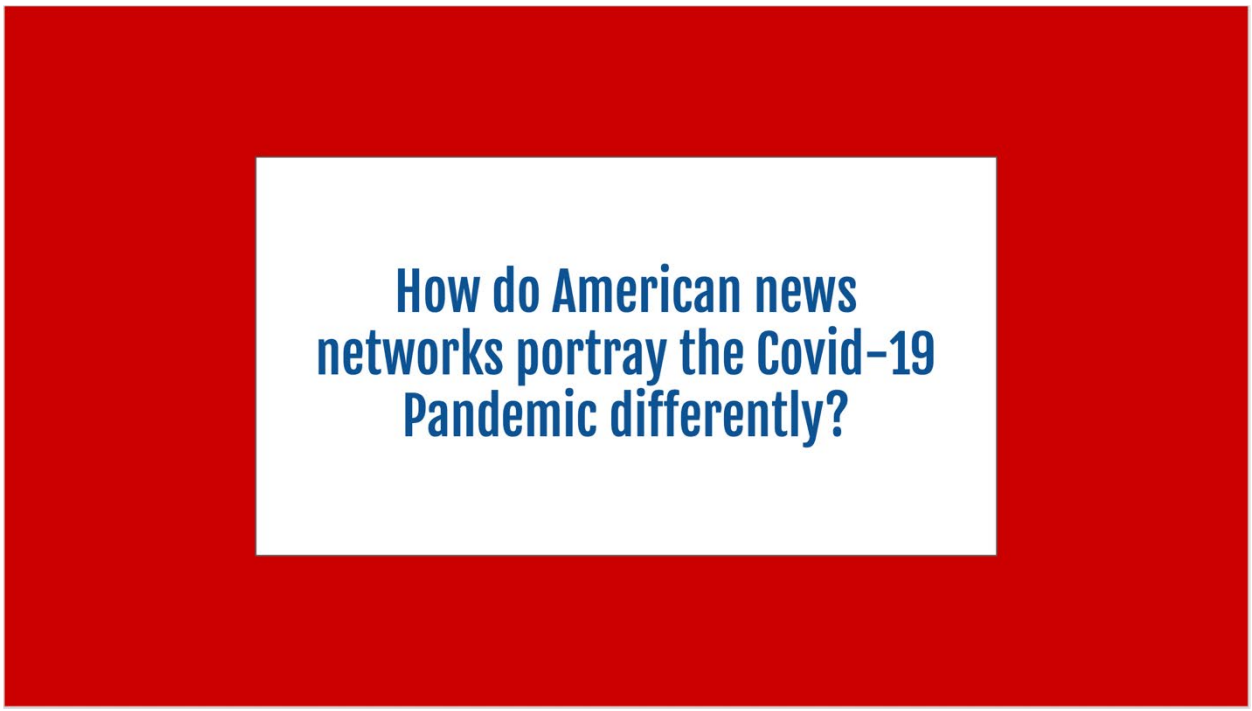


Figure 4.2. Cover Slide of Week 2 Project

Martha began the presentation by asking the class to explain their prior knowledge regarding biases and slants in media coverage. Several students in the class noted the significant split between media sources that are known to support the opposing sides of the political spectrum and referenced CNN and FOX News. Others described that many people only watch media sources that support their side of the argument and as a result are less likely to hear the various perspectives on a topic. Additionally, some students referred to their English curriculum by stating how authors would tend to provide one perspective on a piece and that in many different mediums like art, music, film, or news coverage, biases may be intentionally conveyed, or sometimes, subconsciously shared with the target audience. This led Thomas to explain the context of the presentation by showing the slide in Figure 4.3.

