UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

# “[WE] NEED TO TELL THIS STORY”: CASE STUDIES OF INSTRUCTIONAL NARRATIVES ON THE OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

By

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Norman, Oklahoma
2022

# “[WE] NEED TO TELL THIS STORY”: CASE STUDIES OF INSTRUCTIONAL NARRATIVES ON THE OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING

A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ACADEMIC CURRICULUM

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# DEDICATION

For the teachers who share the stories others fight to bury

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Growing up, my mom and I would always watch It's a Wonderful Life together. As I got older, and began to understand the depth of the film, I loved every opportunity to watch it with her and share it with others. It gets me every time, when Clarence leaves George his note, "remember, no man is a failure who has friends." There were many times throughout this process that I thought I would become a failure; but in the words of Clarence, there was no way I could with the support I had. So, I would like to extend my deepest thanks to my committee, my family, friends, and the teachers who participated in this study. Without each of you, I would not be here.

Thank you to my family for your support throughout this entire journey. Mom and Dad, I get my strong work ethic from you both; and I can proudly say that it is one of my greatest qualities and is something I've come to lean on in times of struggle. Thank you both for being my biggest supporters and knowing what I need when I need it; I appreciate you more than I could ever express. Lexi, you inspire me to do my best each day. Thank you for being a soundboard during the early stages of this project--I will always come to you for advice. Marissa, my whole life I've looked up to you and aimed to make you proud. Thank you for always wanting the best for me. And of course, I can't forget Sophie, our little roly-poly bat-faced girl; thank you for the joy you bring to our lives. I'm proud to be connected to you all for eternity--once a Rat always a Rat!

Aaron Cavazos, thank you for your constant support. I often wonder if I would have been able to finish this thesis, my first semester of teaching, and the last semester of my master's without you and your constant reassurance and kind words; but knowing you, you would remind me of how capable I am. Beyond your day-to-day love and support, thank you for your enthusiastic willingness to read and re-read (and re-read!) parts of this thesis. Your thoughtful feedback and encouragement were the most helpful!

Dr. Kristy Brugar, where do I even begin? One of the things I've most appreciated is your constant belief in me, especially when I've struggled to believe in myself. You saw something in me I didn't see in myself. During my undergrad it was always, "when you start your master's" and now it's, "when you start your PhD." I remember thinking those things were out of reach for me, something only "important" people do; but now I know that I have important things to say and share. Thank you for helping me see myself in new ways, as someone capable of new things.

Dr. Neil Houser, thank you for providing me with the language to express myself. I have always struggled to name my thoughts and feelings about social studies education (and the world at large), but your courses have given me the ability to more accurately share how I feel and think--thank you for this gift. Dr. Aiyana Henry, thank you for your support throughout my master's program. You were one of the first professors I had in grad school, and I will never forget how welcomed you made me feel during such a huge transition in my life. I worried about finding my place in grad school, but you always made me feel welcome and valued as a person.

## Abstract

Teachers intentionally and unintentionally present particular interpretations and narratives of historical events; these narratives shape students' understanding and perceptions of the past, present, and future. Through a multiple case-study methodology, this study seeks to answer the following research question, *What historical narratives are Oklahoma social studies teachers presenting on the Oklahoma City Bombing?*. I collected data from three Oklahoma History teachers, including semi-structured interviews, observations of the lessons on the OKC Bombing, and content-analysis of the materials used throughout instruction. This data was analyzed and triangulated to help make valid and reliable interpretations of the presented narratives. The three teachers, Jean-Pierre, Katie, Adriana, approached this subject/topic in different ways. The various instructional narratives on the OKC Bombing include a disparate collection of concepts and events associated with the OKC Bombing; a sequence of events that led Timothy McVeigh to become the OKC Bomber; and a timeline of events proceeding and following the bombing. These narratives do not critically consider or discuss deeply rooted concepts such as the white power movement and white supremacy: both of which served as contextual and motivating factors surrounding April 19th, 1995. With limited discussion of these topics, which are central to understanding the broader historical context and legacy of the OKC Bombing, students will leave with a superficial, incomplete understanding of the event. More broadly, acts of domestic terrorism perpetrated by radicalized white nationalists like McVeigh are on the rise and *must* be critically examined. This examination, situated in conversations about white supremacy and the white power movement, helps us name and understand the danger these ideologies pose and perpetuate. Critically deconstructing the root causes of events like the OKC Bombing help prevent similar events, like those seen during the January 6th, 2021, insurrection of the United States Capitol, from happening again.

***Keywords:*** historical narratives, instructional narratives, counter-narratives, dominant narratives, social studies, null curriculum, Oklahoma City Bombing

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## Prologue

I grew up learning and living with the legacy of the Oklahoma City Bombing in both familial and academic spaces. I was born in Oklahoma City in 1998, so I am an Oklahoman, born and bred, as us Okies say; and just like every Oklahoma family who was here in the spring of 1995, my family has a story. Marissa, my older sister, was born in Oklahoma City in December of 1994, a few months before the Oklahoma City Bombing. In the spring of 1995 my mom, Gena, was contemplating whether she should drop off or mail Marissa's birth certificate to the Social Security office in the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building to get my sister's social security card issued. With the unpredictability of Oklahoma spring weather *and* having a toddler, she decided to mail it in. In turn, Marissa's birth certificate was housed in the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building when it was bombed in 1995. Miraculously, my parents received my sister's birth certificate in the mail months later, but the destruction that occurred on April 19th is carried in that piece of soot-stained paper. Though the birth certificate remained virtually intact, 168 people, including 19 children, lost their lives in the Oklahoma City Bombing.

While none of my immediate family was physically harmed the day of the bombing, it was emotionally traumatizing. My mom played through a million *what if* scenarios, especially after finding out children had died in the attack; my dad wrestled with notions of Oklahoma (and America) being a "safe" place, and anxieties of authorities catching the person who had done so much harm; my grandmother worked as a counselor for first responders immediately following the bombing. These are the very personal, close to home stories I grew up with; and I know *so* many other Oklahomans have similar, and more heartbreaking, family stories they pass along to their children and grandchildren.

Interestingly, this personal story of the OKC Bombing is reflective of the instruction I received in my social studies classes growing up. I remember learning about the destruction of the bomb, the hate Timothy McVeigh had in his heart after the deadly siege at Waco, the response from both first responders and the community at large, the Oklahoma Standard, and the importance of honoring and remembering the lives lost and changed forever. This was the narrative I recall from my Oklahoma History class freshman year of high school, my AP U.S. history class junior year, and when I visited the Oklahoma City National Museum and Memorial with my AP psychology class. This valuable narrative of remembrance and honor, coming together amid tragedy, and serving the community, is incredibly important and *must* be part of instruction on the OKC Bombing. However, I think there needs to be *more* in the unpacking of this complex event we share with our students. My first critical examination of the OKC Bombing, and the wider historical context of paramilitarism and the white power movement, was in the Oklahoma History class I took at the University of Oklahoma. One of the greatest driving forces in my research has been to create and contribute to a narrative that incorporates discussion of the white power movement. These connections were not brought to my attention as a PK-12 Oklahoma student. So, one of the goals for my thesis is to provide a pathway forward that includes these important conversations during instruction on the Oklahoma City Bombing.

I firmly believe that to appropriately analyze the narratives that Oklahoma social studies teachers present to their students surrounding the Oklahoma City Bombing, we must acknowledge the role that white supremacy played in this event. Even if teachers are not incorporating this subject matter into their instruction, it is critical to unpack the larger historical context of the white power movement to understand the root causes of the OKC Bombing. Timothy McVeigh was not a lone actor; he was part of the white power movement. And these

groups that make up the white power movement are “the greatest domestic terrorist threat in the United States” (Arablouei et al., 2020). The rest of this prologue briefly outlines the history of the modern white power movement. I chose to include this information as a prologue because I believe it is important for you to know where I approach this project from. Equally important, this information is critical for understanding the social studies instruction discussed throughout my thesis.

While it is difficult to succinctly explain the connections between white supremacist hate groups and anti-government violence, like that seen in the OKC Bombing, it is important to recognize and articulate these connections. One of the main reasons it is difficult to explain is because the logic used by the groups and individuals who partake in this violence is illogical. These racist, dangerous logical fallacies produce violence. Dr. Kathleen Belew, a history professor at the University of Chicago, and an authority on the modern white power movement, argues that this movement solidified after the Vietnam War (Illing, 2018). This time period saw an increase in anti-government sentiment and the consolidation of radicalized groups including “Neo-Nazis, Klansmen, skinheads, white separatists, tax protesters, and militiamen” (Belew, as cited in Illing, 2018). With these groups unifying into a single movement known as the white power movement, they grew in numbers and complex group/movement dynamics (Illing, 2018). After the Vietnam War, these groups were unified in their feelings of betrayal and their distrust of the American government. This is not to say that the Vietnam War *made* Americans any more racist, but,

> At the same time, you had all these people with military training who were desensitized to violence and full of rage and hatred. So they obtained weapons they knew how to use, started a network of paramilitary camps, and reframed their struggle as a broader race

> war against the United States. It's out of this environment that you get someone like Timothy McVeigh, who bombed a federal building in Oklahoma City in 1995 (Belew, as cited in Illing, 2018).

They turned their anger on the U.S. government because they believed (and still believe) a race war, or civil war, would not happen without revolution against the government (Illing, 2018).

These groups continued to evolve in the late 1970s with the publication of *The Turner Diaries* and the 1983 Aryan Nations World Conference in Idaho. *The Turner Diaries* is a racist book that "portray[s] a violent campaign against the federal government and a race war that wipe[s] out Black Americans" (Levine et al., 2020). It's important to note that "Excerpts of the book were found in McVeigh's car when authorities arrested him in 1995" (Levine et al., 2020). Similar racist, radicalizing literature spread throughout these groups and across the internet. The situation was made more dangerous with the shift toward leaderless resistance and guerilla warfare tactics of revolution. This strategy was proposed and adopted at the 1983 Aryan Nations World Conference. As Belew asserts in NPR's *Throughline* history podcast:

> [T]here is a notable change in how these groups behave after this event. The kind of violence they carry out changes, and their inter-coordination, the relationships and communications between groups, are just exponentially higher after this meeting in 1983 (Arablouei et al., 2020).

Two particular incidents galvanize the white power movement, and the events in Oklahoma City on April 19th: Ruby Ridge and Waco. First, the Weaver family were anti-government white-separatists who lived off the grid in Ruby Ridge, Idaho. In 1992 a warrant was issued for Randy Weaver's arrest following his refusal to work as an informant for the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and failing to appear for his court

hearing regarding weapons charges (Wright, 2007). What proceeded was an 11-day stand-off resulting in a deadly shoot-out between federal agents and Randy Weaver and his family. Weaver's wife and teenage son died, as did a federal agent (Wright, 2007).

Second, in 1993, a year after Ruby Ridge, another deadly siege took place in Waco, Texas on the Branch Davidians' religious compound. The Branch Davidians are an offshoot of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, a Protestant denomination, that started in the early 20th century. David Koresh, the leader of the Branch Davidians during the siege on Waco, had a warrant out for his arrest on charges of illegally stockpiling weapons at the compound (Wright, 2007). After the ATF went to serve the warrant, a stand-off occurred that lasted 51 days and ended in a deadly fire that took nearly 80 lives, including children (Wright, 2007). Each of these events served as fodder for the white power movement, proving to them, that "the federal superstate is deeply corrupt and will come for you and your family" (Arablouei et al., 2020).

It should be clear that the government's response to these paramilitary groups was unnecessarily violent and lethal. But it is equally important to note that the deadly results further radicalized the white power movement and individuals like McVeigh. This was their proof that the government was staging war against the American people, a central position within the white power movement (Arablouei et al., 2020). So even though these events "weren't explicitly about race" the movement "seized on these events and used them for their own propaganda" and recruitment (Arablouei et al., 2020).

Increasing numbers of followers combined with leaderless resistance allowed the white power movement to avoid wide-scale prosecution. This happened because the movement advocated for individuals to act without orders and did not have clear communication channels between cells (i.e., groups) (Arablouei et al., 2020). This shift in tactics also shaped public

perception of white domestic terror incidents, like the OKC Bombing. Leaderless resistance changed the way we talk about these tragedies, it has also altered how we remember them. These attacks are spoken of as “lone wolf” incidents, and not as a product and part of the white power movement (Belew, 2018). For example, “This movement had targeted the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City since 1983” (Arablouei et al., 2020). Even though “This building was deeply located in the consciousness of the white power movement as a potential target in a leaderless resistance mode of activism,” public memory associates the bombing with McVeigh as the lone, or major actor responsible (Arablouei et al., 2020).

Another contributing factor to the public’s perception of lone wolf actors separated from the broader movement is that “the F.B.I. established a policy to pursue only individuals in white-power violence, with, according to F.B.I. internal documents, ‘no attempts to tie individual crimes to a broader movement.’” (Belew, 2018). More specifically, this FBI policy change affects the OKC Bombing investigation.

> And because of that [policy], we never get a full investigation of the ties McVeigh had to other leaders. We never get the full weight of the investigative apparatus, the jury instruction, prosecutorial strategy. It's all focused on McVeigh and a few co-conspirators (Arablouei et al., 2020).

As Belew asserts, “This strategy not only obscured the Oklahoma City bombing as part of a social movement but, in the years after McVeigh’s execution, [it] also effectively erased the movement itself from public awareness” (2018). This is the dangerous reality we all live in, and our collective unwillingness to reckon with the white power movement only strengthens its corrosive power.

## Introduction

The National Council for the Social Studies defines "The aim of social studies [a]s the promotion of civic competence--the knowledge, intellectual processes, and democratic dispositions required of students to be active and engaged participants in public life" (NCSS, 2017). Thus, among many other roles, the social studies teacher is there to support this work through the curation, co-creation, and presentation of materials and experiences that prepare students for critical, civic competence and engagement (Garrett & Alvey, 2020). But what happens when teacher decision-making influences how "the knowledge" needed for this engagement is presented and framed, and in turn carried by students beyond the classroom? In Oklahoma History courses, one event that can be taught and explored through drastically different lenses is the April 19th, 1995, Oklahoma City Bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. The implications of these differences are at the root of this study.

This act of domestic terrorism carried out by Timothy McVeigh, with the aid of Terry Nichols and Michael Fortier, killed 168 people, including 19 children who attended a daycare inside the Murrah Building. Several hundred others were injured, and many more throughout the city, state, and nation were traumatized by the violence, death, and destruction that resulted (Oklahoma City National Museum and Memorial, n.d.). McVeigh carried out the attack, renting a Ryder truck and driving the bomb up to the Murrah Building. He had the assistance of Nichols as they constructed the plan and the bomb together. Fortier knew of the plans, helped store materials, and did not report any of this information to the authorities after he left the group. After the bombing, Fortier eventually testified against McVeigh and Nichols in return for a lighter sentence. McVeigh was sentenced to death, Nichols to over 100 life sentences, and Fortier to 12 years (Oklahoma City National Museum and Memorial, n.d.; Wright, 2007).

While this act of terrorism was carried out by a few men, to view it as a lone incident is historically inaccurate. McVeigh is a white supremacist who was further radicalized by the federal government's handling of the stand-off and deadly shoot-out that unfolded at Ruby Ridge, Idaho between federal agents and Randy Weaver and his family of anti-government survivalists (Wright, 2007). The deadly siege of the Branch Davidians' religious compound, in Waco, Texas solidified, in his mind, the need for action against the government (Wright, 2007). The attack on the Murrah Building had been a goal of the white power movement for over a decade and was carried out by McVeigh and his co-conspirators in part as retaliation for the federal government's actions at Ruby Ridge and Waco (Wright, 2007; Michael & Herbeck, 2001). While these individuals are responsible for the events on April 19th, 1995, they are not solely to blame; this tragedy *is* what the white power movement demands from its sympathizers.