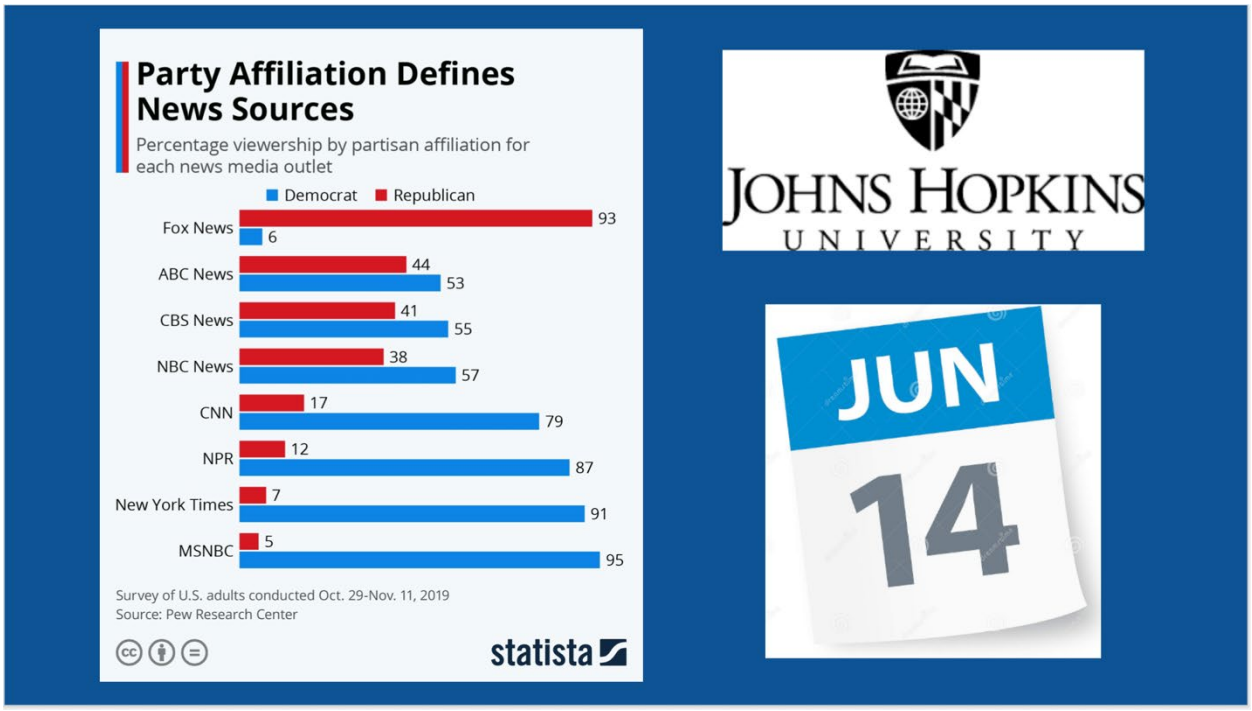


Figure 4.3. Context Slide

Thomas explained that according to the research done by the Pew Research Center the chart shows the partisan viewership of several of the nations' more prominent media sources. Martha and Thomas then explained the scope of their project by explaining that they selected two primetime news stories that focused on the pandemic from the same date, June 14, 2021, and that the information that both videos were covering came from the research being done at Johns Hopkins University. After each video, Martha and Thomas asked the class a series of questions focused on the individual news source. These questions included: (a) What was the main message that CNN/FOX was trying to get across? (b) What terms or phrases stuck out to you that CNN/FOX used? (c) What did CNN/FOX focus on most? What did they not focus on?

These questions prompted a rigorous discussion in which students noted the differences in which the sources explained former President Trump's performance in handling the situation, the severity of the pandemic, and the way that the Coronavirus was spreading week to week. One student noted specifically the way that CNN showed the increase and decrease of cases on a map

of the entire nation, while FOX News tended to focus on traditionally Republican states. Another student stated that by broadening the scope to show how every state was being affected made the situation seem much more severe that it had seemed in the FOX News source.

This stimulated a conversation as to the purpose of this discrepancy and what impact it may have had on the viewers of each media source. Additionally, one student also made a note of the difference in the lengths of the segments, with the CNN coverage lasting a little over ten minutes and the FOX News coverage lasting only about four minutes. One student remarked that it seems as though CNN was taking the situation more seriously because the segment "took up a large chunk of their airtime," whereas FOX News's coverage "seem[ed] like they squeezed it in just to cover it." After further discussions students collectively decided that this also showed the way each network saw the "gravity of the situation at hand" and questioned whether therefore there is such a split between Republicans and Democrats perceptions of the Coronavirus and its effects. Martha and Thomas then used this conversation as a transition to their final point, in which they provided a slide with *Key Takeaways* from each video, as shown in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4. Key Takeaway Slide and Follow-Up Question

Martha and Thomas used this to springboard the conversation into the corroboration of the two videos and to have their classmates delve deeper in their analysis of the sources. Additionally, the conversation the students began to explore the political divide that exists in the United States and how media can be held accountable for that polarization. This prompted Martha and Thomas to open up about their own political identities and share that they are close friends, but they sit on opposite ends of the political spectrum. They explained that while they may not agree with each other on every topic or issue they respect each other's opinion and do not allow it to affect their friendship.

Think & Link Scores

When examining the scores of the *Think & Link* project, one can see that most students were invested in submitting a high-quality product focused on facilitating conversations for their peers, as seen in Table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7. *Think & Link* Scoring Chart

Cycle 1								
Week	**Claim**	**Evidence**	**Sourcing**	**Context**	**Corroboration**	**Close Reading**	**Presentation**	**Total Score**
1	5	4	4	5	4	5	5	32/35
2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	35/35
3	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	34/35
4	5	4	4	4	4	5	4	30/35
5	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	30/35
Cycle 2								
6	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	23/35
7	5	4	4	5	4	5	4	31/35
8	5	3	3	5	4	4	3	27/35
9	5	4	4	4	3	4	4	28/35
10	5	4	5	4	3	4	5	30/35
Category Totals	50/50	40/50	41/50	44/50	40/50	43/50	41/50	

Table 4.7 showcases not only the students' grades but also provides a breakdown of the category totals that coincide with the rubric, found in Appendix C. When grading students' *Think & Link* presentations, I paid close attention to how students were utilizing each historical thinking skill. The process of evaluating how presenters made use of those skills involved the presenters themselves, the other students in the class, and myself. We all used the analysis tools in Appendix B. The analysis tools provided a great starting point for the conversations in the classroom, as the tools served as a way for students to gather their thoughts privately before they shared with the class. Additionally, it served as a script for presenters who were struggling to guide the class in conversation. Presenters were able to turn to the questions on the analysis tool to encourage their classmates to share their thoughts on the guiding question.

During each presentation, students focused on identifying the context, performing a close reading, exploring the source information, and corroborating the sources to answer their guiding questions Students were also scored on the credibility and scope of their sources, the quality of their presentation, and the development of a thought-provoking claim/guiding question. Overall,

students exceeded expectations as evidenced in their scoring of 40 and greater in each category and showed growth in their understanding of historical thinking strategies.

Student Engagement During Think & Link Presentations

During the presentations, I took note of student participation and used that as a measure of student engagement. When the class began the *Think & Link* process, there were only seven instances of students responding to questions posed by their classmates. In the last two sessions, students participated 30 times. Additionally, while participation in the *Think & Link* activity increased so did the number of substantive comments.

As one would expect, when students begin participating in dialogue in the classroom many may feel guarded as they do not know what to expect from their peers and they are exploring how the class will participate. This is evidenced by the types of responses presenters received to their questions. One example is that during the first presentation four of the seven initial responses to the question started as a simple "I agree with X." However, after the researcher and the presenters provided some qualifying questions, the students began explaining their opinions in greater detail.

To illustrate, during Week 1 George and John were presenting how the Black Lives Matter Movement and the Civil Rights Movements of the 1960s were similar/different. One student stated that they thought that the Civil Rights Movements paved the way for the style of the Black Lives Matter Movement. After that, three students raised their hand to provide their shared opinion; however, they did not provide any context to their response. John then told the student that he appreciated their feedback and asked if they could provide any specific evidence from the sources to support that claim. The students paused for a second and then provided three examples of the similarities between two of the images George and John had shared. With the use of a qualifying

question, John had opened an additional level of dialogue between his peers and afterwards students began better implementing the historical thinking skills.

Abigail and Sally, in Week 3, also used the Black Lives Matter protests as a focal point of their question. They, however, were examining how the police response to the Black Lives Matter protests were handled differently than the events of the Capitol Riot on January 6, 2021. Without pause, students began citing specific evidence from the pictures and gifs that Abigail and Sally provided and supplied thoughtful and evidence-based responses to their responses. When the researcher asked at the end of the presentation why they answered in that fashion one student responded that "As a student and when dealing with difficult topics like these you need to provide evidence to make people hear you." Finally, at the close of the activity that day, three students thanked me for allowing them to talk about these conversations in a setting where they felt they would be heard.

4.2.2 Final Surveys

The final data source for Research Question 2 is the Final Survey. After the completion of the *Think & Link* project, students were asked to complete a survey focused on how they enjoyed the activity, how they thought it supported their work on their Capstone Paper, and what effect *Think & Link* had on their understanding of historical thinking skills. The survey contained four Likert scale questions and eight free-response questions. Responses to the Likert scale questions can be seen below in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8. Final Survey Likert Responses

Question	4	3	2	1	Average Score
How interesting was the activity to you?	6	9	0	0	3.4
How important was it that you got to choose the text to present and how to present it?	11	3	1	0	3.7
How much did Think & Link help you to understand historical thinking practices including contextualization, corroborating, close reading, and sourcing?	10	5	0	0	3.7
How much did Think & Link help you think about and be prepared for your Capstone Research Paper?	6	5	4	0	3.1

In the 15 responses submitted via Google Forms, all students indicated that the *Think & Link* activity improved their ability to understand historical thinking practices (67% indicated this with a ranking of 4, while 33% responded with a ranking of 3).

One student wrote that "[historical thinking skills] are valuable skills that students need to learn before graduating. This activity is setting me up for the future by teaching me to consider all aspects of the event, and the bias in a source, before drawing a conclusion." Another student stated, "The *Think & Link* activity gave me the opportunity to conduct my own individual research on a topic we chose. This meant I was able to learn and understand how to evaluate my sources and use other sources to support my claim."

Seventy-four percent of students surveyed selected "very important" in response to the question about selecting their own topics. This is an important finding since a key goal of *Think & Link* was to empower student voice and agency. In their responses, 40% of students made comments regarding the freedom they had in selecting their topic and how they preferred this to getting assigned a topic in which they might not have an interest.

Another important take-away when examining the impact of the *Think & Link* activity on student engagement was the connection between the project, their Capstone Paper, and other

coursework. Five students surveyed noted that the use of the historical thinking skills learned through the project would help them grow as writers not only in history courses but in their English classes as well. When asked how the skills used for *Think & Link* would help them prepare for the skills used for the Capstone Research Paper, 73% of students responded that they found the project helpful, or very helpful, in writing their Capstone Research Paper. Another student noted that, "I definitely think the skills I used for my *Think & Link* prepared me for my research paper because it was almost a mini-version of our paper. I was conducting research and finding sources in a smaller scale, but I was able to practice the same skills I used in my research paper." This student, among others, noted that one of the most interesting and helpful parts of this project was that fact that students were trusted in the search for information, and that while this project required presenters to rely heavily on their partner, the students knew that if they needed help that the instructor was able to provide guidance.

4.2.2.1 Responses to Historical Thinking Questions

For the open-ended questions on the Final Survey, students were asked to imagine that they were explaining the historical thinking skills to a freshman history student. A rating scale was used to measure students' explanations which were compared to the explanations provided in the Stanford Historical Thinking Chart (Appendix A). The scale ranged from 1 (needs improvement) to 4 (exceeds expectations), and results can be seen in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9. Student Explanations of Historical Thinking Skills

	Student Responses															
Historical Thinking Skill	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**	**Avg.**
Sourcing	1	2	4	3	4	2	3	1	4	2	4	3	2	3	4	2.8
Contextualization	4	4	4	3	4	3	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	3.7
Corroboration	2	3	4	3	4	3	3	2	4	3	3	3	3	4	4	3.2
Close Reading	3	4	4	3	4	3	3	3	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	3.5

Sourcing

Sourcing involves investigating a document or source's origin and the questioning of an author's point of view, purpose, and intent. When analyzing the student responses for this skill, I found that several students believed that sourcing was the act of citing a source rather than the investigation of its origin. Student performance related to sourcing had the lowest scoring average with a 2.8; however, while some of the class misinterpreted the purpose of this skill, the general understanding was still slightly above average.

For instance, one response that received a 1 stated that sourcing was "citing your material so you don't get called for plagiarism." While citing is an essential part of the historical writing process, this student's understanding of the term missed the mark. Whereas one of their classmates, who received a 4, stated that sourcing is "about thinking of who created the document and what their intentions might be. For example, a piece of propaganda has obvious bias, and this will be clearly seen in what the propaganda talks about. Sourcing is important as it, much like Close Reading, gives insights into the intentions of the author."

Another student who received a rating of 4 stated that "sourcing is an important step in being able to analyze a source and unveil its meaning to a historic event. By identifying documents, sources, and information, we can dive into the importance of its purpose." Some

interesting sourcing examples provided by students were analyzing the intent of the Declaration of Independence and how the document demonstrated bias against England, propaganda, and its intentional slant of information for political purpose, and the rationale for the selection of photos included in a textbook and what message the authors were trying to convey through that selection.

Contextualizing

Contextualizing involves situating historical events in a specific time and place. Students' average score was the highest with a 3.7 average.

No student received a score lower than a three on their descriptions of this historical thinking skill. Where the difference between a three and four was found was in the use of applications in their responses. For instance, one response stated that contextualization was "giving background for the topic and making it easier to understand. It is important because it helps the audience comprehend the subject better because they will have some background knowledge about it. Ex: explaining the dates, people involved, etc." While this is an appropriate definition of contextualizing, this response received a score of "3" due to the general examples provided. An example of a "4" response stated that "Putting a historical event within its proper context and understanding its relationship with other events on a broader scale. Example: explaining the relevance of slavery in the U.S. with regard to the Civil War and other examples of division. The importance of this skill lies in the ability to relate events with each other to broaden global contexts rather than focus on a single idea." This response provides a specific historical example and describes the significance of connecting a topic to the larger scope of its influence.