These events were clearly identified by McVeigh as catalysts for the tragedy that unfolded on April 19th, 1995, at 9:02 A.M; but they are not always presented in the historical re-telling of events (Thornton, 2005). This is not only true of Waco and Ruby Ridge but also of the white power movement--this particular piece of the story is largely ignored. For example, The Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) website has an article on the bombing and their investigative efforts following the event, and yet there is only a brief mention of the *motive* of McVeigh and his co-conspirators--"They learned about McVeigh's extremist ideologies and his anger over the events at Waco two years earlier" (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016). Similarly, the Oklahoma Historical Society's article on the Oklahoma City Bombing makes no mention of Waco, Ruby Ridge, or white supremacy. It only briefly mentions how McVeigh and Nichols "found persuasive the conspiratorial world view of militia culture and viewed the bombing as a justifiable attack against the federal government of the United States" (Linenthal,

n.d.). With these two examples, it is clear to see how this particular event can be told in a variety of ways, and how certain pieces of information can be left out, buried, or deemphasized.

If the FBI and the Oklahoma Historical Society present drastically different versions of events on the 1995 Bombing, I began to question whether a similar situation was occurring in Oklahoma History classrooms. With the potential for various Oklahoma City Bombing narratives to be taught, the following broad research question unfolded:

*What historical narratives are Oklahoma social studies teachers presenting on the Oklahoma City Bombing?*

## Theoretical Framework

Throughout the school day, teachers make a plethora of choices, big and small--from when to take a bathroom break and selecting font size on assignments, to selecting materials and perspectives to introduce, and determining ways to assess student growth. Each of these choices impacts a classroom's social, physical, and educational environment. Thornton (2005) argues that the decisions teachers make function as a form of gatekeeping. Curriculum-instructional gatekeeping is identified by Thornton (2005) as "more crucial to curriculum and instruction than the form the curriculum takes" (p. 10). Through situating teachers at the center of instruction and curriculum, "the teacher makes the crucial decisions concerning content, sequence, and instructional strategy that determine the social studies experiences of students" (Abstract, Thornton, 1989).

Teachers' choices and knowledge influencing instruction (i.e., praxis) are central to my work. From the beginning of this study's development, I have been curious about the narratives teachers present on the Oklahoma City Bombing, and these narratives are created through teacher decision making (whether intentional or not). Even if the curriculum is adapted from

others' instructional materials, the teacher still works as a gatekeeper as they present their particular instructional narrative.

Curricular-instructional gatekeeping can be viewed more critically through the selection and utilization of pedagogical tools. Grossman et al. (1999) identify two types of pedagogical tools, conceptual and practical. Conceptual pedagogical tools are "principles, frameworks, and ideas… that teachers use as heuristics to guide decisions about teaching and learning" (Grossman et al., 1999, p. 14). Practical pedagogical tools are "classroom practices, strategies, and resources that do not serve as broad conceptions to guide an array of decisions but, instead, have more local and immediate utility" (Grossman et al., 1999, p. 14). As teachers make choices about the content and the tools to use, the content will be constructed and presented in a particular way. Since conceptual pedagogical tools function as frameworks that teachers operate from and within, they will influence the gatekeeping that teachers partake in. Similarly, the practical pedagogical tools that teachers select function as gatekeeping. As a result of gatekeeping and the pedagogical tools teachers select and teach from, students will leave classrooms with historical narratives that have been developed and presented in part by their teacher's choices (Thornton, 2005; Grossman et al., 1999). Teachers' choices and conceptual frameworks are central throughout this study.

Through placing Thornton's (2005) curricular-instructional gatekeeping and Grossman et al.'s (1999) pedagogical tools in conversation with one another, I saw the structures of a classroom curriculum being developed. This curriculum consists of explicit, implicit, and null curricula (Eisner, 1985). The explicit curricula are the objectives, materials, syllabi, etc. that are intentionally, explicitly, and publicly addressed, shared, and published (Eisner, 1985). The implicit are the norms, values, and other "aspects of the culture of schooling no school district

advertises" (p. 95). This creates a situation where students, faculty, and parents, are not consciously aware of what is being taught and how students are being socialized (e.g., punctuality, competitiveness, etc.) (Eisner, 1985). Null curricula are the events, subjects, perspectives, experiences, and values not taught to or provided for learners (Eisner, 1985, p. 97). Eisner argues that both the school at large and individual teachers create a curriculum that often follows tradition, sustaining a system where "we teach what we teach largely out of habit" (p. 103).

In Eisner's 1985 work on the three types of curricula, there is particular emphasis on the harm that null curriculum can produce. As Eisner asserts,

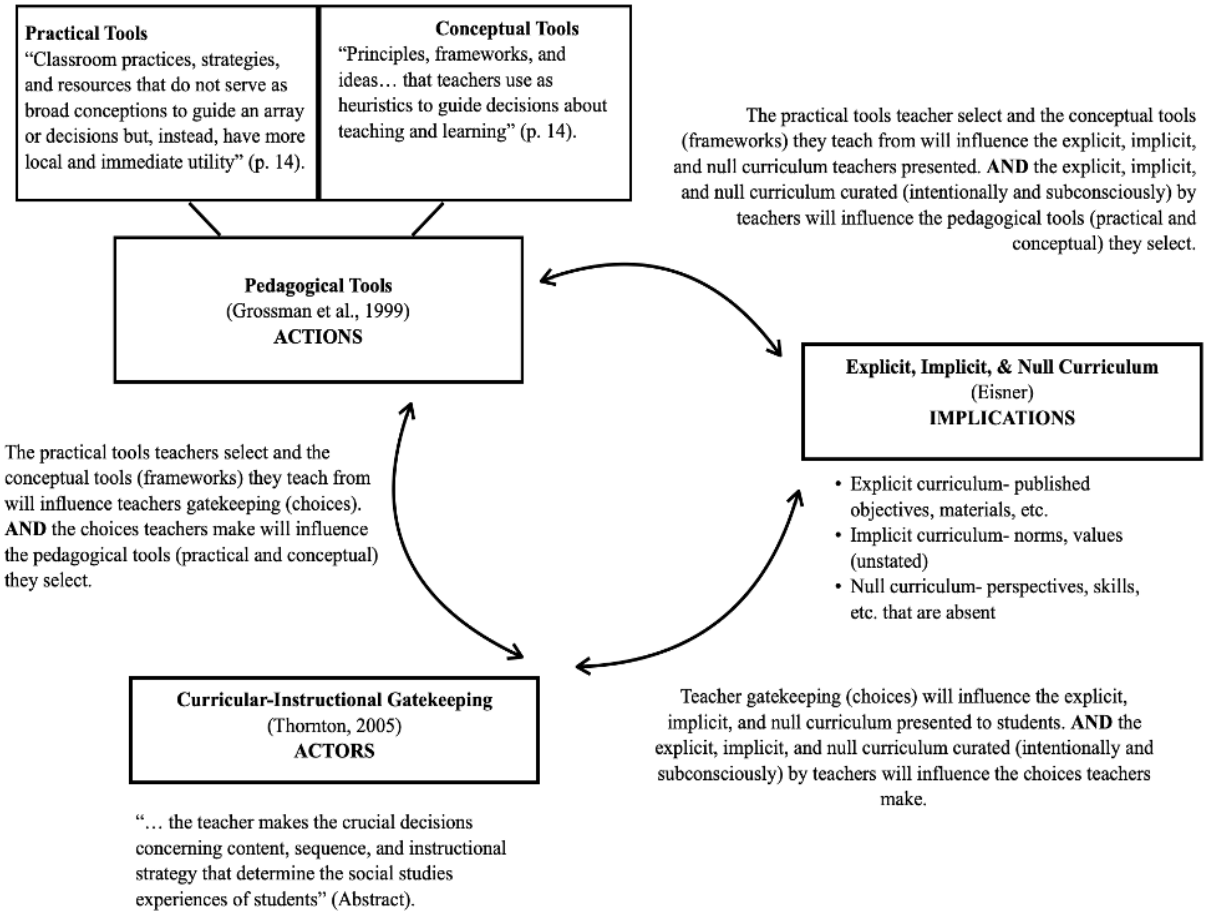
> … We can identify the null curriculum--the options students are not afforded, the perspectives they may never know about, much less be able to use, the concepts and skills that are not part of their intellectual repertoire. Surely, in the deliberations that constitute the course of living, their absence will have important consequences on the kind of life that students can choose to lead. (1985, p. 107)

With such influence over an entire educational experience, notions of curricula, particularly the explicit and null, are central to this study.

Looking holistically at the theoretical framework for this study, it is necessary to put these ideas in conversation with one another to ensure they support this work. Each of these foundational theoretical underpinnings work together to inform my research question and study at large. For the purposes of this study, teachers serve as curricular-instructional gatekeepers who select pedagogical tools that present explicit, implicit, and null curricula that shape students' understanding of historical events like the 1995 Oklahoma City Bombing. (See Figure 1 for further explanation of the interrelated components of my theoretical framework.)

**Figure 1**

*Theoretical Framework*




## Literature Review

To situate this study within the existing academic literature, the following areas of research need to be discussed: the presentation of instructional historical narratives in various educative spaces (museums, monuments, textbooks, etc.), what dominant/master and counter-narratives are, the implications of dominant/master historical narratives, the implications of counter-narratives, and how each of these areas work together in social studies classrooms. To meaningfully address these areas of research, I want to walk through my thinking in selecting each area and how they built upon one another. These topics were informative as my thinking

developed around the factors that influence the presentation of historical narratives. Although the topics are addressed in a linear fashion, they were cyclical and continuously in conversation with one another, helping me unpack and develop my research question.

From the open phase of my research, I was interested in teachers presenting historical narratives that students leave the classroom believing to be the only truthful understanding of historical events. For the purposes of this research, narratives are broken into two major subcategories, dominant narratives (also referred to as master narratives in the literature) and counter-narratives. Pulling from the work of Jupp (2005), "Master narratives are socially constructed, reason-based, consensus-oriented understandings of history as universal progress toward good that serve to fortify the social order, political power, and economic interests of the present" (p. 103). Conversely, "Counter-narratives, rather than focus on grand and universal programs, emphasize the situational, contingent, and temporary, making no reach toward truth, reason, or universality" (Jupp, 2005, p. 105).

My interest in looking at teaching and instruction from the vantage point of historical narratives was spurred by my own experience learning about the Oklahoma City Bombing in my Oklahoma History classes during my freshman year of high school and my sophomore year of college. In these two classes, I recall being presented drastically different narratives of the 1995 bombing. In high school, the narrative centered on remembering and honoring the victims, and coming together amid tragedy to serve your community. In college, we took a more critical look at the event, discussing McVeigh's motivations, and the wider historical and political contexts the OKC Bombing is situated within. These narratives, both of which are important parts of the story, differ drastically. I left both classes with radically different understandings of the bombing and its legacy and implications for present-day Oklahoma and America. With such drastic

differences in the narratives I personally learned, I wanted to know what narratives are being presented in Oklahoma metro-area social studies classrooms.

As I began looking for literature, it was difficult to find readings that specifically addressed the ideas I was so curious about. That being said, one area of research that was helpful in making sense of the impact dominant and counter-narratives have on individual/public understanding of historical events, was literature on the narratives museums, memorials, and other educative spaces create for their visitors (e.g., Marcus, 2010; Segall, 2014; Veil et al., 2011; Morris & Bohan, 2021). In reading about the intentional creation and curation of narratives in museums, I made direct comparisons to the work that goes on in social studies classrooms.

Making sense of the presentation of specific, often simplistic narratives in museums was formative for my understanding of the work I wanted to pursue. From there, I began looking for sources that made connections between historical narratives and the work going on in social studies classrooms. With a renewed sense of direction, I was able to find reading that addressed curriculum and/or teachers presenting particular narratives and historical interpretations (intentionally and unintentionally) (e.g., Morris & Bohan, 2021; van Kessel & Crowley, 2017; Woodson, 2016; Foster, 2011).

The rest of this literature review will proceed as follows. First, I will look at educative spaces beyond the classroom (e.g., museums and monuments) to better understand the process through which narratives are "created" and shared with audiences. From there, connections are made to the work going on in social studies classrooms, leading us to the second area of literature addressed. Second, I will highlight how the presentation of particular historical narratives is also occurring in classrooms. Third, I will address counter-narratives in social

studies education. Throughout this literature review, I will address the implications of both dominant and counter-narratives on student learning and societal progress and equity.

**Educative Spaces Beyond the Classroom**

When we visit museums, monuments, memorials, view statues, etc. we experience a curated version of history (e.g., Marcus, 2010). As Veil et al. (2011) assert, these educative spaces "[establish] guidelines for how future generations should remember [an] event" (p. 168). While visitors are not always aware that the history we consume in these spaces is intentionally constructed interpretations of events, there is considerable research on the subjective nature of museums, monuments, and memorials (Marcus, 2010).

For example, Veil et al. (2011) analyze the "complex process" of creating the Oklahoma City National Memorial by viewing it "as an artifact that inspires a discourse of renewal" (p. 165). The development of the memorial was the work of a task force that included various stakeholders (i.e., survivors, family members of those who died, first responders, organizers) who often had conflicting desires for the direction of the project. However, even with this tension, the group "fully recognized they were creating… how future generations would remember the [bombing]" (Veil, 2011, p. 172). From this task force came a vision for the memorial that identified "themes of remembrance, peace, spirituality and hope, cherished children, comfort, recognition, and learning," each of which co-construct the narrative that is both explicitly and implicitly told to visitors of the Oklahoma City National Memorial (p. 172).

Not only are these educative spaces outside of the classroom creating historical narratives, but they also function as pedagogical sites (Segall, 2014). As Segall (2014) succinctly asserts,

> The stories developing teams and curators choose to tell, as well as those they gloss over and "forget," form a curriculum that conveys--explicitly, implicitly, and by omission--particular messages about history, power, knowledge, and identity, helping position those who encounter those stories to think about the world in some ways rather than others. (p. 55)

From these encounters, visitors leave with a particular understanding of events that have been effectively "taught" to them. For example, Segall analyzes two American museums as pedagogical sites to determine the narratives both presented *and* forgotten (2014). Analyzing the National Museum of the American Indian, Segall argues a prevalent narrative is that "the impetus for pillaging the Americas and colonizing its people… is economic and religious, driven by positive notions such as imagination, inspiration, and the ambition of men, not by greed or the desire for conquest" (Segall, 2014, p. 60). Similarly, the Director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum spoke to Segall about how the exhibits "'had to be careful not to make people [Americans, particularly Christian Americans] feel too guilty'" (p. 64). As exemplified by Segall's analysis of the narratives presented at the National Museum of the American Indian and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, it is clear that these pedagogical sites are "attempt[ing] to influence the production and management of knowing, memory, and desire" (2014, p. 55). This power, to shape people's understanding and perceptions of the past and in turn the present and future, is *huge*, making the need for critical analysis of *all* educative spaces and materials paramount.

Similar to the work by Segall (2014), is the work of Morris and Bohan (2021) who conducted a case study of John B. Gordon's Confederate statue and memorial, and the narrative presented about Gordon in Georgia history textbooks. This study determined that the imagery on

the statue was reflected in Georgia history textbooks (Morris & Bohan, 2021). Through analysis of the statue and in turn, the discussion of Gordon in textbooks, "[the] study sheds light on the continued survival of the Lost Cause mythology, the glorification of individual Confederate icons, and the deemphasis on slavery" (Abstract, Morris & Bohan, 2021). As Morris and Bohan assert, the narrative of the Lost Cause has become "a deeply held set of beliefs that transcends generations" (2021, p. 150). This study connects the Gordon statue to the racist narratives of the Lost Cause, highlighting how these spaces, and the narratives they create, inform individuals' understandings and beliefs about history (Morris & Bohan, 2021). Through unpacking these studies, one can see how the process of curating a historical narrative in museums, memorials, statues, etc. influences the ways visitors interact with and understand history.