Corroborating

Corroborating involves comparing of multiple sources to garner the similarities or differences between them to determine the verifiable information related to an event. The use of this skill is critically important in supporting an investigative thesis, as used in students' Capstone Paper, and for strengthening a conclusion when forming a historical argument. Students received an average score of 3.2 on this historical thinking skill.

Students who received a score of 2 provided a general description of the process but did not provide examples or applications of this skill in their response. One example of an explanation rated 2 is: "To give support to a topic or confirm it. Link a study that would relate that topic you're researching. It is important because it backs up your claim and gives it more reputability." Again, while a correct response the student did not provide any examples that would help a younger student better understand the importance or use of contextualization.

To receive a score of 3, students had to provide a definition similar to the 2 score, but they also had to provide an example. One student stated "Corroborating is the act of confirming source information by looking at other sources. It is important not to source all information in your essay/presentation from one document as the information could be inconsistent to what others are saying in other sources. An example would be reading different news articles from different sources to find an accurate unbiased answer." This student response provides an accessible definition and a tangible example of the corroborating a source.

A 4 response provided the rationale for corroborating. For instance, one "4" response posited that "corroborating is the utilization of multiple sources to prove a valid point on a certain topic. An example would be taking sources from various books or databases in order to prove an overall point (basically a heart of a research paper). Corroboration is important since

it is the action of proving something is valid based on conclusive evidence, and without it, false claims or incorrect statements could arise. Like reading multiple sources, from different perspectives, on Dr. King's speech in order to understand the impact." This response provides a definition, a rationale, and an example of its application.

Close Reading

Finally, close reading is the practice of focusing on what an author, artist, or director is trying to say and how specific decisions such as word choice or artistic medium convey their message. This is one of the more transferable historical thinking skills as it is commonly used in English courses as well. As a result, the average student score on this skill was a 3.5.

To receive a score of 3, students needed to provide a definition of the term and explain its significance. An example of an explanation scored as 3 is: "Close reading is the way we interpret or criticize a source. The importance of close reading is that it helps us understand what the author of a piece wants us to think. It also helps with interpreting how we can relate that to topics being researched or other sources, similarly, to corroborating." This response provides an accurate definition of the skill and the importance of using the skill. However, it does not contain an example which would make it easier for a younger student to understand its application.

An explanation rates as 4 needed to include a definition, provide the significance, and provide an example. A sample of a 4 response is: "close reading involves looking at a piece of text with great detail to fully understand the purpose of the text, including the author's purpose and other essential parts of the text. An example of this is using the SOAPS strategy to analyze a piece of text or how we respond in class to what we see in various photos presented on the board. This skill is important because it allows a writer or reader to fully understand the text

that will be used for research of a topic." Not only does this response provide an example but it also included a cross curricular connection to the SOAPS (Speaker, Occasion, Audience, Purpose, Subject) analysis used in English class. This would be an appropriate explanation for a younger student.

5.0 Discussion

During the year in which my research took place, students and teachers faced unprecedented challenges in responding to the global pandemic. As students' schedules and traditions were consistently uprooted, it became evident to me that I would need to support students and provide them with a school experience that would quell concerns and support their social-emotional well-being. It was important that students felt connected with their peers and their teachers because, as Ryan and Deci (2000) argue, *relatedness* is vital for the promotion of student adjustment and well-being.

During this difficult time, students deserved a place where they could expect a constant, consistent, appreciation for their happiness, voice, and success. Therefore, as a new teacher in the district, I was in the position to develop a classroom culture around the needs of students and ground it in a responsive, rigorous, and caring pedagogy. On the first day of school, I recall telling students that living through history is hard, confusing, and frustrating but that we would make it through together and come out on the other side stronger. From day one, I felt it was necessary to create a classroom culture in which students knew that they could rely on their needs and concerns being central to the culture in the classroom.

The 2020-2021 school year provided an interesting context in which to examine the impact of the development of caring in the classroom. By grounding the learning community this year in the tenets of Isenbarger and Zembylas (2016), hooks (2003), and Noddings (2005), I was able to provide an example of how a classroom culture of caring can be created.

Specifically, the *Think & Link* activity provided students with opportunities to engage choice and voice. Their engagement with the activity demonstrated their buy-in, and their

reflection on the activity revealed their appreciation of its underlying message of agency and support. My design of the *Think & Link* activity was influenced by its potential to provide that agency and support.

As an educator, I also wanted the activity to provide what Isenbarger and Zembylas (2016) call pedagogical caring. That is, I specifically wanted to provide support for the academic success of my students. The *Think & Link* activity with its emphasis on the use of historical thinking practices not only provided students with skills they could use with any history project; it also provided them with the specific skills and tools they could use in completing the high-stakes capstone paper.

While I was able to document my students' learning, I am also able to demonstrate my own learning. My review of the scholarly literature introduced me to powerful theoretical constructs that I used to frame my work. For example, by grounding the learning community this year in the tenants of Isenbarger and Zembylas (2016), hooks (2003), and Noddings (2005) this study was able to build upon the existing evidence of the power of caring in the classroom by focusing on the creation of a culture of caring during a time of monumental uncertainty and confusion for students and faculty alike. An integral part of this project came from the existing body of work on empowering student voice in the classroom. Making students active stakeholders in their education throughout this study enabled the building strong relationships with students in the creation of a classroom environment in which students can thrive in a caring climate (Mitra, 2018; Noddings, 2012; Simmons, Graham, & Thomas, 2015).

I was also inspired by the Lit4Life approach of Storm and Rainey (2018). In developing the *Think & Link* activity, I made use of several principles in that approach. I was specifically drawn to Lit4Life's focus on connecting course content to students' interest as a vehicle to promote

individuality and voice in the classroom. It was my goal to create an activity that provided my social studies students the same powerful experience Storm had created within his English classroom.

Although I had always been committed to a caring classroom culture, these scholarly influences provided me with perspectives to ground my efforts.

My students also taught me a great deal. I was particularly taken by comments from two students that referenced the caring of students had for one another. For a classroom culture to develop, the teacher cannot be the only member committed to demonstrating caring. However, the teacher is key and the caring needs to go beyond designing activities. My students pointed out how my willingness to accommodate their schedules and to take an active interest in their lives was integral to the caring culture that they perceived.