To intentionally and unintentionally tell a singular version of events, to emphasize particular perspectives over others, and/or to simplify history to an uncomplicated narrative is work that is done in museums and memorials, but it also occurs in classrooms (Marcus, 2010; Segall, 2014; Jupp, 2005; Bohan et al., 2019; Woodson, 2016; van Kessel & Crowley, 2017). There are numerous implications for the presentation of simplistic, inaccurate narratives, many of which will be addressed below and throughout this study.

**Historical Narratives in Social Studies Classrooms**

As I worked towards understanding the role historical interpretations played in the narratives teachers present to their students, I framed my understanding through the lens of curatorial work in museums and memorials. After reading work like Segall's (2014) study on the "remembering" and "forgetting" central to the narratives museums share with visitors, I began wondering whether teachers acted similarly to the museum storytellers and curators. Social studies teachers, specifically history teachers, share stories of the past when they teach (Connelly

& Clandinin, 1990). Thus, students are likely to receive a variety of narratives across classes that are influenced by standard or master narratives (e.g., Woodson, 2016; van Kessel & Crowley, 2017; Jupp, 2005), textbooks and other curricular materials, and their authors' positionality (e.g., Bohan et al., 2019; Foster, 2011; Ward, 2006), and other identifiable and unidentifiable factors (Eisner, 1985). From these historical interpretations and narratives, students begin to shape their understandings of reality for the past, present, and future.

***Dominant/Master Narratives***

Furthermore, these narratives are influenced by master narratives that dominate common understanding of historical events, people, and ideas. Woodson (2016) describes the ways Messianic master narratives have "constrain[ed] Black youth's civic agency" (p. 188). Briefly, "Messianic master narratives position an individual as the messiah, savior, or deliverer of an oppressed group" (Woodson, 2016). This narrative has created a situation where students believe civil rights leaders must be perfect, risking their lives, adhere to Judeo-Christian values, etc. (Woodson, 2016). This master narrative has not only simplified the actions of civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks, but it has also prevented Black students from being able to imagine themselves and other community members as civil rights leaders (Woodson, 2016; Krutka & Milton; 2018). Ultimately, narratives have the power to shape a student's historical understanding of an event *and* their perceptions of themselves and their possibilities.

Similarly, van Kessel and Crowley (2017) highlight this process of "heroification" that is prevalent in most instruction on the Civil Rights Movement, where students "learn that positive social change occurs through the heroic actions of individuals," diminishing the actions of everyday people and communities (p. 429). But taking things in an interesting direction, van Kessel and Crowley introduce a new concept of "villainification," similar to "heroification" in

that “both processes boil down intricate webs of events, people, and ideologies into an isolated component: the single actor” (2017, p. 429). As the researchers assert, “villainification narratives--and the conceptualization of evil they promote--do greater harm. By over-simplifying and over-individualizing certain types of ‘evil,’ villainification obscures our understanding of how we perpetuate evil through our daily actions” (van Kessel & Crowley, 2017, p. 429). As their work suggests, when we paint Hitler as the sole villain responsible for the Holocaust, we absolve the rest of the population (German, European, American, etc.) “who contributed to Nazi ideology and deeds,” of responsibility (p. 439). When we oversimplify history into single, master narratives, to the point that we are unable to identify the harm we collectively perpetuate, blaming individuals for systemic issues, we only further perpetuate the problems (Jupp, 2005).

Jupp (2005) asserts that master narratives are central to the way history is presented. As Jupp (2005) argues,

> History, as understood in the master narrative of liberal progress in civil rights, presents history as harmonious advancement of great men and events while ignoring the extermination of Native American cultures, violent conservative resistance to ‘universal suffrage,’ institutionalized racism still in existence, labor unrest and exploitation, the uses and abuses of un-documented Mexican American workers in the twentieth century, violently assimilative and punitive educational and penal practices, or white dominance inherent in what liberalism means. This master narrative of liberal progress holds out the promise that the ruling classes fight against the repression of its citizens and will address any present wrongs in the long march of human betterment, if not immediately, eventually. (p. 104).

When *these* are the narratives presented to students, one sees how problems are perpetuated, leading to a more dangerous, unjust future for us all.

### *Textbooks and Curricular Materials' Instructional Narratives*

One factor that influences the narratives students learn in their history classes are textbooks. As Foster (2011) acknowledges, "textbooks… do not stand as neutral entities espousing agreed or accepted 'historical truths'" (p. 5). Instead, "textbooks appear as powerful cultural artefacts because they contain the ideas, values, and knowledge that influential elements in society expect students to know and embrace" (Foster, 2011, p. 5). Looking at the dominant traditions in international textbooks, Foster argues that "history education is regarded as the vehicle through which nations seek to disseminate and reinforce narratives that define conceptions of nationhood and national identity (p. 5). This means the "narratives and stories that nations choose to tell about themselves, their people, and their relationships with other nations" are intentionally selected (Foster, 2011, p. 5). Looking internationally, at the macro-level, one can easily identify the critical role dominant/master narratives play in understanding history and one's place within it.

More local to the US-context, Bohan et al. (2019) conducted a content analysis of 19th century textbooks from the north and south to determine how they discussed issues and events surrounding the Civil War. Of particular interest was how the racist Lost Cause narrative of the war was perpetuated in southern textbooks and later incorporated into northern textbooks (Bohan et al., 2019). The Lost Cause Myth argues that the Civil War was fought over states' rights, avoiding the acknowledgment that it was over a state's right to legally allow the *owning* of human beings. Ultimately, "as time progressed, Southern versions of events increasingly impacted Northern textbooks" which shifted Northern students' understandings of the war and its

causes (Bohan et al., 2019, p. 139). Through this example, we see how a student's geography and the textbooks they have access to, can influence the version of events they are taught and the narratives they leave school believing to be "truth."

As Ward (2006) further highlights, these stories, or narratives, are presented in the instructional materials teachers present to their students. To complicate the process, their options (e.g., materials) are often limited and determined by "community pressure," lack of professional development and resources provided by their department, school, or district (Ward, 2006, p. xxv). Ward's (2006) work details how "history textbooks over the past two hundred years have been written, published, taught, and studied by people with personal biases, perspectives, and interpretations of what our past was like" (p. xxv). Consequently, these interpretations of the past continue to "impact… us in the modern day as well as the future" (p. xxv). With this reality, it becomes increasingly apparent that alternative perspectives or counter-narratives are critical tenants of social studies, and history education in particular.

**Counter-Narratives in Social Studies Education**

If dominant, or master narratives dominate public knowledge that is transferred through instructional materials like textbooks, counter-narratives stand as an alternative approach to social studies education (Bohan et al., 2019; Foster, 2011; Ward, 2006). As Salinas et al. (2012) assert, "the dominant group has the ability to shape and produce the official narratives that are communicated in our society because they have access to particular means of cultural production, including public education" (p. 18). With an inequitable power dynamic that prioritizes particular stories or narratives over others, issues of equity and representation further highlight the need for counter-narratives. Salinas et al. (2012) and Salinas and Alarcón's (2016) work emphasizes the need for counter-narratives to complicate historical understandings and to

practice important social studies skills (e.g., critical thinking and analysis of multimodal primary and secondary sources).

For example, when working with teachers and new-comer immigrants, Salinas and Alarcón (2016) found that challenging and complicating the dominant narratives of American citizenship and democracy through the inclusion of diverse perspectives and student experience fostered "critical classroom dialogue" and helped "[develop] … critical and participatory citizens" (p. 81). Salinas and Alarcón provide two paths forward, one that continues to perpetuate dominant narratives "that silence or avoid conflicts surrounding race, class, and gender," or the other that "lead[s] students in questioning dominant historical interpretations by introducing difficult histories" (2016, p. 81). Introducing these concepts and complicating historical narratives is work that must be done in social studies classes and has been a concern for scholars for decades (Zinn, 1980; Morris & Bohan, 2021; Shear et al., 2015; Journell, 2009).

Howard Zinn famously presents history from the perspective of the people. Zinn's work is positioned not from the perspective of the "victors" but rather the "victims" (1980). For example, Zinn presents the story of America's "discovery" from the vantage point of the Arawaks, emphasizing a counter-narrative of colonization as opposed to the dominant narrative that posits Columbus as an ambitious explorer (Zinn, 1980). Writing and creating curriculum from this positionality, Zinn acknowledges that "the historian cannot avoid emphasis of some facts and not of others" (1980, p. 9). The reality is that these facts are "released into a world of contending interests, where any chosen emphasis supports (whether the historian means to or not) some kind of interest, whether economic or political or racial or national or sexual" (Zinn, 1980, p. 9). From here, one sees how historical narratives shape local, regional, and national

memory, which unquestioned and accepted at face-value, goes on to influence our thoughts and actions in the present and future (Zinn, 1980; Ward, 2006).

### Putting this Literature Review to Work!

My research question, *What historical narratives are Oklahoma social studies teachers presenting on the Oklahoma City Bombing?*, is situated at the intersections of the academic literature addressed above--where the implications of historical narratives that present singular versions of events become clear. This study aims to contribute to the existing work on the implications of dominant historical narratives, and the need for more complex, critical examinations of historical events. Through identifying the historical narratives Oklahoma social studies teachers present on the Oklahoma City Bombing, conversations about the implications of presenting single, overly simplistic, dominant narratives are made immediately clear. The role of counter-narratives and the implications for complicating dominant narratives, exemplified by my examination of instruction on the OKC Bombing, is central to my thesis.

## Methods

### Research Design

For the present study, I use a multiple-case study methodology. Case study suits this inquiry because of its flexible ability to investigate and make sense of phenomena in their "'real-life' context" (Yin, 2004, p. 1). For this study, the case being explored is instruction on the 1995 Bombing. The bounded system for this multiple-case study is each individual teacher, with emphasis on their words, actions, and the impact of their instruction. Using this methodology allows the researcher to collect various data (e.g., interview, observation, instructional materials) in the context they naturally occur - Oklahoma History secondary social studies classrooms. In a similar vein, the flexibility of case studies allows the data collection and analysis to drive the

methodology and data collection plans (Yin, 2004). These benefits of case study are critical for unpacking the work taking place on the OKC Bombing in Oklahoma social studies classrooms.

The flexibility addressed above gave space for the present study's design to further develop as data were collected and analyzed. According to Yin (2002), there are three basic steps to design a case study, and the second step asks the researcher to determine whether the study will be a singular or multiple-case study. To answer my research question, a multiple-case study design is most appropriate because it allows for in-depth examination of *multiple* classroom teachers' instruction. As data were collected and analyzed, it was clear that the themes and narratives identified would not benefit from cross-comparison and would not help answer my research question. Since case-studies necessitate that the data collected drives this design decision, it was clear that multiple-case study was most appropriate for this study.

**Positionality**

Since this study requires inferences to be drawn about the historical narrative teachers present when providing instruction on the OKC Bombing, I must address the positionality I bring to this work. While I have limited experience with classroom teaching, I'm in my first semester teaching 8th grade United States and Oklahoma History, I do have strong feelings about the need to situate all historical events in a wider, more holistic historical context. This is particularly important for instruction on the OKC Bombing. To be blunt, I began this project worrying that teachers were not including discussions of the white power movement, domestic terrorism, and the heightened radicalization that followed the federal government's responses at Ruby Ridge and Waco.

I worry this perception might come across as teacher-bashing, so I want to acknowledge that I do not think individual teachers' choices are the primary reason for this assumed lack of

instructional focus. I believe it is the product of white supremacy. Historically and contemporarily, there are intentional efforts by dominant groups to suppress acknowledgment of the role(s) white supremacy and race/racism play in daily American life (e.g., disproportionate shootings of unarmed Black men by law enforcement) *and* acts of white domestic terror (e.g., the January 6th, 2021, insurrection of the U.S. Capital). We see these intentional efforts in the recent signing of HB1775 into law, which bans critical examinations of race and racism in Oklahoma classrooms (H.B. 1775, 2021). We also see ignorance toward white supremacy happening throughout various parts of our society (e.g., policing, housing, health services, etc.) because it *is* the foundation of our society. If this foundation is revealed and collectively acknowledged, drastic, institutional change and reparations must be carried out. This scares people in power and necessitates that this foundation never be unearthed and reckoned with. Among many other dangerous outcomes, this reality socializes us (particularly white people) to be ignorant about white supremacy's power over our collective understandings of what American history is, how teachers teach about it, and ultimately how we talk about and remember it.

These assumptions and beliefs come from my sociopolitical upbringing but also are rooted in my experience being born and raised in Oklahoma. Speaking specifically to my assumptions about instruction on the OKC Bombing, most of this stems from my personal experiences learning about the event in school. Though I was born after the bombing, I grew up learning about the legacy of the event in both personal and academic settings. My experiences receiving instruction on the bombing in Oklahoma K-12 schools left me with oversimplified misunderstandings of the event. Working in tandem with these academic experiences, my progressive political leanings leave me wanting more for current Oklahoma students.

***Positionality as an Emerging Scholar***

It is important for me to note that I feel uncomfortable being the sole individual making inferences about a teacher's instructional goals. To work through this discomfort, I was transparent with the teachers who helped me create this work, sharing the inferences and findings I posed. This decision was impacted by a central characteristic of Indigenous research paradigms, where knowledge holders (participants) are allowed the time and space to speak back to the inferences and findings of the researcher (Milner, 2007). I engaged in this practice, also referred to as member-checking, to ensure I had the permission of those I am writing about; and also, to see if they found my findings to be representative of their actions.

This decision was important because it calms my discomforts previously outlined about teacher bashing and being the sole interpreter of data. And more importantly, it respectfully values the teachers who participated in this research, and their knowledge, skills, and practice. Ultimately, research would not happen without the knowledge and expertise of the people who are helping you co-create and understand your work/questions (Simpson, 2017). I want to be respectful, relationally accountable, and honor the gifts of knowledge and experience shared with me throughout this process.

In addition, I understand that the separation of findings from discussions and implications is the standard way to present data, but the notion that your findings can be separate and unbiased is antithetical to my beliefs as a researcher. This practice operates as though the data collected is not influenced by your positionality. For example, the questions a researcher asks in an interview will influence the participant's response(s) and in turn, the codes created from those responses. So, even though you are only presenting participants' responses (without your discussions), they are still not "just" the findings. I hold the belief that nothing can be fully

objective. However, with the acknowledgment of my concerns, I adhere to these research expectations and present the findings separate from my discussion.

**Research Context**

This case study's data collection took place in secondary Oklahoma History classrooms in the Oklahoma City metro area. This context was selected because the Oklahoma City Bombing is included in the Oklahoma History Oklahoma State Standards (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2019). The Oklahoma standards state that Oklahoma History students should be able to **"**Analyze the causes and effects of the domestic terrorist attack on the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City including the responses of Oklahomans to the act, concept of the 'Oklahoma Standard' and the creation of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum" (Oklahoma State Standards, 2019, p. 46). Data was collected from this social studies classroom context because of its explicit focus on the historical event; it was also collected from the metro because of proximity and recommended and agreeing participants were teaching within this area.