This was a small study in one high school with one teacher and 25 students. However, I suggest that it does offer a type of proof of concept for an approach that may be of interest to other teachers. In communicating with those teachers, I would posit that student-centered learning, and activities like *Think & Link*, are a powerful tool that can be used to support students at any level, not just AP and Honors Students. By eliciting student's interests, perspectives, experiences, and using them as the keystone of the lesson students in any social studies course can have a positive experience. For example, one student, that identified as a struggling reader, commented that by listening to his peers describe and explain the texts, completing the analysis tools, and the variety of sources utilized allowed for him to participate at the same level as his peers.

With the close of this study, I am thinking about the next steps. One exciting opportunity that has come up is the chance to present my research to the central administration at Benjamin Franklin School District. Additionally, I have been asked to develop a workshop for interested

teachers to share my findings in supporting student needs in the classroom. I have also been asked by the assistant superintendent to include the *Think & Link* activity in the new 11th grade history curriculum, as an opportunity for students to discuss important civics, historical, and legal topics in a safe and student-centered atmosphere. Another opportunity that I discussed with the principal is the opportunity to replicate this study in the other disciplinary areas at Benjamin Franklin High School to support the creation of cross-curricular caring cultures within the building.

I intend to present my research at conferences including the Pennsylvania Council for Social Studies (PCSS) and the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS). I also plan to prepare a manuscript for possible publication in a social studies journal.

5.1 Final Conclusions

When I entered the EdD Program I thought that I would continue my research on the mythification of historical figures in social studies curricula. However, by trusting the process and developing my own growth mindset, I was lucky enough to come upon caring education and the potential it has in the lives of students. This is now my passion. Over the last three years, I have grown as an educator, a researcher, and leader in my place of practice. I will continue to work to close the *caring gap* and to help other teachers to develop classroom cultures that support and empower their students. This work is essential to the field of education because as Fred Rogers once said, “Love and trust, in the space between what's said and what's heard in our life, can make all the difference in the world.”

Appendix A Stanford Historical Thinking Skills

HISTORICAL THINKING CHART

Historical Reading Skills	Questions	Students should be able to . . .	Prompts
Sourcing	• Who wrote this? • What is the author's perspective? • When was it written? • Where was it written? • Why was it written? • Is it reliable? Why? Why not?	• Identify the author's position on the historical event • Identify and evaluate the author's purpose in producing the document • Hypothesize what the author will say before reading the document • Evaluate the source's trustworthiness by considering genre, audience, and purpose	• The author probably believes . . . • I think the audience is . . . • Based on the source information, I think the author might . . . • I do/don't trust this document because . . .
Contextualization	• When and where was the document created? • What was different then? What was the same? • How might the circumstances in which the document was created affect its content?	• Understand how context/ background information influences the content of the document • Recognize that documents are products of particular points in time	• Based on the background information, I understand this document differently because . . . • The author might have been influenced by _____ (historical context) . . . • This document might not give me the whole picture because . . .
Corroboration	• What do other documents say? • Do the documents agree? If not, why? • What are other possible documents? • What documents are most reliable?	• Establish what is probable by comparing documents to each other • Recognize disparities between accounts	• The author agrees/disagrees with . . . • These documents all agree/ disagree about . . . • Another document to consider might be . . .
Close Reading	• What claims does the author make? • What evidence does the author use? • What language (words, phrases, images, symbols) does the author use to persuade the document's audience? • How does the document's language indicate the author's perspective?	• Identify the author's claims about an event • Evaluate the evidence and reasoning the author uses to support claims • Evaluate author's word choice; understand that language is used deliberately	• I think the author chose these words in order to . . . • The author is trying to convince me . . . • The author claims . . . • The evidence used to support the author's claims is . . .

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Appendix B *Think & Link* Analysis Tools

Appendix B.1 *Think & Link* Analysis Tool for Artifacts

Think & Link Analysis Tool for Artifacts

Purpose:
To conduct a close reading of the texts provided in class, use the following guide to analyze those texts. Your close reading involves a three-step process of observe, reflect, and question. This process will conclude with the posing of a claim.

Use the questions provided to guide your analysis and to discuss your ideas with the other students in your group. The goal of this activity is to answer or respond to your classmates' inquiry question or claim.

Source 1: _____
Source Creator/Artist: _____

Source 2: _____
Source Creator/Artist: _____

Topic:

What is the question or topic the presenters have identified?

_____
_____

Observe:

What material or medium did the creator/artist use? Describe your reaction to the piece, consider aspects like shape, color, texture, etc. Why do you think it was created? What response do you think the audience had? When is it from? Where is it from?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Reflect:

Where is it from? When is it from? Who used it and for what reason? What was it used for and how do you surmise that? What does it tell you about the technology of the time? Is there anything similar to today?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Question:

What do you wonder about _ Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? What questions does this artifact elicit? What more do you want to know? How would you go about answering those questions or finding out more?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Response

How would respond to the claim or question provided by the presenter? Do you have enough information to support their claim or answer their question?

Appendix B.2 *Think & Link* Analysis Tool for Audio Sources

Think & Link Analysis Tool for Audio Source

Purpose:
To conduct a close reading of the texts provided in class, use the following guide to analyze those texts. Your close reading involves a three-step process of observe, reflect, and question. This process will conclude with the posing of a claim.

Use the questions provided to guide your analysis and to discuss your ideas with the other students in your group. The goal of this activity is to answer or respond to your classmates' inquiry question or claim.

Source 1: _____
Source Artist: _____

Source 2: _____
Source Artist: _____

Topic:

What is the question or topic the presenters have identified?

_____

_____

Observe:

What type of recording is it – speech, performance, entertainment, radio show, interview, podcast, etc.? What is the mood or tone? Who do you hear? What do you hear? What topics are being explained or discussed? How would you summarize this piece?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Reflect:

When is the recording from? How was it originally released? What was happening during its release? Who made it? Who do you think the intended audience was? How do you think the created wanted the audience to respond? What evidence from the recording supports your ideas?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question:

What do you wonder about ...? Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? What questions does this recording elicit? What more do you want to know? How would you go about answering those questions or finding out more?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Response

How would respond to the claim or question provided by the presenter? Do you have enough information to support their claim or answer their question?

Appendix B.3 *Think & Link* Analysis Tools for Cartoon Texts

Think & Link Analysis Tool for Cartoon Sources

Purpose:
To conduct a close reading of the texts provided in class, use the following guide to analyze those texts. Your close reading involves a three-step process of observe, reflect, and question. This process will conclude with the posing of a claim.

Use the questions provided to guide your analysis and to discuss your ideas with the other students in your group. The goal of this activity is to answer or respond to your classmates' inquiry question or claim.

Source 1: _____
Source Artist: _____

Source 2: _____
Source Artist: _____

Topic:

What is the question or topic the presenters have identified?

_____
_____

Observe:

What labels are seen? What descriptions are provided? What dialogue is depicted? What people, objects, and items do you see in the cartoon? What actions or activities are portrayed?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Based on Library of Congress guides. 1

Reflect:

When is the cartoon from? How was it originally released? What was happening during its release? Who made it? Who do you think the intended audience was? What symbols or images are used? What do they portray? What response do you think this would elicit?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Question:

What do you wonder about _ Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? What questions does this cartoon elicit? What more do you want to know? How would you go about answering those questions or finding out more?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Response

How would respond to the claim or question provided by the presenter? Do you have enough information to support their claim or answer their question?

Based on Library of Congress guides. 2

Appendix B.4 *Think & Link* Analysis Tools for Photographs and Prints

Think & Link Analysis Tool for Photographs and Prints

Purpose:
To conduct a close reading of the texts provided in class, use the following guide to analyze those texts. Your close reading involves a three-step process of observe, reflect, and question. This process will conclude with the posing of a claim.

Use the questions provided to guide your analysis and to discuss your ideas with the other students in your group. The goal of this activity is to answer or respond to your classmates' inquiry question or claim.

Source 1: _____

Source 2: _____

Topic:

What is the question or topic the presenters have identified?

_____
_____

Observe:

Describe what you see. What do you notice first? What people or objects are shown? How are they arranged? What is the physical setting? What, if any, words do you see? What other details do you see?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Reflect:

Why do you think this image was made? What's happening in the image? Who do you think was the audience for this image? What tools were used to create this image? What can you learn from examining this image? What's missing from this image? If someone made this image today, what would be different? What would be the same?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Question:

What do you wonder about ...? Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? What questions do these images elicit? What more do you want to know? How would you go about answering those questions or finding out more?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Response

How would respond to the claim or question provided by the presenter? Do you have enough information to support their claim or answer their question?

Appendix B.5 *Think & Link* Analysis Tool for Video Sources

Think & Link Analysis Tool for Video Source

Purpose:
To conduct a close reading of the texts provided in class, use the following guide to analyze those texts. Your close reading involves a three-step process of observe, reflect, and question. This process will conclude with the posing of a claim.

Use the questions provided to guide your analysis and to discuss your ideas with the other students in your group. The goal of this activity is to answer or respond to your classmates' inquiry question or claim.

Source 1: _____
Source Artist: _____

Source 2: _____
Source Artist: _____

Topic:

What is the question or topic the presenters have identified?

_____
_____

Observe:

What type of video is this source – animation, propaganda, promotional, training, news, documentary, satire, comedy, etc.? What elements are noticed – music, live action, narration, color, black and white, special effects, etc.? What do people, objects, and activities do you see? How would you summarize this source?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Reflect:

When is the video from? How was it originally released? What was happening during its release? Who made it? Who do you think the intended audience was? How do you think the created wanted the audience to respond? What evidence from the video supports your ideas?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Question:

What do you wonder about …? Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? What questions does this recording elicit? What more do you want to know? How would you go about answering those questions or finding out more?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Response

How would respond to the claim or question provided by the presenter? Do you have enough information to support their claim or answer their question?

Appendix B.6 *Think & Link* Analysis Tool for Written Texts

Think & Link Analysis Tool for Written Texts

Purpose:
To conduct a close reading of the texts provided in class, use the following guide to analyze those texts. Your close reading involves a three-step process of observe, reflect, and question. This process will conclude with the posing of a claim.

Use the questions provided to guide your analysis and to discuss your ideas with the other students in your group. The goal of this activity is to answer or respond to your classmates' inquiry question or claim.

Source 1: _____
Source Author: _____

Source 2: _____
Source Author: _____

Topic:

What is the question or topic the presenters have identified?

_____
_____

Observe:

Who wrote the piece? Who is the speaker? Who was the audience? When is it from? Where is it from? What are important words or phrases in the text?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Reflect:

What is this piece about? How could you summarize this piece? Why do you think the author wrote this text? What evidence from the text can be used to support this idea? What was happening when this text was written? Why is that context important?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Question:

What do you wonder about …? Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? What questions does this text elicit? What more do you want to know? How would you go about answering those questions or finding out more?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Response

How would respond to the claim or question provided by the presenter? Do you have enough information to support their claim or answer their question?

Appendix C *Think & Link* Assignment Sheet and Rubric

Appendix C.1 *Think & Link* Assignment Sheet

Think & Link for Historical Inquiry

Purpose:

The Think & Link activity is designed to engage you in **thinking** about historical questions and **linking** your efforts to answer those questions to the historical thinking skills of sourcing, contextualizing, corroborating, and close reading to analyze historical texts.

The questions you choose to investigate can be motivated by many different things. For example, if you saw the movie *Harriet*, you might wonder about how Harriet Tubman was represented in that film. What did Tubman actually do? What was she really like? To answer your questions, you might compare the movie poster for *Harriet* to a historical photograph of Tubman.

You might have questions about the historical figures in the musical *Hamilton*. Why did Aaron Burr challenge Hamilton to a duel? What were the reasons motivating his challenge?

Other questions may relate to events in the Revolutionary War that we are reading about. What really happened during the Boston Massacre? What were the arguments for and against the Articles of Confederation?

You may also consider current events. For example, what is the electoral college? How does it work? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the electoral system?

To answer your questions, you will identify texts to help you answer your questions. These texts can include images (for example, photographs, video clips, paintings, political cartoons), primary sources (for example, diaries, eyewitness historical accounts, interviews, autobiography), secondary sources (such as newspaper or magazine articles), literature (such as poetry, biography, historical fiction), music (for example, song lyrics, music videos), as well as websites and blogs.