**Recruitment: Knowledge Holders and Doers and Social Studies Sequence**

As Yin (2002) shares, recruitment requires the researchers to identify criteria that will be useful for the purposes of your study. Some examples include "the willingness of key persons in the case to participate in your study, the likely richness of the available data, and preliminary evidence that the case has had the experience or situation that you are seeking to study…" (Yin, 2004, p. 7-8). For the present study, recruitment occurred in the following process. Based on my knowledge of Oklahoma high school teachers, I emailed Oklahoma History social studies teachers who teach in the metro, inviting them to participate in my study. I reached out to potential participants via email two times to gauge interest; all emails were sent to individuals, as

opposed to a larger group, to minimize coercion. Additionally, in the recruitment emails, knowledge holders were informed about the purpose of the study, expectations of participation (interview, observation of lesson(s), and access to instructional materials), and the time requirements of the study.

Before introducing the knowledge holders and doers I recruited, I want to address the discomfort I feel referring to those who helped me create this work as participants. Throughout this thesis, the word knowledge holders is used interchangeably with participants in an attempt to minimize these feelings. I am still on the journey of discovering the language that will assist me in communicating this discomfort, and the best, most relationally accountable words or phrases to describe the working relationship I hope to sustain with all people who help me make sense of my curiosities that drive this work. It feels as though it should go without saying, but I'm not sure we *truly* say it enough, without knowledge holders--and in the case of teachers, knowledge holders and *doers*--most research would not happen. The knowledge holders and doers in the present study are prime examples of this relationship that brings our inquiries to life. Without the Oklahoma social studies teachers that have graciously agreed to share their knowledge, instruction, expertise, and classrooms with me, I would not have been able to engage in this fulfilling, compelling, and critical work.

To look more specifically at the knowledge holders and doers participating in this study, I need to unpack the general Oklahoma social studies course sequence. While the 1995 Oklahoma City Bombing is taught in 2 courses, Oklahoma History and U.S. History, classroom teachers were only recruited from Oklahoma History because of the timing of the study. Oklahoma History is a semester course, and my data collection needed to take place in the fall semester. U.S. history classes were not an option because the OKC Bombing instruction does not occur

until the late spring. Looking specifically at Oklahoma History, it is generally taught in the 9th grade, but some students take it in their 8th grade year as an extra social studies credit. However, for this study, only Oklahoma History teachers at the high school level agreed to participate. Three Oklahoma History teachers are the knowledge holders and doers for the present study; additional information about each teacher and their school is presented in the following section.

### *Introducing the Knowledge Holders and Doers of the Present Study*

**Jean-Pierre LeBlanc.** Jean-Pierre is a first-year classroom teacher who received his undergraduate degree in Social Studies Education at the state's flagship university. He teaches at Pennsylvania High School, an urban alternative setting that primarily focuses on supporting students through credit recovery to graduate. He teaches Oklahoma History, Government 1, Government 2, and Civics (which Jean-Pierre said functions predominantly as a personal financial literacy class). Some of these classes are held in the same hour, so he has civics students at the same time as Oklahoma History. In addition to being a full-time classroom teacher, Jean-Pierre is also a graduate student working towards his master's. We crossed paths in this setting and have come to know one another very well.

**Katie Wells.** Katie is in her sixth year of teaching, her fifth at Western High School, and graduated with her bachelor's in Social Studies Education from the state's flagship university. Western High School is a large (2000+ student) high school in a college town. She teaches Oklahoma History and has for all five years of her time at Western High. Katie is also pursuing her master's degree at the same institution she received her bachelor's degree.

**Adriana Jones.** Adriana is in her first full year of teaching. She started teaching in 2021 during the spring semester, after graduating in the fall of 2020 from the state's flagship university. She teaches at Sand Springs High School, a suburban high school that draws from a

large geographic area including a large urban center. Adriana and I also know one another, though more in passing, as we have taken classes together during our undergraduate experiences.

**Data Sources**

Similar to my discomfort when simplifying knowledge holders and doers to faceless, static participants, referring to the rich life experiences of Oklahoma social studies teachers as data sources also gives me pause. This knowledge and the experiences shared with me are more than a source from which I can extract and manipulate for my benefit, they are a gift of sorts. While I hesitate with this language, I am unaware of any alternatives that succinctly define and capture my thoughts on this issue. Thus, I use data sources throughout this study, while clearly acknowledging my desire to find and/or create a more respectful and accountable term to describe this relationship and shared knowledge.

With that said, to understand the big ideas addressed in my research question, three data sources were collected: semi-structured teacher interviews, content analysis of materials used and created during instruction, and observation of lesson(s). This design allowed for in-depth analysis of the practice of constructing and sharing a historical narrative. By collecting various types of data, the information was triangulated which allowed inferences to be more accurate (Yin, 2004). For example, it is important to report what a teacher says during the interview when identifying and explaining the larger purpose and main takeaways for teaching a particular event, but through observing the lessons and analyzing the materials a more holistic understanding can emerge (one that may or may not match the intended goals expressed in the interview). This triangulation assisted me in "establish[ing] converging lines of evidence to make [my] findings as robust as possible" (Yin, 2004, p. 7).

### *Interviews*

Interviews were the first source of data I collected in this process. I conducted a semi-structured interview and used the same interview protocol for each participant. The following questions were asked:

- How and where does your instruction begin about the Oklahoma City Bombing?
- When considering the OKC Bombing, what information do your students *need* to know?
- In your opinion, what would you say are the most important understandings (lessons) for your students to take away from your instruction on the OKC Bombing?
- Why are these lessons or takeaways most important for your students?

These questions were designed to support me in understanding my research question, but they still allowed for the conversation to develop and evolve naturally. The data collected during the interviews were rich and complex, which led me to develop equally complex understandings of the intended instruction, progression of instruction, and the methods the teachers anticipated to engage their students in. Each interview allowed for the teacher to speak in their own words about their intended goals, identifying the things they saw as *most* important for their students, and why those were most important. Without these questions, it would have been more difficult to identify the historical narratives teachers were presenting (or intended to present) during instruction.

### *Classroom Materials*

For this study, classroom materials mean a few things. They include the instructional materials teachers are using to support their lessons and present information (e.g., textbook chapters, articles, documentaries, etc.). It also includes the exit ticket students produced at the end of the days' instruction. The exit ticket prompt was, *What was your main takeaway from*

*today's lesson on the OKC Bombing?* This question was used to help identify if the main takeaways or instructional narratives the teachers identified during our interviews were reflected in the students' responses. Similar to the exit tickets, the materials were analyzed to determine what information was emphasized, omitted, etc. in order to help determine the overall narrative teachers were presenting on the bombing. The materials teachers use support the work they do in classes. Without examining them closely, with a critical eye, the interpretations of the narratives would be incomplete.

***Observations of Instruction***

For this study, observations of instruction meant I was present in the classroom during each lesson on the OKC Bombing, watching instruction and recording my impressions, queries, and preliminary analytic memos. Observations of instruction are a pillar of my data collection process because I wanted to see if the intended goals of instruction were present in classroom instruction. Additionally, I wanted to see the progression of instruction--what information teachers emphasized, what strategies/methods were used to present information, etc. I knew this data would be critical in answering my research question, so I followed a semi-structured protocol for observations. I used the questions from my semi-structured interview listed above, to guide my field notes and my attention while observing the lessons in the Oklahoma History classrooms.

I used these three data sources (interviews, classroom materials, observations on instruction) to triangulate data to identify the narratives teachers presented on the OKC Bombing. But also, it provided an insight into the complexities of curricula that Eisner (1985) speaks about: what is intended (as identified in the interviews), what is delivered (identified

during observations and through curriculum materials), and what is learned (student takeaways from exit tickets), are not always the same.

**Data Analysis**

One of the greatest assets of case study is the ability to simultaneously collect and analyze data (Yin, 2004). Thus, throughout the data collection process, I engaged in data analysis. Analytic memoing was used to document my initial impressions, questions, and concerns that arose both during data collection and analysis (Mile et al., 2013). These analytic memos were then used to develop inductive codes based on identified themes present across the data (Miles et al., 2013). Analytic memoing assisted in the development of codes and themes that were helpful in understanding the data holistically, and propelled the project forward, informing the research question.

This process mirrors the first cycle of Miles et al.'s Two Cycle Coding data analysis framework (2013). The "First Cycle coding of data generates an array of individual codes associated with their respective data chunks" (Miles et al., 2013, p. 21). The codes were then stitched together to identify the instructional narrative teachers presented on the Oklahoma City Bombing. I analyzed and coded each data source individually (e.g., interview, observation, analytic memos) and then collectively examined the data sources of each individual participant to identify the instructional narrative presented on the OKC Bombing. This process was repeated for each participant.

For transparency, the order I followed as I analyzed data is as follows: first, I transcribed and analyzed an interview; next, I analyzed my observation notes from the field; then, I used the data collected from those sources to inform the analysis of the instructional materials. During my time in the field, I compiled copies and/or titles or links to the materials used for instruction on

the OKC Bombing. For the instructional materials collected in the field, a separate form of analysis was employed--content analysis. Krippendorff (1989) defines content analysis as "a research technique for making valid and reputable references from data to their context" (p. 403). Furthermore, the types of data most "appropriate for content analysis are texts to which meanings are conventionally attributed: verbal discourse, written documents, and visual representations" (Krippendorff, 1989, p. 404). After analyzing the instructional materials teachers used, I was able to triangulate the data to further create codes and themes that helped further explain and infer the narrative teachers presented on the OKC Bombing.

Ultimately, as with all research, every portion of this developed research design will assist me in better understanding my research question: *What historical narratives are Oklahoma social studies teachers presenting on the Oklahoma City Bombing?*

## Findings

The following 30 pages follow three participants' instructional narratives on the Oklahoma City Bombing. The findings section is organized as follows: each teacher has a description of their school, an overview of the instructional narratives from our interview and my observations, a closer examination of each data source, and a synthesis of these sources. As previously discussed in the methods section, three data sources were gathered and analyzed for each participant--interview, observations, and content analysis of instructional materials and student exit-tickets. The synthesis section puts these sources into conversation, articulating the grand narrative that spans the teacher's instruction. This process is repeated for each participant.

Following this process, each participant's narrative was identified. Jean-Pierre's narrative centered on critical thinking, using the OKC Bombing as an example to practice critical thinking skills. The narrative of critical thinking and analyzing historical events looked different in the

interview and instruction. In the interview, critical thinking meant the ability to question and reflect on one's own beliefs and the beliefs of others; but during my observations, critical thinking meant viewing history through the lens of storytelling and paying particular attention to the parts we share, leave out, emphasize, etc. Adriana developed two distinct narratives during our interview, one centered on the who, what, where, and when of the bombing, and the second focused on understanding that people do not just wake up one day a terrorist, they *become* one, and the personal responsibility everyone has to not become, and to try to stop others from becoming the next McVeigh. During Adriana's instruction, she emphasized the impact of and the response to the bombing (e.g., the Oklahoma Standard). Katie's narrative focuses on understanding McVeigh as an individual actor, the things that "led him to become the OKC Bomber," and how those actions impacted Oklahomans, downtown Oklahoma City, and the creation of the Oklahoma Standard. Each participant's narrative(s) is further described in the following sections.

**Jean-Pierre LeBlanc and Pennsylvania High School:**

Walking into Pennsylvania High School, my attention was immediately drawn to the metal detectors sitting right inside the doorway. The second I walked in, the security sitting at the desk told me to go ahead and go on to the office, directly on the other side of the detectors. I felt a twinge of panic not knowing whether I was expected to walk through the detectors, or if I could just walk around. During this momentary pause, a secretary walked out of the office and let me know that I could "come on around, and we'll get you checked in." It didn't escape my notice that this most likely isn't a choice for students to make. They enter their school and are immediately suspect, so much so that they have to walk through metal detectors. I know this situation is not unique to this school. The perceived need for metal detectors further highlights

the drastically different treatment minoritized students face the second they enter their schools--my high school, which was predominantly white, middle-class, did not even require students to enter through the front entrance. Even with friendly staff and teachers, which seemed to be the case with everyone I encountered at Pennsylvania, I cannot begin to imagine how dehumanizing it is to walk into your school, a place you *legally* are required to be, and be immediately treated as a dangerous threat.

These thoughts disappeared when I entered Jean-Pierre's classroom at the end of his 2nd hour. The students' desks were individually placed around the room in the shape of a horseshoe, and I was surprised to see that there were only around 10 students in his room. I was invited to get myself situated at Jean-Pierre's desk, so while I got my notebook and pen out, I listened to the conversation between Jean-Pierre and his students. It was abundantly clear that his students adore him. And as one student who has taken Oklahoma History three times told me, Jean-Pierre is "really cool and helping [him] pass the class this semester," it's clear they trust him to look out for their best interest and be there to support them along the way. He goes out of his way to be available for students, spending his time during the passing period helping students check their grades, and checking in on students as they enter for his next class period. If anything is clear from my time spent interviewing and observing Jean-Pierre, it is that he's dedicated to his students and their development and well-being as *people*.

***Overview of Narrative***

Jean-Pierre's instructional narrative evolved throughout my time spent with him, which is reflective of the teaching process and his first-year teacher status. For our interview, his instructional narrative focused on the civic responsibility to think critically about why certain atrocities happen, what ideologies spur or motivate these actions, and the ability to check oneself

and others' thinking to prevent similar events from happening again. While observing in his classroom, his instructional narrative was also about critical thinking, but it emphasized viewing history through the lens of storytelling and critically considering the parts we share, leave out, emphasize, etc. As a whole, his instructional narrative on the Oklahoma City Bombing uses the bombing as an important historical example that needs to be critically examined to prevent it from happening again.

***Interview: "I've come to the conclusion that my main goal as a teacher, is to just have these students think deeper"***

From our interview, it is clear that Jean-Pierre has lofty goals for himself, his instruction, and his students. During our interview, he shared that a "big part of why [he] wanted to become a teacher" was his belief that we need to ask those big questions, those "why questions." He wants to "create a really open and accepting classroom environment" to better support his students as they develop "genuine curiosity and genuine… need to learn and question things," all in the name of "developing a more informed answer and a more informed belief." Another way Jean-Pierre articulated this instructional goal was through his emphasis on "being able to question your own beliefs and the beliefs of others." Critical thinking is the foundation of Jean-Pierre's pedagogy, and it manifested in unique ways during both the interview and as I observed his instruction on the 1995 Oklahoma City Bombing.

Jean-Pierre's intended historical narrative around the 1995 bombing centered on the civic responsibility of thinking critically about why certain atrocities happen. This requires us to look at what ideologies motivated the actors, while also questioning our own thinking and others', all to prevent similar events from being repeated. After being asked why we need to learn about the events that took place in Oklahoma City in April 1995, Jean-Pierre very directly acknowledged

the dynamic nature of history, arguing that "history isn't dead… we're still feeling the ramifications of these actions even today." Building upon that idea, he spent some time unpacking the role critical thinking plays in educating students about the OKC atrocity in order "to prevent something like this from happening in the future."

The emphasis placed on critical thinking as "a foundation of how to fix stuff like this [terrorism and hate in America]," demonstrates his desire for students to understand what led McVeigh to commit this act of terrorism. He wants his students to see political ideologies as more than a difference of opinion, that it's "how you view life." Jean-Pierre has no qualms about *naming* the April 19th bombing as a domestic terrorist event. He also identifies McVeigh's motivating ideologies as being far-right extremism, and he wants his students to see it that way. But to get his students to truly see this connection, he speaks about wanting to "illustrate the notion that people can be so caught up in their own beliefs that they will do anything to promote or push their ideologies." Critically thinking about the connection between ideology and action is how Jean-Pierre anticipated making the connection between McVeigh's far-right ideology and his bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building.