Directions:

You will work with a partner to select two texts related to a historical figure or event. The texts should provide contrasting representations or representations that reinforce or corroborate one another. For example, these two images provide two contrasting representations of Harriet Tubman. One is a famous photograph, and the other is the poster from a recent film.

The questions you might pose are: Who was Harriet Tubman? What was she like?

The texts you select do not have to be from the same medium. For example, you can select a photograph and a newspaper account, or a poem and a primary source.

For each text, you need to provide **source information** explaining the development of your piece. For example, the photograph of Harriet Tubman was taken in 1895 by Horatio Seymour Squyer.

- The photo was taken thirty years after the end of the Civil War
- The photo emulates portraits of leading historical figures of the time
- Photography was still a relatively new medium to capture portraits
- This photo was taken a year before the Civil Rights movement would begin after the ruling of *Plessy v Ferguson*

The *Harriet* movie poster was designed for the 2019 film directed by Kasi Lemmons.

- The film was released during the height of the Black Lives Matter Movement
- In recent years, there has been a push in Hollywood to create and celebrate works that are directed, star, and focus on people of color
- The film has received the rare acknowledgment of receiving an "A+" from audiences polled by CinemaScore

You also need to provide **contextual information** about each text. For example, if you and your partner were going to present the images of Harriet Tubman, you would need to do research about Harriet Tubman's life and what she did that relates to the images. When was she born? When did she die? What did she do in her life?

Next, you need to engage the class in doing a close reading of the texts using the Think & Link Analysis Tool for Photographs and Prints. You should complete the tool first and be prepared to guide a discussion of it with your peers.

Share the guide with your peers and explain how to use it working in small groups.

Finally, have your peers share their findings, that is, what they recorded on the Think & Link Analysis Tool.

Procedure:

The Think & Link Routine involves these steps:

1. With your partner, pose a historical inquiry question that interests you both. These can relate to current events, our course discussions, or something that you are both curious to explore.
2. Have your choice approved by Mr. Torquato.
3. Select two texts that examine the topic and pose an engaging perspective.
   a. Reminder that these can be traditional or non-traditional texts including images (for example, photographs, video clips, paintings, political cartoons), primary sources (for example, diaries, eyewitness historical accounts, interviews, autobiography), secondary sources (such as newspaper or magazine articles), literature (such as poetry, biography, historical fiction), music (for example, song lyrics, music videos), as well as websites and blogs.
4. Provide copies of the texts for your peers. This can be done in Google Slides, PowerPoint, sharing your screen with the class, or another medium you prefer.
5. For each text, the student who has chosen that text will
   a. provide source information
   b. provide contextual information
   c. provide a blank copy of the Think & Link Analysis tool for their peers to use in engaging in a close reading of the text
6. Both students will then facilitate a discussion with their peers to
   a. answer any questions regarding the sources
   b. share their close reading
   c. corroborate their close reading with the source and contextual information
7. The class will collectively develop a response to the presenters' question or claim and pose other questions that might be explored to further understand the figure, topic, or event.

Appendix C.2 *Think & Link* Rubric

Think & Link Rubric	Claim	Evidence	Sourcing	Context	Corroboration	Close Reading	Presentation
5 – Exceeds Expectations	Formulates a plausible interpretation, argument, or claim based on the evaluation of evidence found in a variety of primary and secondary sources.	Justifies claims using appropriate direct evidence from a variety of reliable sources.	Fully understands the meaning and content of sources and evaluates the reliability of sources based on the author's perspective and when and why they were produced	Applies prior and new knowledge to determine the historical setting of sources. Uses that setting to interpret the sources	Constructs an interpretation of events using information and perspectives in multiple sources. Identifies consistencies and inconsistencies among various accounts.	Questions the author's thesis and determines viewpoint and evidence to evaluate claims and seeks answers to questions left unanswered in the source to formulate an interpretation.	Provides clear purpose and subject; pertinent examples, facts, and/or statistics; supports conclusions/ideas with evidence
3 – Meets Expectations	Generates a reasonable interpretation, argument, or claim based on an evaluation of the evidence found in selected primary and secondary sources.	Justifies claims using some appropriate direct evidence from a variety of reliable sources.	Understands the meaning and content of sources with appropriate scaffolding and attempts to evaluate the reliability of sources.	Applies prior and new knowledge to determine the historical setting of the sources. May attempt an interpretation of some sources	Identifies similarities and differences in information in multiple sources.	- States the author's claims and evidence presented to prove those claims and notes how language is used to persuade.	Attempts to define purpose and subject; provides weak, facts/examples, which do not support the subject; includes very thin data or evidence
1 – Needs Work	Does not state an original claim, argument, or interpretation.	Does not justify or support claims using appropriate direct evidence.	Does not adequately examine reliability.	Demonstrates no attempt to understand the historical setting of sources.	Demonstrates little to no attempt to examine sources for corroborating or conflicting evidence.	Attempts to identify the author's claims, viewpoint, or evidence.	Does not clearly define subject and purpose; provides weak or no support of subject; gives insufficient support for ideas
						Total:	_____ / 35

Appendix D Cultures of Caring Questionnaire

Cultures of Caring Questionnaire

To help build a culture of caring within our classroom please respond to the following questions. These responses should take into consideration all of your courses unless noted otherwise.

* Required

What are examples of how teachers show their care for your wellbeing and concerns?

Your answer

What do you think caring in the classroom looks like at the high school level? *

Your answer

Appendix E Classroom Culture Reflection

Classroom Culture - Reflection

As we prepare to enter into the final quarter of this challenging year, reflect on your experiences in Honors American History by responding to the following questions.