Throughout my conversation with Jean-Pierre, it was clear that one of his goals for his instruction was to "prevent [something like this] from happening again." To successfully do this, Jean-Pierre made it clear that he needed to go further than the narrative he was taught as a student. He recalled that his experiences left him with the impression that there was "this one guy who blew up a building" and that they were supposed to feel sad because "kids and innocent humans died." But that was it, that was "the extent of what was taught to [him]." Jean-Pierre noted this was not the entire story of the OKC Bombing, and that more needed to be included in

his instruction. He wanted more moments for questions and critical thinking about *why* this domestic terrorist event happened.

***Observations: "We're all upset with the system at times, but we don't go out and commit violence."***

Following my interview with Jean-Pierre, I was interested to see how the intended narrative would translate into his instruction. Knowing this was his first year teaching, his first go-round with the Oklahoma City Bombing, and that his instruction on the event wouldn't happen for a couple of weeks, I was aware that our conversation might not match the instruction the students received. But it is important to remember, this is reflective of teaching, plans are always in flux and can change at any point of the planning process, even during instruction itself.

Heading into my observations, of particular interest was how Jean-Pierre presented the connections he made during our interview to his students (e.g., the need to critically deconstruct McVeigh's political motivations). During my time in Jean-Pierre's Oklahoma History class, the goals and instructional narrative(s) discussed in the previous section were present in his instruction, but the sequencing emphasized certain parts over others (e.g., using a story deconstruction framework to think deeper about why McVeigh attacked OKC). In other words, critical thinking is the foundation of Jean-Pierre's pedagogy, but it manifested differently in our interview and his instruction. In the interview, critical thinking was discussed as a generalized skill--the ability to question and reflect on one's own beliefs and the beliefs of others; but during my observations, critical thinking emphasized viewing history through the lens of storytelling and paying particular attention to the parts we share, leave out, emphasize, etc.

Additionally, the explicit objective for the lesson written on the white board was not wholly reflective of the objective and narrative discussed during our interview. And in a similar

vein, the students' takeaways, as assessed by an exit ticket activity, did not reflect the narrative we discussed during our interview or the stated objective during instruction. However, this does not mean that learning was not happening. Learning is not always measured by students' ability to restate the intended learning objectives. The entire experience was educative and clearly interested the students.

Jean-Pierre's instruction occurred over two days, working together to build a narrative of the OKC Bombing that emphasized deconstructing the story of the bombing to begin understanding why it happened. Jean-Pierre had the students look at various sources to identify pieces of the story that he hoped would help them come to critical conclusions about the motivations for the bombing. He also engaged them in discussion using compelling questions to have them consider new points within his instruction on the OKC Bombing. What follows is an overview of the events.

**Day One: "When you tell a story, what are the most important things for you to remember?".** There isn't a bell system to start and end class periods, so after getting situated at Jean-Pierre's desk, I wondered whether the students were running late or if the class size was really that small. This hour had 14 students on the roster, but only 4 students were present when class started (one more showed up later in the hour). To start class, Jean-Pierre asked the students to answer the question projected on the board, *When you tell a story, what are the most important things for you to remember?* This question was not explicitly connected to the OKC Bombing, but Jean-Pierre wanted the students to consider how we share stories with others. The students focused on getting the story "right," sharing details and the interesting things that could capture people's interest.

This opening question, and the students' responses, highlight Jean-Pierre's instructional narrative of the bombing. He had the students consider how *they* tell stories to prepare them to look at the historical narratives various sources present on the same event, in this case, the 1995 bombing, and consider what "story" the sources were telling or leaving out. Starting with a ten-minute video, Jean-Pierre asks the students to pay particular attention to the tone of the video and focus on how it told the story of the OKC Bombing. The video details the immediate aftermath and response, with visuals of the destruction, first-hand accounts, and a brief overview of the Oklahoma Standard. Interestingly, while this video includes information about the FBI's investigation and the trial, not once is McVeigh's name mentioned; a photo is included, and his name is written on the picture, but his name is not said in the video (Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, 2020).

Though the video explicitly addressed how "[we] need to tell this story," when the students were asked "*After having watched this video, how much they would know about the OKC Bombing? What was missing?*" the students immediately noted several missing aspects. The students identified that they did not know "why it [the Murrah Building] was bombed." Jean-Pierre reminded his students that the video says the perpetrators "were upset with the system," but that's the extent to which a motive is addressed. Before moving on to the next source, Jean-Pierre made a compelling point about this explanation, "we are all upset at times, but we don't go out and commit violence." Moving to the next source, the class looked at the first few sentences of the Wikipedia page on the 1995 Oklahoma City Bombing, and then were asked "*what's missing?*" (Oklahoma City bombing, 2022). The students collectively decided that "the back story" was missing; unfortunately, there was no clarification for what the students meant by "back story." Jean-Pierre follows up and asks the students to consider what was

mentioned in the video that was not included in the first few sentences of the Wikipedia article. The students observed that the article, or the portion they looked at, did not include discussion of the response or, beyond the inclusion of the number of fatalities, focus on the people impacted by the bombing.

This task segued into brief commentary on how different sources discussing the same content can serve different purposes as it highlights certain pieces of information over others. Based on students' comments, the video's story focused on the humanity of the event, emphasizing remembrance and the response; conversely, the article focused on details like the date, time, names of perpetrators, etc. As Jean-Pierre noted, "when you tell history, you need… facts but also emotions and how you feel - human connections are important." This commentary, and the tasks he asked students to participate in, reflect one of the main components of Jean-Pierre's narrative: we must be critical thinkers and consumers of the sources we engage with, identifying the "story" the source tells, the pieces they omit, and how various "stories" covering the same content compare and contrast.

***Defining Terrorism.*** After discussing the sources, the instruction shifted to a discussion about what terrorism is and what makes a terrorist. This conversation was disconnected from the previous tasks. There was no mention of the OKC Bombing or McVeigh until the end of the hour. With the use of 2 broad compelling questions, "*What is terrorism?*" and "*What makes a terrorist?*" the students went straight to work collectively trying to determine what terrorism and a terrorist is. Jean-Pierre reminded students that there is a working definition of these terms, but he wanted to know what his students thought. The class emphasized the need to feel terror or to be frightened. One student gave an interesting definition of terrorist, saying that these people have "anger inside [them] and want to let it out as something big." From here, Jean-Pierre

facilitated the discussion with follow-up questions, often using hypotheticals to have students consider the severity of actions required to be classified as terrorism. The students came to a consensus that terrorism exists at different levels, or scales, because "you can feel different levels of terror." From my observations, the students articulated that terrorism is when people feel terror as a result of others' actions.

As previously mentioned, this discussion was completely disconnected from the prior activity; but in trying to connect the class discussion on terrorism to the OKC Bombing, Jean-Pierre used a dictionary definition to identify McVeigh as a terrorist--"he has a motive, he wanted to inflict violence back on the government, so he is by definition, a terrorist." As the class period came to an end, Jean-Pierre reminded students that they still have an "incomplete story" of the bombing and will continue to talk more about it tomorrow.

**Day Two: Deconstructing History as a Story.** Jean-Pierre begins class with an announcement that they had a lot of information and activities to get through. With that said, he quickly went through two different articles discussing the Oklahoma City Bombing, one pulled from Fox News that detailed a timeline of events surrounding the 1995 bombing, and another from the Washington Post that articulates connections between the events in downtown OKC and the January 6th, 2021, insurrection (Fox News, 2015; Allam, 2021). Jean-Pierre pulled the articles up, and briefly summarized the main points, asking students a few questions, aiming to have students see the differences in point of view, historical narrative, framing, etc. The Fox News article timeline starts in 1994 when McVeigh and Nichols are purchasing materials for the bomb (Fox News, 2015). Jean-Pierre asked the students if "that is really where the story starts?," getting the students to see that this timeline drastically cuts out events that led to the bombing. Due to time restraints, Jean-Pierre was only able to introduce the Washington Post article, stating

that it makes connections between the 1995 OKC Bombing and January 6th insurrection (Allam, 2021). From here, he moved into his next activity where he wanted students to explore Waco and Ruby Ridge, and their connections to the OKC Bombing.

***Motive Story.*** After a brief overview of the two articles, instruction abruptly shifted to, what Jean-Pierre referred to as, deconstructing history as one would do to a story. He asked the students to "research one of two incidents" that motivated McVeigh to carry out the bombing--Waco or Ruby Ridge--and identify the who, what, where, when, and why of the incidents. Jean-Pierre referred to these two events as the motive story, explaining to students that these two "events help insight anti-government sentiments in McVeigh and others." Students had ten minutes to identify the five w's. During this time, I overheard a few students' questions that stood out to me. Several students asked if Ruby Ridge was a place or a person, and for Jean-Pierre to give them extra details about the two incidents. I was not sure if the students did not want to look up the information themselves, if they were unsure of what they found and read, or if they did not know where to look up the information; regardless, these questions suggest a need for more time spent on the events that radicalize McVeigh and his accomplices.

After five minutes, Jean-Pierre provided a brief overview of the two events. Jean-Pierre quickly summarized Waco, noting that while the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives attempted to serve a warrant for weapons charges for the leader of the Branch Davidians, a 50-day stand-off occurred, leaving many people dead a fire broke out. This summary is as broad and quick as the information provided here, and it seemed to leave the students with many questions.

Following this brief overview, there was another shift in instructional focus toward *The Turner Diaries*. In less than five minutes, Jean-Pierre introduced *The Turner Diaries*, describing

it as a "white supremacist book about taking over control and power." Jean-Pierre drew connections between McVeigh's admiration of this book, which details the bombing of a federal building to start a race war, to the actions in downtown OKC. With little room for questions or further clarification, Jean-Pierre ends his instruction on the bombing by asking his students to tell him the story of the OKC Bombing. This activity aimed to reinforce part of Jean-Pierre's historical narrative, viewing history through the lens of storytelling, and the details we emphasize, bury, and omit.

***Student Takeaways***

At the end of the second day's lesson, the students completed an exit ticket that answered the following question: *What was your takeaway(s) from today's lesson on the OKC Bombing?* In general, the students' responses suggested that the Oklahoma City Bombing is familiar to them, but also that the most important takeaway is to always be cautious because "you just never know" when something like this could happen. There was no mention of the larger forces or factors that contributed to the events in downtown OKC. Instead, there was a sense that the students viewed the bombing as something that could not have been prevented, making them feel as though they must constantly "watch [their] surroundings."

***Putting it All Together: Jean-Pierre LeBlanc's OKC Bombing Narrative***

Critical thinking is clearly the driving force behind Jean-Pierre's instruction. With compelling questions, and the presentation of various sources/narratives, the students engaged in a process of critiquing various OKC Bombing narratives. While the lesson was occasionally hard to follow, a disparate collection of events surrounding the 1995 OKC Bombing were presented to the students, giving them additional lenses through which to analyze and consider the event. These aspects of critical thinking were prevalent in the interview, observations, and stated

objective, though each took a different form. In Jean-Pierre's interview and instruction on the Oklahoma City Bombing, the bombing is used as an important historical example that needs to be critically examined to prevent others from happening in the future. In the interview, critical thinking about the bombing meant the ability to question and reflect on one's own beliefs and the beliefs of others to prevent other terrorist acts from happening in the future. During observations, critical thinking about the bombing meant viewing history through the lens of storytelling and paying particular attention to the parts we share, emphasize, omit, etc.

**Katie Wells and Western High School**

After checking in at the Western High School office, you exit into a hallway that leads you directly to a memorial for those who lost their lives during the 1995 Oklahoma City Bombing. There is a commemorative bench made from a tree on campus that grew from a seedling of The Survivor Tree. The tree was cut down as renovations were completed to expand the high school. This alcove, "in memory of the events of April 19, 1995, those who were lost and those who were changed forever," in a high traffic area of the school, stands as a physical reminder of the impact the bombing continues to have on local communities around the state of Oklahoma. While speaking with Katie, a graduate of Western High School, she spoke of classmates whose parents died in the bombing, further highlighting the proximity (physically, time-wise, *and* emotionally) April 19th will always have on this suburban community.

Walking into Katie's room, in the Freshman Academy, I was immediately drawn to how aesthetically pleasing her classroom was. From local artifacts and merchandise of local sports teams, to students' Senior graduation announcements, the room is comforting and inviting. The graduation announcements also lead me to believe Katie makes a lasting impact on her students. During our interview, a group of students came in to say hi and chat during passing period--

unfortunately, our interview turned them away, but not without an “I love you” from Katie. From these interactions, and her public display of students' successes (e.g., graduation announcements), I get the impression that she connects with her students beyond the classroom, stays in touch throughout their years in high school, and celebrates their life achievements.

### *Overview of Narrative*

Katie’s instructional narrative was consistent across all data sources. Looking at her instruction holistically, her instructional narrative on the Oklahoma City Bombing centers on understanding McVeigh as an individual actor, the things that “led him to become the OKC Bomber,” and how those actions impacted Oklahomans, the state of Oklahoma, and the creation of the Oklahoma Standard.

### *Interview: “Understanding what made Oklahoma, Oklahoma”*

Katie has been teaching for 6 years and has been an Oklahoma History teacher at Western High for 5 of those. Katie’s experience teaching this event was evident throughout our interview. Like many teachers, she spoke of constantly reevaluating her lesson, but the intended goals for her instruction on the bombing were clear and consistent throughout our conversation *and* her instruction. The intended goals identified during our interview map onto the historical narrative Katie presented on the OKC Bombing: identifying events in McVeigh’s life that contribute to his actions in downtown OKC; understanding the impact the event had/has on Oklahoma City and the state as a whole, and having empathy for the victims, and understanding and implementing the Oklahoma Standard.

The intended narrative is full of important information that Katie hoped would provide students with the opportunity to practice historical empathy, “realiz[ing] these were real people in this state,” that “this was really close to home” and could have been anyone’s family. Katie

argued that "there are a lot of themes in McVeigh's life that are still prevalent in society today." During our conversation, Katie identified the following aspects of McVeigh's life as factors that led him to become a domestic terrorist: being bullied in high school, his time in the military and his development of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and his radical alt-right views on guns and white supremacy. However, she is explicit in stating that:

> I bring up a lot more than just white supremacy, it's not like, "Oh, he was this white supremacist and then he bombed the government." It's - white supremacy was just a piece of it… so we, we equally hit on him having PTSD, we equally hit on his time in the [military], we equally hit on his love for guns, him wanting to get back at the government. So, we hit on all these aspects equally.

Katie spoke of using Oppenheimer's (2010) *The McVeigh Tapes: Confessions of an American Terrorist* and class discussion to help students identify and work through the themes of McVeigh's life to "[not] become those people." She hopes that if "they recognize those things in people that … they can maybe stop it before that person ends up becoming another McVeigh." While she stated that they spend an equal amount of time on various aspects of McVeigh's life, her emphasis was on him being bullied, and what the students can learn from that. She asserted that "McVeigh was bullied in high school, and so he resented bullies his whole life, and he saw government as the ultimate bullies," making it "a good lesson for them to learn, like don't bully in high school." Through the use of emotional appeals, Katie hopes her students not only let themselves "get emotional," but understand the ways they can help prevent something like the bombing from happening again.

Katie spoke of taking time for students to reflect and *feel*, then helping the students see how to channel those feelings into action and service--the Oklahoma Standard. Speaking

holistically of Katie's Oklahoma History class, her goal is for students to "understand what made Oklahoma, Oklahoma," so that they know how to enact the Oklahoma Standard after they learn about it. Through the emphasis on the Oklahoma Standard during our discussion, it is clear the Oklahoma City Bombing is central to the story Katie shares about Oklahoma. She wants her students to "have a better understanding of the people here and why we should take care of our state." The intended narrative we discussed during our interview was mirrored in Katie's week of instruction on the Oklahoma City Bombing.

***Observations: What "led [McVeigh] to become the OKC Bomber?"***

Katie Wells dedicated a full week to her instruction on the 1995 Bombing, giving class time to each component of the narrative addressed during our interview. The historical narrative presented during instruction centered on understanding McVeigh's life to identify *why* the bombing happened. From the direction her instruction took, it seemed that the goal was to use this understanding to prevent something similar from happening again in the future.

Katie used various instructional methods to present the content to her students throughout the lesson series. Her Oklahoma History classes watched Oppenheimer's (2010) *The McVeigh Tapes: Confessions of an American Terrorist*, a documentary that details the building and execution of the bombing, plus the background to McVeigh's life. This film was used to introduce the key concepts of Katie's narrative we discussed during our interview. After two days of viewing the film, the students participated in a whole class discussion that focused on students sharing their thoughts and feelings about the film, McVeigh, and his actions in downtown OKC. There was also a brief presentation on the Oklahoma Standard, why it was created, what it hopes to instill in Oklahomans, and what students can do to enact the Standard. For the last two days of the week, the students worked on an essay about the bombing.

**Day 1 and 2: The McVeigh Tapes--"that was hard to watch".** Katie began instruction on the OKC Bombing by introducing the documentary, stating that this film is the "only time we hear his voice," making the documentary powerful and eerie. Since the documentary is the primary mode of instruction, I will provide a brief overview of the film. The film details McVeigh's backstory, the planning, building, and carrying out of the bombing, briefly covers the manhunt for McVeigh, and presents stories of victims and their families. Essentially, *The McVeigh Tapes* are an "oral blueprint of what turned one young man into the worst domestic terrorist" (Oppenheimer, 2010). As one student so perfectly captured in their comments with Katie after class, the documentary is "hard to watch."

The documentary spends significant time detailing McVeigh's life, trying to note anything that may have contributed to the deadly April 19th attack. According to *The McVeigh Tapes*, Timothy McVeigh was a socially awkward teenager who was severely bullied in high school (Oppenheimer, 2010). This experience led him to resent bullies above all else, hating anyone who was bigger and could impose their will on others. He was able to get away from this life when he joined the military and served in the Gulf War. However, during his time in the military, after forming relationships with Terry Nichols and Michael Fortier, he begins to develop contradictory, anti-government beliefs. In McVeigh's own words, he "didn't like being someone's pawn" (Oppenheimer, 2010). Per the documentary, McVeigh believed in American justice and military action, but he grew disheartened by the killings he participated in. He eventually saw the U.S. as the ultimate bully and believed he had been bullied into seeing the "enemy" as evil, stripping them of their humanity in order to complete missions (Oppenheimer, 2010). From there, his anti-government, patriot sentiment festers and intensifies, finding traction

online and in militia groups, particularly after the events at Waco, paving the way for the destruction that will occur in downtown OKC (Oppenheimer, 2010).

***Student Takeaways from The McVeigh Tapes.*** This connection between bullying and anti-government ideologies is central to the narrative Katie presented to her students. It becomes the primary explanation for *why* the Murrah Building was bombed. Several students' exit tickets also noted this narrative when asked to identify their biggest takeaway from the day's lessons. Many students were appalled by McVeigh's actions, struggling to understand "why he ha[d] to go out and kill others" and that he "felt no remorse or guilt" for any of it. One student suggested that "the bombing was a huge tragedy that all happened because some kid was bullied in high school," clearly linking the bombing to McVeigh's hatred for bullies.

Students used words like "sociopath," "monster," and "not human" to describe Timothy McVeigh, a man who "wanted to get his anger out on the government" for being a "big bully." These explanations were reflected in most every response for the first two days of instruction. *The McVeigh Tapes* used McVeigh's experience of being bullied to connect the dots between his anti-government sentiment and his bombing of the Murrah Federal Building. Per the documentary, McVeigh saw the federal government as the ultimate bully who needed to be punished (Oppenheimer, 2010).

**Day 3, 4, 5: Class Discussion and Essay Writing.** After the bell rang and class started, Katie told her students that she was excited to hear what students had to share, and that she was already proud of them for being brave enough to talk in front of the whole class. For the discussion, the students sat in a community circle around the perimeter of the room so everyone could see their classmates. Once everyone was settled, Katie began sharing her experience with the bombing, telling her students that one of their family friends lost their dad in the bombing.

She spoke of eating dinner with the family growing up, thinking it was exciting to get to play with the kids. She only realized as she got older that they regularly went over for dinner because her mom would *make* dinner for the family to help relieve any stress they could. From there, she opened the floor for students to share their own stories or their family's stories of the bombing.

Since all of the students were born over 10 years after the bombing, they shared stories their parents, grandparents, or other family and friends had shared with them. Several students shared their stories, many of which were anecdotes of family members' plans for the day being altered, feeling the ground shake, or donating supplies to help at ground zero. There was a student whose grandfather died in the bombing; and another who shared that their aunt who worked in the Murrah Building did not go into work on the 19th, potentially saving her life. So even within this classroom, though the students would not be born for another decade, we can see how some of their lives were drastically changed because of the events on April 19th, 1995.

After sharing personal connections with the bombing, the discussion was primarily call and response, seldom did students build upon one another's ideas. Most communication was moderated through Katie. Follow-up questions were not utilized. Most questions throughout the discussion focused on two themes, identifying events leading up to the bombing and students' emotional responses to the documentary. The discussion started with the following three questions, asked in succession, "What were your thoughts on the film?," "How did you feel?," and "What are things that made McVeigh become this person?" Each question reflects various components of the historical narrative presented on the Oklahoma City Bombing: identifying events in McVeigh's life that contribute to his actions in downtown OKC, evaluating the impact the event had/has on Oklahoma, and having empathy for the victims.

Student responses during the discussion reflected the narrative the documentary and Katie presented. Several students brought up that McVeigh was bullied in high school, that he did not love anyone, and struggled to fit in. While there is not much in-depth discussion about the points students shared, it is clear they took away a narrative that focused on McVeigh as an unstable person who had an unfortunate past. Based on the class discussion, Katie's comments, and the narrative presented in the documentary, his past, particularly his experience being bullied, combined with his time in the service, allowed McVeigh to project his hatred on the government. The students walked away being told, explicitly and implicitly, that viewing the government as the "ultimate bully" provided McVeigh with a rationale to bomb a federal building.

Another question that reflected the identified narrative was, "What was the big event that caused [the bombing]?" Students struggled with this question and required additional prompting from Katie, reminding them that McVeigh "saw it as the government [coming] in and kill[ing] these innocent people." With that prompt, the students identified Waco as the event that "sparked" McVeigh into action. One student did question how McVeigh rationalized his actions as being any different from what happened at Waco--"he is attacking civilians too!" Katie agrees with the student, but no additional comments are made on this question. Though explicit connections were not made, this question, and Katie's and the students' comments, reflect the narrative previously presented. McVeigh saw the government as the ultimate bully deserving retribution for their actions against others (e.g., civilians at the Waco compound, the civilians killed during the Gulf War, etc.).

Katie ended the discussion by suggesting that students work to prevent events like these from happening in the future. She argues that if we "try to take care of [the] pain" we see in

others, “advocate for mental health for veterans, be someone’s loved one if they don’t have any,” we can prevent events like the Oklahoma City Bombing from happening in the future. The end of this discussion, the need to take care of your neighbors, segued into a mini lesson on the Oklahoma Standard.

As the Oklahoma Standard reminds us, immediately following the bombing, people did not know what happened, and yet, they still ran to help. Everyone came to help. Per Katies’ presentation, this selflessness *is* the Oklahoma Standard. She emphasized that her students should rise up to honor those who lost their lives or were changed forever. Katie reminded her students that the Oklahoma Standard--acts of service, kindness, and giving--is “what makes [Oklahoma] special.” The brief overview of the Oklahoma Standard is symbolic of one of the components in Katie’s historical narrative. She wanted her students to understand and implement the Oklahoma Standard after her instruction on the OKC Bombing. While none of her students identified this as the most important takeaway from the lessons on the bombing, Katie’s actions demonstrate her desire for students to *feel* and use those feelings as a motivator to live out the Oklahoma Standard.

Each discussion question, and the overview of the Oklahoma Standard, reinforce each aspect of Katie’s historical narrative on the Oklahoma City Bombing. The historical narrative presented during instruction matched the intended historical narrative we discussed during our interview. Katie’s instruction, and the students’ comments, focused on the events in McVeigh’s life that contributed to his actions in downtown OKC, highlighting the impact the bombing had and continues to have on Oklahoma City and the state as a whole. Having empathy for the victims and understanding and implementing the Oklahoma Standard are also core pillars of her OKC Bombing instruction.

This narrative is also reflected in the summative assessment Katie assigned her students after watching the documentary and engaging in discussion. The students were tasked with writing a five paragraph essay answering the following prompt:

> On April 19, 1995, Timothy McVeigh completed the worse domestic terrorist attack the United States had ever seen, killing 168 people and injuring over 600 others in downtown Oklahoma City. Please detail events in McVeigh's life that led him to become the OKC Bomber, details of the bombing and why he chose OKC, how the bombing affected Oklahoma, and any other thoughts and feelings you have regarding the bombing or Tim McVeigh.

This essay prompt is reflective of the instruction I observed during my time in Katie's classroom; it is also reflective of the discussion we had during our interview.

### *Putting it All Together: Katie Wells' OKC Bombing Narrative*

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, Katie has a fine-tuned narrative that combines many important aspects of the story of the Oklahoma City Bombing. But she presents a very particular narrative, one that centers on understanding McVeigh as an individual actor, the things that "led him to become the OKC Bomber," and how those actions impacted Oklahomans, downtown Oklahoma City, the state of Oklahoma, and the creation of the Oklahoma Standard.

## Adriana Jones and Sand Springs High School

When I arrived after school for my interview with Adriana, I was struck by how friendly and energetic she was. Even after a long day teaching 9th graders, she still had a smile on her face and seemed like she could teach another full day's worth of classes! I admired this about her at the time of our interview, but even more, now that I'm an 8th grade teacher. It also reminded

me of how grateful I am for each participant's willingness to participate in my study--without them, I would not be able to carry out this project.

Walking through the building, I was actively aware of how this school compared to the others I'd been in to collect data. This building had its own Freshman Academy building dedicated solely to freshmen and helping them transition and acclimate to high school. Adriana's classroom was also very large with high ceilings and a wall of windows. Her classroom was decorated with inclusive and representative materials. For example, she had a map with pins from the places her students were from; she also had signs that showed her support for LGBTQ+ students. These made her room feel welcoming and I can imagine many students also felt this way upon entering her room.

***Overview of Narratives***

Adriana's instructional narrative evolved throughout my time spent with her, which is reflective of the teaching process and being in her first full year of teaching. For our interview, she had two intended instructional narratives. One focused on the content, or "facts" of the bombing. This narrative centered on the who, what, where, and when of the bombing. The second narrative focused on a deeper understanding of the reality that people do not just wake up one day a terrorist, they *become* one. During our discussion, Adriana seemed to want her students to understand that they are personally responsible for making a difference and preventing themselves and others from becoming dangerous people like McVeigh.

These instructional narratives, though identified during our interview as central to Adriana's intended teaching on the OKC Bombing, were not reflected in her instruction. While observing in her classroom, her instructional narrative was more closely aligned to the first, content-driven narrative. As a whole, based on my observations of her instruction, and the

students' exit-ticket responses identifying the most important takeaway(s) from the lesson, her instructional narrative on the Oklahoma City Bombing was a timeline of events that emphasized the impact of and the response to the bombing (e.g., the Oklahoma Standard).

***Interview: I want to "provide them with a holistic look and … something to take with them as they think about it"***

At the time of our interview, Adriana had previously taught one spring semester and was starting her first full year at Sand Springs High School. With it being so early in her career, it was natural for our conversation to have a different trajectory than someone who had been teaching for several years. There seemed to be a lot more uncertainty about what the lesson would look like, but *many* options and possibilities were up for grabs. During our conversation, many interesting and insightful comments were made, and questions posed, all of which developed two distinct narratives for the Oklahoma City Bombing. One addressed several content points: "looking at who Timothy McVeigh was, his … backstory on why he kinda rationalized his ideas," the bombing and the "consequences, those aftereffects, … [the] lives that are lost, um and, really, and the response." The other narrative seemed to develop during the tail end of our interview and centered on students "hav[ing] empathy," not for McVeigh's actions, but rather the circumstances that would create someone like McVeigh. This narrative advocated for personal responsibility and an awareness that students can "effect change in a way that can affect the trajectory of someone else," preventing something like the OKC Bombing from happening again.

**Content-Focused Narrative.** To build the first narrative, Adriana spoke of her plans to start instruction on the bombing by having students interview parents, teachers, or others in their lives who were alive at the time, asking them about their experiences and memories of the

bombing. These "personal anecdotes" were documented, brought to class, and shared to bring "humanity" to the event, to "set the tone for the rest of the [lesson]." Adriana wanted the students to talk about their own stories because they would be "talking very personally about people's experiences." In addition to sharing personal stories, she spoke of wanting the students to consider how the first-hand accounts "inform[ed] what [they] already [knew] about the Oklahoma City Bombing."

Gauging students' prior knowledge was an important part of our conversation. Asking the students "what do we know about [the bombing], in general?" provided a segue to discuss the details and facts of the 1995 bombing. In the previous year, some students knew the date, time, and McVeigh's role in the bombing, and had visited the Oklahoma City National Museum and Memorial. As students shared this "general information," Adriana used follow-up questions to introduce new information about the bombing. For example, as Adriana so perfectly described, "someone will usually um shout 'Timothy McVeigh,' and I'm like, 'Okay, so Timothy McVeigh, who else do we know?' and so they typically don't know um, the other names, the other people involved." This provides a perfect opportunity to pull up a "PowerPoint and … just kinda [go] through some key things" like the date, the premeditation of the bombing, a little information on McVeigh and his life leading up to the bombing, the people/groups in the Murrah Building, and the immediate and long-term responses to the bombing.

At this point in our conversation, Adriana and I spent some time speaking about the concept of security and what it means to feel secure. Though neither Adriana nor I were alive in 1995, as students of history we discussed how Homeland Security was formed after the events in OKC and 9/11. Adriana spoke of wanting her students to understand that this concept of "security" was not dominant in the American psyche; but after the bombing, "that's all people

are thinking about, is … how do we make sure people are taken care of?" This concept of safety, and how Oklahoma and the United States had to reimagine what this would look and feel like, was not reflected in the broader historical narrative Adriana identified as central to her teaching on the OKC Bombing.

The ideas that are central to her narrative are McVeigh's motivations for the bombing and the results of and response to the bombing. When asked to explicitly identify these motivations, Adriana acknowledged that she "[doesn't] have a huge depth of knowledge of like who he is and all his story," but she spends her time on his experience in the military. The conversation we had was very vague at times due to the previously acknowledged lack of content knowledge. Adriana did not make a clear link between McVeigh's time in the military and *how* he becomes radicalized, but she did introduce the critical need to name McVeigh as a domestic terrorist.

Similar to the concept of security, domestic terrorism played a critical role in our conversation, but it was not central to her historical narrative on the OKC Bombing. Speaking specifically about her instruction, Adriana said that she poses questions about domestic terrorism that aims to have students consider "what *is* domestic terrorism and how do, how can you go against … somewhere where you grew up, somewhere that you're supposed to believe in?" She "ask[s] the questions and let[s] them decide how they want it to go." She noted that some of her previous students brought up white supremacy during conversations about domestic terrorism. When asked to clarify how these conversations evolved, she said that there is the "sense [that] people feel like they have the right to fight for what they believe in," even "these ideals that white supremacy, that white supremacists tend to um, ya know, take, take heed [of]." These ideas, though underdeveloped and disconnected from our wider conversation are critical for understanding the Oklahoma City Bombing. I was curious how and if these would be present and

fine-tuned in Adriana's instruction since they were not present when asked to identify the *most* important takeaways she wanted her students to have for her instruction on the OKC Bombing.