* Required

What words would you use to describe your experiences in this class? Just list 4 or 5 words that describe your experiences *

Your answer

How has your teacher helped you to feel valued, supported, and heard throughout the course this year? Provide 2 or 3 examples to support your response. *

Your answer

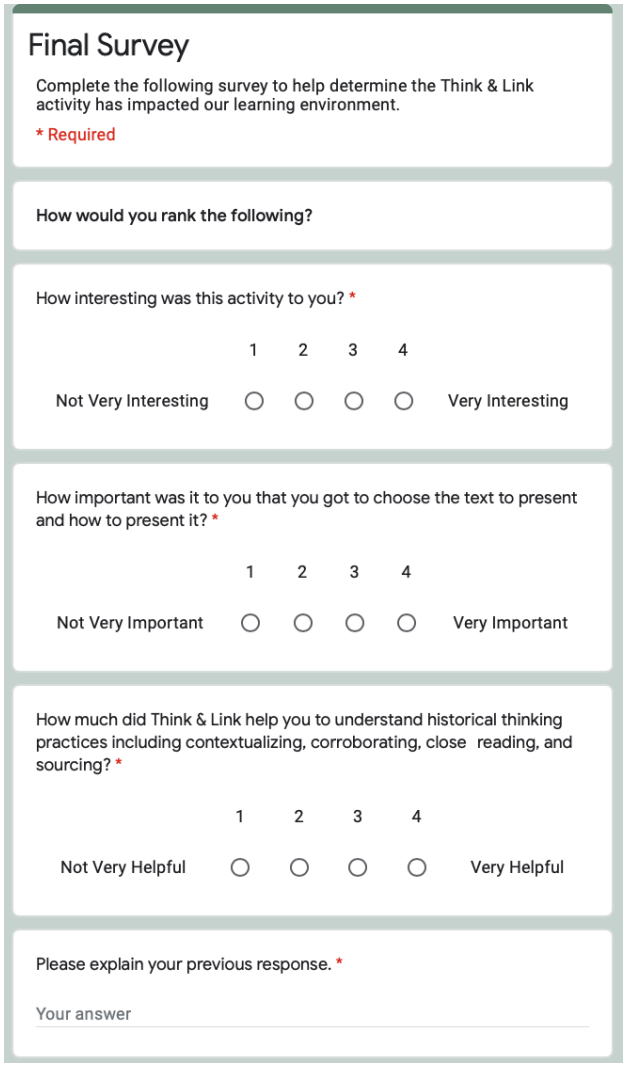
What opportunities in the course have supported you in expressing your ideas, interests, and empowering your voice? Provide 2 or 3 examples to support your response. *

Your answer

How would you describe the learning community we have developed in this course across this school year? Provide 2 or 3 examples to support your response. *

Your answer

Appendix F Final Survey



Final Survey

Complete the following survey to help determine the Think & Link activity has impacted our learning environment.

* Required

How would you rank the following?

How interesting was this activity to you? *

	1	2	3	4	
Not Very Interesting	○	○	○	○	Very Interesting

How important was it to you that you got to choose the text to present and how to present it? *

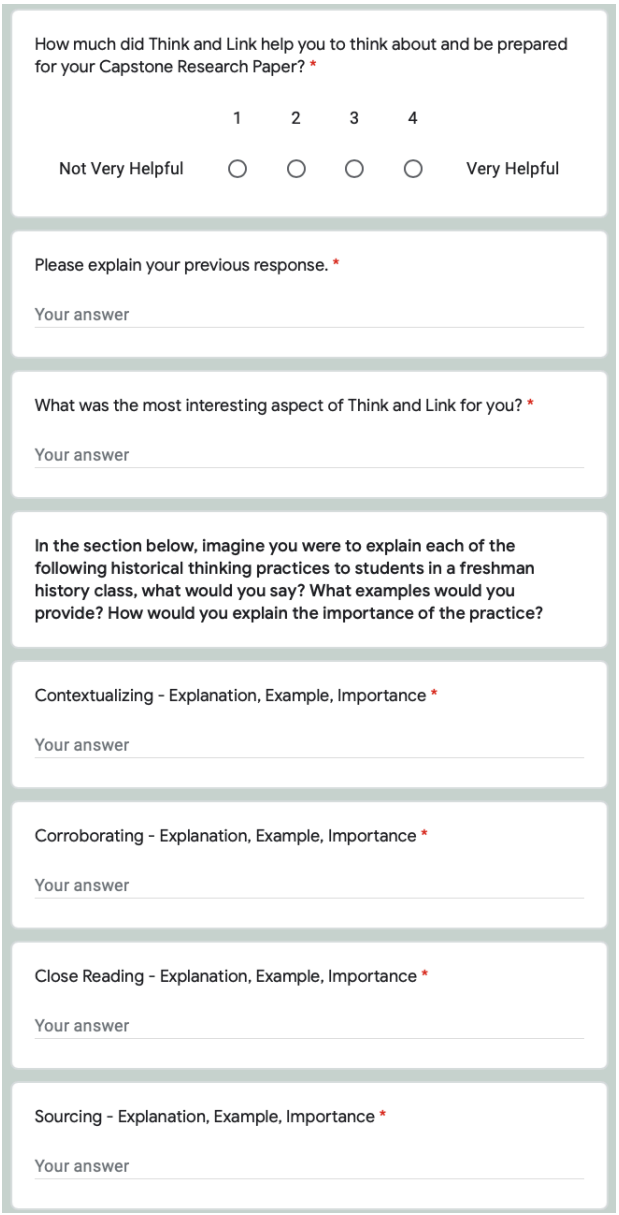
	1	2	3	4	
Not Very Important	○	○	○	○	Very Important

How much did Think & Link help you to understand historical thinking practices including contextualizing, corroborating, close reading, and sourcing? *

	1	2	3	4	
Not Very Helpful	○	○	○	○	Very Helpful

Please explain your previous response. *

Your answer



How much did Think and Link help you to think about and be prepared for your Capstone Research Paper? *

	1	2	3	4	
Not Very Helpful	○	○	○	○	Very Helpful

Please explain your previous response. *

Your answer

What was the most interesting aspect of Think and Link for you? *

Your answer

In the section below, imagine you were to explain each of the following historical thinking practices to students in a freshman history class, what would you say? What examples would you provide? How would you explain the importance of the practice?

Contextualizing - Explanation, Example, Importance *

Your answer

Corroborating - Explanation, Example, Importance *

Your answer

Close Reading - Explanation, Example, Importance *

Your answer

Sourcing - Explanation, Example, Importance *

Your answer

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