**Narrative that Drives a Dispositional Positioning of Personal Responsibility and Empathy.** Interestingly, when asked about the most important takeaways for her instruction on the OKC Bombing, Adriana and I had a very different conversation devoid of the "facts" and "background information" that had previously dominated our conversation. She spoke about how we cannot only condemn people, or in the case of "our criminal justice system just… put 'em away… and say, 'that's the end of that.'" Adriana did not see that as fixing anything. She spoke of wanting her students to consider the OKC Bombing in the context of reconciliation, "How do we create something better where we can actually transform things, change things, um for the future," "because we can't always just throw people away… and say, "that's gonna fix it." This leaves us in a situation where, "when it happens again, we're stuck with the same question." So, if "a student gets anything from [my lesson on the OKC Bombing], um, is that, they have the power to make change, like you have the power to do something different, say something different, um, or respond in a way that can change someone, right?" Adriana recognizes that

> you can't necessarily stop someone, ya know, from putting a bomb somewhere, right? But in the way that you treat someone on a day-to-day basis, the way that you um, think about things in a bigger picture of empathy and compassion, um, because those are the things that change the course of history. Like we see the same kind of ideologies over and over again, we see the same kind of, at the end of the day like, rationalizations for reasons for why people do um, destructive things. So how do we um, the biggest takeaway is how can you as a person, right, um, affect change in a way that can affect the trajectory of someone else?

Ultimately, Adriana spoke of wanting her students to reflect on the OKC Bombing and McVeigh's emotional distress, and his motivations for the bombing. She wants her students to consider "what would I do? And how would I, um respond differently?" She uses this lesson as an "opportunity for them to start to develop their own ideology about what is right and wrong," and to be a person who "thinks about these things in a way that… [promotes] change, for empathy, for compassion, for, for a better or a different outcome um, maybe than we've had before." These goals are reflective of a broader historical narrative that centers on personal responsibility to promote a more empathetic, compassionate, reflective society.

Adriana's narrative on the Oklahoma City Bombing was difficult to identify because our conversation was not very straightforward, it went on several tangents, but it was always informative and interesting. It was clear how deeply Adriana thought about creating educative, engaging experiences for her students that "connects them to the information," but it was also clear that her plans were still evolving. The interview was not linear, but rather lateral, which is reflective of the profession, especially for teachers early on in their careers. This led me to identify two distinct narratives, one that focused on the content of the event, the other on broader concepts like empathy, reconciliation, and creating a better future where domestic terrorist acts do not happen, or happen less frequently.

***Observations: "you can't just look at the person who did it, you have to remember the people affected"***

Coming in for observations, I was excited to see how and if these multifaceted narratives would be presented to students. Based on my observations of Adriana's instruction on the OKC Bombing, I identified the historical narrative to be more reflective of the first content-based narrative addressed above. Adriana's narrative was still complex, with several moving parts, and

sought to cover the facts of the bombing, those who constructed and carried out the bombing, the destruction of the bombing (physically, emotionally, and mentally), and the response to the bombing (i.e., the Oklahoma Standard). All of this information culminated in a narrative that covered basic information about McVeigh's actions leading up to the bombing, the destruction, and the response to the events.

Class started with the question, "what do we know [about the OKC Bombing]?" To answer this question, gauging students' prior knowledge, Adriana had students interview people who were alive at the time of the bombing. These primary sources were utilized throughout the lesson to garner participation, but also to highlight the human impact this event had and continues to have. From this first question, the students spoke of their interviewee's experiences the day of the bombing, where they were, their reactions, etc. One student explicitly named the Murrah Building, but other than that, the conversation focused on the fact that "people were doing day-to-day stuff," and "nobody was thinking about disaster."

After this initial question, Adriana used a slideshow to present information on the bombing. She covered the basic background information, including the date, time, and an overview of the investigation into the bombing, including the arrest of McVeigh and Nichols. When talking about McVeigh, Adriana noted that he had anti-government beliefs that were intensified after the events at Waco. While she does not provide detail on Waco, she explains McVeigh's actions in OKC as him "being mad at the government, so he attacks a government building." This led her to explicitly name McVeigh a domestic terrorist.

Due to time constraints, she moved quickly through the PowerPoint, presenting students with before and after pictures of the building, highlighting the destruction, and a picture of President Clinton to highlight the nationwide response to the event, all of which led to an

overview of the Oklahoma Standard and the need to "be kind." Adriana wants the students to consider how the bombing continues to impact Oklahoma, reminding the students that "you can't just look at the person who did it, you have to remember the people affected."

Adriana's comments, though occasionally left without much follow-up, build a narrative that emphasizes the basic background info on the bombing, the immediate and more delayed impact and responses. This lesson and narrative are enhanced by showing a video that documents the same key points--McVeigh's past leading to him becoming the bomber, the bombing and its destruction, and the response to the bombing (Reel truth history documentaries, 2020, March 8).

### *Student Takeaways*

The significant majority of students identified their biggest takeaways from the instruction were how "people became stronger" after the bombing, when the tragedy "brought the community together" to "help others and serve." While these takeaways are broad and did not include detail about the "causes" of the bombing, or the actors involved, the vast majority of students used similar language to identify their takeaways. The students seemed to interpret Adriana's instructional narrative as a story that emphasized the ways the bombing "made Oklahoma stronger" even when "people were confused [and] scared." As a few students summarized, "even through all of these terrible events, it (the bombing) create[d] a sense of unity through Oklahoma," where people [came] together in "community" to "help" and "heal" after tragedy.

### *Putting it All Together: Adriana Jones' OKC Bombing Narrative*

Looking holistically at the data gathered during my time spent with Adriana and her Oklahoma History class, the historical narrative she presented on the Oklahoma City Bombing is multifaceted. Our discussion of the bombing during our interview was her *intended* instruction;

but it did not wholly reflect the narrative presented during instruction. Based on the interview, two distinct narratives were present. One focused on content, including McVeigh's backstory and his rationalization of the bombing, and the destruction, aftermath, rescue efforts, and response to the bombing. The second narrative focused on two main points, one, students developing a critical understanding that people are not born terrorists, they are radicalized; and two, wanting students to see that individual people can prevent these actors and acts of domestic terrorism.

Putting these narratives into action did not seamlessly happen. The narrative presented during instruction more closely mirrored the first of the two, a timeline of events proceeding and following the bombing. The narrative covered the facts of the bombing and bombers and looked at the destruction of the bombing (physically, emotionally, and mentally) and the response (i.e., the Oklahoma Standard). As was reflected in the exit-tickets, the students greatest takeaways focused on the response to the bombing, the sense of community that emerges, and the desire to help that rose from the rubble. All these moving parts worked together, creating a narrative that is reflective of the dominant narrative of the OKC Bombing. Adriana's narrative centered on the impact the bombing had and continues to have on everyone--those inside the building on April 19th and those watching the news thousands of miles away--and how Oklahoma and the nation came together to respond to the tragedy in downtown Oklahoma City.

## Discussion

### Summary of Findings

When teaching about the Oklahoma City Bombing, my participants had distinct approaches which resulted in different historical narratives. Jean-Pierre's instructional goals centered on getting students to think critically, using the OKC Bombing as an example to

practice these critical thinking skills. This emphasis on critical thinking resulted in a narrative centered on critical thinking and analyzing historical events, but the narrative looked different during the interview and his instruction. In the interview, Jean-Pierre wanted his students to question and reflect on their own beliefs and the beliefs of others; but during observations, he wanted his students to view history through the lens of storytelling, paying particular attention to the parts we share, leave out, emphasize, etc. He used the bombing as an example to practice these skills, demonstrating the danger we face when we do not do the hard work of critical reflection and thinking. Adriana developed two distinct narratives during our interview. The first centered on the who, what, where, and when of the bombing. The second focused on two big ideas; first, understanding that people are not born terrorists, they *become* one, and second, the need for personal responsibility to avoid becoming or letting others become the next McVeigh. However, during Adriana's instruction, she presented a different narrative, one that emphasized the impact of and the response to the bombing (e.g., the Oklahoma Standard). Katie's narrative focused on understanding McVeigh as an individual actor, the things that "led him to become the OKC Bomber," and how those actions impacted Oklahomans, and the creation of the Oklahoma Standard.

More concisely, the various instructional narratives presented by the participants in this study included a disparate collection of concepts and events associated with the OKC Bombing; a sequence of events that led Timothy McVeigh to become the OKC Bomber; and a timeline of events proceeding and following the bombing. Unfortunately, these narratives do not critically consider or discuss deeply rooted concepts such as the white power movement and white supremacy: both of which served as contextual and motivating factors surrounding April 19th, 1995. The implications of these narratives are discussed below. Even though these are case

studies of individual teachers, making the data non-generalizable, the implications of presenting historical narratives that tell a particular version of events are critical for all work in social studies. For this particular topic--the Oklahoma City Bombing--the lack of inclusion of white supremacy in instruction has many dangerous implications.

**Jean-Pierre**

Jean-Pierre is a first-year teacher in an urban, alternative high school setting. His inexperience in the profession was at times clear and hard to see at others. Somehow his lessons on the Oklahoma City Bombing were both disorganized *and* well thought through. Instead of focusing on the bombing as a content standard that needed to be "covered," he used it as an example to support students in practicing critical thinking and analyzing historical events (Thornton, 1989). The emphasis on critical thinking was clear throughout the entire data collection process. But the narratives Jean-Pierre presented during our interview and his instruction differed. While both reflected the need for students to think critically about history, the interview's narrative focused on students questioning their own thinking and the thinking of others to prevent radicalization that leads to acts like the OKC Bombing; and his instruction's narrative focused on students deconstructing the event like a story--what parts of the story are emphasized, buried, or omitted (Eisner, 1985).

These narratives and the critical thinking skills they support are key components of any social studies content, and they are particularly important for the OKC Bombing. With that said, the confusing progression of ideas during his instruction, time constraints, and assumptions about students' prior knowledge of the event, led to a narrative that did not translate to students or the stated objective written on the whiteboard (Eisner, 1985). This does not mean that Jean-Pierre was not doing important, valuable work; he was asking important questions and engaging

students in interesting activities (Grossman et al., 1999). He introduced important topics like *The Turner Diaries*, acknowledging similarities between the book's plot and McVeigh's actions in downtown OKC. Unfortunately, these important aspects of the bombing were rushed, leading to an incomplete narrative of the bombing. While efforts were made to introduce critical aspects of this event, there was not sufficient time spent on unpacking the motivations for the bombing and the connections to the wider white power movement.

With the current structure of his lessons, Jean-Pierre is in a position to make adjustments that will support a more complex *and* comprehensible narrative, one that supports his goal of critical thinking *and* adequately addresses all of the topics he introduces, specifically white supremacy. While it may seem like I am unfairly critiquing Jean-Pierre's work, I am deeply appreciative of the work he is doing in his Oklahoma History class. He is having students question and consider the way(s) history is "told," something that does not always happen in schools. Though this is a single case, and cannot be generalized, Jean-Pierre's work reminds us of important components of teaching complex histories. Looking specifically at social studies classrooms, if we do not have our students practice critical thinking, deconstructing, and questioning content, materials, etc. they will not have those skills outside our classrooms. Students may come to accept information at face-value and fail to critically analyze the causes, significance, and implications of the information. We must prepare our social studies students to question and be critical consumers of information, and Jean-Pierre's instructional and pedagogical choices create a framework of a lesson series that would support the beginnings of these efforts (Grossman et al, 1999).

Looking specifically at Jean-Pierre's inclusion of white supremacy in his instruction on the OKC Bombing, there is considerable room to grow. Jean-Pierre did attempt to incorporate

white supremacy in his teaching, but for whatever reason (time constraints, fear of reactions, lack of pedagogical content knowledge), these moments fell flat. While showing his students different sources on the bombing, only one makes a connection to white supremacy. Jean-Pierre briefly mentions this point and moves on. Similarly, when discussing *The Turner Diaries*, the topic seems to come crashing in from stage left, only to exit stage right quickly after, never to be seen or heard from again. The lesson goes from a brief overview of Waco and Ruby Ridge, discussing the anger these groups and McVeigh had toward the government, and their anti-government, pro-gun ideologies, to an overview of *The Turner Diaries*. Jean-Pierre calls the book a racist book and highlights the similarities between the plot of the book and the events in downtown OKC; he also notes that McVeigh is a fan of this book and is arrested with pages in his car. No time is spent discussing the connection between this radicalizing piece of literature, the ideologies it presents, and McVeigh's own ideologies. The students do not get time to consider *why* McVeigh might have had these pages with him and *how* they might have influenced his actions. Opening the floor for discussion about these ideas is a great way to engage students in critical thinking and questioning while also promoting the inclusion of white supremacy in instruction on the Oklahoma City Bombing.

The importance of critical thinking, metacognition, and thinking about others' thought processes were also mentioned during my time with Jean-Pierre. As he himself identifies, when people go through life without questioning their thinking and the thinking of others, they run the risk of perpetuating hateful and harmful ideologies. Of course, it is important to teach your students to reflect on their own thinking and question others', but it cannot replace questioning the systems that uphold these ideologies. In the context of the OKC Bombing, we must understand and question McVeigh's thinking--why did he bomb the Murrah Building? But with

those answers, we must move beyond an individualistic approach and question how the white power movement and white supremacy remain dominant, unchallenged, and hidden.

Naming this process for students--critical thinking--can help them better understand history as a messy, subjective retelling of events. This is exactly what can happen during instruction on the OKC Bombing; we can complicate this history, making it more reflective of the *actual* event. Whether through the deconstruction of a historical event like a story (who, what, where, when, and why) or the examination, comparison, and critique of narratives presented by various media outlets on the same topic, there are ways to engage students in thinking deeply and complexly about difficult history (Grossman et al., 1999). Jean-Pierre engaged his students in both of these activities, and while they were messy in their implementation, they have the potential to be promising.

To better support the students with the activities addressed above, Jean-Pierre must get a better understanding of his students' background knowledge. A lot of his instruction seemed to be operating on the belief that his students knew the basic facts of the bombing; but based on observations, that assumption did not seem to be the case. If you want students to dive into complex analysis of sources' positionality, the students need to know what they are critiquing. You cannot critique what you do not know. If the students do not know much about the Oklahoma City Bombing, you cannot ask them what is missing from a retelling of the events. Spending time identifying the students' understanding of the event *before* starting instruction, Jean-Pierre will be able to sequence his teaching and spend more time making connections between white supremacy, the white power movement, and McVeigh's attack on OKC.

Some of the students' exit ticket responses stood out to me as a prime opportunity to increase meaningful discussion of the white power movement and its connections to the OKC

Bombing. In a few responses, students made comments about how the events downtown made them realize that they need to "be more aware" and "watch [their] surroundings." This language makes me think that the students have accepted that this is a larger problem than just McVeigh, because if they thought that McVeigh was the only person capable of doing this (the lone-actor narrative), then they would not be worried about being more diligent. These comments could be followed up with questions, getting to the root of why and what the students think they need to be cautious of. Ultimately, if the students see that other people are capable of the same actions as McVeigh, we can use that to reject the lone-actor narrative. Even if students are unaware of *why* they feel these ways, we can use comments like these as an in-road to talk about McVeigh and the bombing's connections to the larger white power movement. Using these opportunities to complicate our students' historical understandings is something we cannot always prepare for, but they may be the key to unlocking difficult conversations about difficult topics (e.g., white supremacy).

While the findings from Jean-Pierre's work cannot be generalized to other teachers and contexts, his narrative demonstrates the difficulties that come with teaching history from a position that supports complicating and critically examining history. Embracing this mess can be beneficial; but the teacher must have sufficient awareness of the content they are teaching, what they want their students to take away from their lessons, and then select particular conceptual pedagogical tools (e.g., critical thinking) and practical pedagogical tools (e.g., deconstructing history as a story) that will support these goals (Grossman et al., 1999). Without these considerations, particularly around white supremacy, the narratives presented will send students off with an incomplete understanding of the bombing. If our students are unable to identify white

supremacy in less overt spaces/events, they perpetuate and strengthen its power over our collective memory and society.

**Katie Wells**

Katie is an experienced Oklahoma History teacher; one who has thoughtfully developed a week-long lesson on the OKC Bombing over her years teaching the course. She identifies the bombing as a central feature in Oklahoma's history, which is reflected in the amount of time she dedicates to this event. However, even with extended time dedicated to this topic, the narrative presented during her instruction reflects dominant trends apart from her efforts to understand McVeigh's past and the factors that potentially led him to become a domestic terrorist. Katie's historical narrative focuses on McVeigh as a lone actor whose actions radically altered Oklahoma and Oklahomans, all of which coalesced in the creation of the Oklahoma Standard. While these are important components of the OKC Bombing story, they do not adequately address the central role white supremacy played in the events that unfolded in downtown OKC.

During my interview with Katie, I got the impression that she felt like she was trying to balance a variety of components of the OKC Bombing. She wanted the students to remember and honor the victims and their families, while also working to uncover reasons for McVeigh's actions. When looking at her instruction, however, the emphasis was on understanding what made McVeigh the OKC Bomber. Unpacking McVeigh's history is important and should be present in any instruction on the bombing; but the approach Katie took centered so significantly on McVeigh (though she did mention his co-conspirators), that she neglected to acknowledge any significant mention of the larger movements he and his radicalization represented.

Though Katie mentions McVeigh's connections to white supremacy, she explicitly tells the students that white supremacy does not play a role in the bombing. She does acknowledge

that McVeigh is a white supremacist, hates the government, and attacks the Murrah Building because he is retaliating for actions done at Waco; but she explicitly says there is no connection between his ideology, his actions, and the larger white power movement. Whether these comments were made from misunderstandings or avoidance of talking about white supremacy, they create an inaccurate and dangerous narrative that gives a false sense of security. If one individual carried out this bombing and that man was apprehended, then there is nothing to fear; but to acknowledge McVeigh was only *one* individual in the white power movement necessitates collective action to prevent and stop future acts of white domestic terror.

In a similar vein, one of the students' biggest takeaways from Katie's instruction was the role bullying played in the bombing. This is a drastic simplification of McVeigh's motivation, but it is one of the main ideas of *The McVeigh Tapes*, the documentary the students watched to cover the bulk of the information on the bombing. Both the documentary and Katie repeatedly emphasized that McVeigh hated nothing more than bullies and saw the government as the ultimate bully, using this to explain his motivations for bombing the Murrah Building. While this may be part of McVeigh's rationale for his actions, it simplifies the narrative down to the actions of a singular person and not the result of a radical movement (van Kessel & Crowley, 2017). This is a concerning narrative because it leaves a society complacent and does not prevent similar actions from happening in the future. You cannot separate an individual's actions from the larger context they stem from, or occur within. We need to complicate, critically examine, name, and critique these narratives in social studies classrooms (van Kessel & Crowley, 2017).

This critique is not to say that Katie is intentionally ignoring the role white supremacy plays in the bombing. It seemed like she, herself struggled to make these connections during our conversations; she knew McVeigh was a white supremacist but saw it only as a piece of

background, biographical information. This shows an area for growth in Katie's pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986). However, any inclusion of white supremacy during instruction on the bombing is a significant diversion from the narrative that de-emphasizes McVeigh to "respect" victims and those who responded to the scene to help. This opens the door for recommendations to enhance instruction to include a more critical look at the bombing and McVeigh, situating both within the white power movement.

I appreciate Katie's inclusion of McVeigh in her instruction, and while her case cannot be generalized to a wider context, her work does demonstrate important points to consider during and throughout OKC Bombing instruction. We must understand McVeigh as an individual to understand the movement he and his actions represent. Some teachers do not like to discuss McVeigh at all during their instruction on the bombing because they feel it is unfair to the victims. While this may be understandable, if one of the goals of learning about the bombing is to prevent events like it from happening again, I am unsure how that would be achieved without *some* time devoted to McVeigh. Similarly, I am unsure how you can talk about McVeigh without addressing his connections to the white power movement--there must be a balance between these two important aspects of the bombing.

With brave instruction, we can avoid this concern; we can respect the victims by creating space for conversations that get at the root of the problems that caused the bombing--white supremacy and the white power movement. If we continue to discuss McVeigh solely as a lone-actor who was bullied and mad at the government, we do not prepare our students to be able to identify issues and events related to white supremacy in the present (e.g., the January 6th, 2021, insurrection) and future. We must name the *true* causes of our societal issues, even ones that reveal ugly truths about us and our society--especially those. Though it may be hard, naming

white supremacy and working to understand and deconstruct it is the way forward. We do this to diminish its power, otherwise, we are doomed to perpetuate it and the lethal damage it causes.

**Adriana Jones**

Adriana is an early career teacher, having taught one semester prior to our time together. While she taught the Oklahoma City Bombing once before, she was still working through how she wanted to structure her lesson(s). Adriana's decisions and logic were difficult to follow and make sense of at times, resulting in data that was challenging to code. This lack of clarity produced a narrative that changed throughout our time together, particularly during our interview. During all stages of data collection and analysis, the dominant narratives in the interview, observations, and instructional materials used in Adriana's lesson told a simplistic narrative of the Oklahoma City Bombing. There was emphasis during her instruction on the what (bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building), who (Timothy McVeigh), where (downtown OKC), and when (9:02 am) of the bombing. This basic information was used to show the destruction and in turn the response to the bombing. Unfortunately, the background information seemed to stop there. There was no deeper contextualization of the event, so McVeigh and the bombing's connection to the white power movement were absent in Adriana's instruction.

This information, the "facts" of the bombing, excluded in-depth conversations about *why* the bombing happened. I do not believe the students would have been able to tell you why the bombing happened, at least not anything beyond McVeigh being angry at the government, so he decided to attack a government building in retaliation. There was a lack of instruction on the role Waco, Ruby Ridge, and the larger white power movement played in McVeigh's actions. Similarly, this narrative presented McVeigh as a lone-actor. There was no connection made

between the movement, McVeigh, and his actions. This is alarming because it presents the bombing as a freak accident carried out by a "crazy" person, leaving people to believe these kinds of events could happen any time or place. As one of Adriana's students responded when asked to identify the biggest takeaway from the lesson, "anyone can betray their country." While acts of domestic white terror are happening with more frequency, they are not random accidents (U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation & U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2021, May). So, even though Adriana spoke of wanting her students to understand that people do not just wake up one day and decide to bomb a building, she did not support them to these conclusions during her instruction. Without discussing *why* someone would attack their country, it is unlikely students will be able to see acts of white domestic terror as anything more than the actions of individuals. If you want students to understand that people do not become terrorists overnight, teachers have to make the explicit connections between the larger motivations, actions, and rationale for events like the OKC Bombing; in so doing, conversations about white supremacy *must* be present.

I do not believe that teachers are always intentionally ignoring white supremacy, I believe they are socialized to ignore it, just like everyone else in society. The dominant narratives of our society refuse to acknowledge the power white supremacy holds over us, which only adds fuel to the fire (Jupp, 2005). The inability or reluctance to name the threat we face makes that threat all the more powerful. So, while I do not believe Adriana is intentionally avoiding conversations about white supremacy's role in the 1995 bombing, I think she is either unaware or unsure of how to make the connections between McVeigh's ideologies and his motivations for bombing the Murrah Building (Eisner, 1985). This necessitates teachers continuously work to hone their pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986). Teaching the OKC Bombing requires

knowledge of the content itself--the "facts"--but also the ability to place this event in a larger context. Teachers must then know how to effectively present the connections between the bombing and the white power movement to their students (Grossman et al. 1999). Without sufficient consideration of the content and tools (conceptual and practical) needed, effective teaching of this event that addresses and deconstructs white supremacy to truly understand *why* the Oklahoma City Bombing happened, will be a challenge.

Regardless of the reasons for this lack of emphasis, the results are still the same. The null curriculum, or one potential layer, of Adriana's instruction, is that the OKC Bombing is not placed within the larger historical context of the white power movement (Eisner, 1985). The way I view it, if we place all blame for the bombing on McVeigh, we doom ourselves to have more events like it happen in the future. That is not to say that McVeigh is not responsible for his actions, but rather that "This false resolution of cognitive dissonance is dangerous when it prevents us from examining systemic factors, some of which may still be in play today" (van Kessel & Crowley, 2017). Many systemic issues led to the 1995 bombing, one of which happened to be white supremacy and the white power movement. To deny, omit, or bury this fact only perpetuates the narratives that threaten our work toward a more safe, just future (Eisner, 1985).

As is the case with all systemic issues, placing the responsibility of fixing these issues on individuals is only going to prolong the process. Unfortunately, this seemed to be what Adriana was doing during our interview when she spoke of wanting students to see "they have the power to make change, … to do something different, say something different, um, or respond in a way that can change someone." While this is an empowering message--the belief that our students can make change, one that should constantly be delivered to our students--it emphasizes an

individual's personal responsibility to dismantle systemic issues like white supremacy with empathy and compassion. Working in community with our institutions (e.g., elections, media, education, etc.), is the way to address the power white supremacy has within our society and begin to dismantle it.

Though the narrative Adriana presented to her students followed a dominant, or traditional trajectory, emphasizing the impact and response to the bombing while ignoring the role of white supremacy. She made several interesting points during our interview that could lead to a more critical, historical narrative, one of which I would like to unpack here. During our conversation, Adriana spoke about how the United States criminal justice system does not work to solve problems. She argued that we have a desire to get rid of people who act out of line, then refuse to address the issues that cause those behaviors, and act surprised when those behaviors reemerge. This individualistic approach to societal problems is detrimental when talking about events like the OKC Bombing. Unfortunately, Adriana's comments during our interview, which alluded to the dangers of individualistic approaches to societal issues, did not show up in her instruction (Eisner, 1985). During our conversation, she did not explicitly note that our society treats these issues, like criminal justice or white supremacy, as individual problems as opposed to systemic, societal problems. With this clarification and inclusion in instruction, this comparison would be useful to explicitly communicate McVeigh and the bombing's connections to the white power movement. McVeigh is an individual who committed an awful crime, *and* he was part of the white power movement. Both are true. Simply bringing McVeigh to justice did not bring an end to this type of violence.

Conversations about criminal justice that help students understand the complex relationships between individual acts and societal issues can be a segue to connecting individual

acts of domestic terror to the white power movement. The reluctance to include the role of white supremacy in the OKC Bombing is not going to protect us from another act of domestic terrorism; and by making the connections between McVeigh and the movement, students may more clearly see these complicated connections. For this explanation to work, however, the teacher must actively include a deeper exploration of both the content and concepts related to the topic (the OKC Bombing and white supremacy). Meaningful instruction on the Oklahoma City Bombing begins with the teacher engaging students in a deeper exploration of how white supremacy impacts the "actions" that unfolded on April 19th, 1995. This exploration will be challenging because white supremacy is designed to hide in plain sight, but Adriana's comments about criminal justice might be a useful tool to make connections between individual actors (McVeigh) and the movements and ideologies they represent (the white power movement and white supremacy).

Engaging with Adriana's instruction on the OKC Bombing highlights the importance of complicating narratives in social studies instruction (Jupp, 2005). Her instruction presents a dominant narrative on the OKC Bombing that is dangerously simplistic, ignoring white supremacy's impact on the bombing (Eisner, 1985; Thornton, 1989). With that said, Adriana's intended, and actual instruction reveal the challenge of creating lessons and narratives that are both multifaceted *and* comprehensible. There needs to be a conceptual understanding of the bombing, not just the "actions" that occurred (Grossman et al., 1999). Students cannot learn about content disconnected from the context it is situated within, otherwise, there is no way to learn *from* it. This is particularly important for instruction on the Oklahoma City Bombing; if teachers and their students leave their lessons on the bombing without a critical, deep understanding of the role white supremacy and the white power movement played in the

bombing, they are unprepared to identify and combat white supremacy in other contexts (e.g., January 6th, 2021, insurrection). This reality leaves our society in a dangerous pattern of experiencing acts of white domestic terror, misidentifying or ignoring the root causes of these events, blaming the actions on individuals, "taking care" of the actor, and thinking we have "fixed" the problem, only for the next mass shooting, or other act of terror, to surprise us. If the goal of instruction on the Oklahoma City Bombing is to learn from the event and prevent another from happening in the future, conversations about white supremacy *must* be included.

**Things to Consider When Teaching the Oklahoma City Bombing**

When looking across the case-studies, distinct historical narratives are being presented over the *same* content. This stems from a variety of factors including the choices teachers make (both consciously and unconsciously) about the conceptual and practical pedagogical tools they use and work from, resulting in the curriculum provided and presented by teachers (Thornton, 1989; Grossman et al., 1999; Eisner, 1985). These pieces work together, influencing one another, in a cyclical process that shapes the educational experiences students have in school. They shape the narratives that are shared, and in this case, the narratives all lacked meaningful inclusion of the role white supremacy played in the Oklahoma City Bombing.

For example, looking at Jean-Pierre, he chose to use the bombing as an example to support his goal of critical thinking. Jean-Pierre, acting as a curricular-instructional gatekeeper, developed an implicit curriculum that emphasized questioning materials and the thinking of oneself and others (Thornton, 1989; Eisner, 1985). To support this process, Jean-Pierre utilized pedagogical tools such as deconstructing history like a story (Grossman et al., 1999). These components worked together to produce a narrative that emphasized critical thinking about a

disparate collection of events, but insufficiently considered and analyzed the role white supremacy played in the Oklahoma City Bombing.

To successfully incorporate white supremacy in instruction on the bombing, teachers must be attuned to the narratives, or curriculum they want to present and the pedagogical tools that will support their narrative (Eisner, 1985; Grossman et al., 1999). Teachers must know the history of the bombing and know the connections to the white power movement, something I think was lacking in the teachers I worked with. But more than knowing the content, teachers must know how to communicate the connections between this individual event and the larger, white supremacist context it's situated within (Grossman et al., 1999). With an awareness of these components, teaching the Oklahoma City Bombing from a critical lens is more structured. As teachers, we have to remember that the choices we make influence, or gatekeep, the narratives our students receive (Thornton, 1989). And if our students leave our classrooms with incomplete understandings of the Oklahoma City Bombing, they will not be prepared to identify how white supremacy is a catalyst for other actions carried out in the present and future.

**Limitations**

There are a few limitations that deserve attention. First, with all case-study research, the findings cannot be generalized to a larger context. Second, and what I struggled with most, was presenting my participants' thoughts and actions as they intended. In a similar vein, collecting data through a semi-structured interview protocol necessitated that I ask the "right" questions, and due to time constraints I was not able to ask all of the follow-up questions I would have liked. Due to my inexperience with interviews, I also struggled to restate questions after participants took the conversation in directions that were not informative for my research question. More conversations to clarify comments would have strengthened this study.

## Conclusion

One of the most interesting things I observed at each site was the obvious interest students had in this event. While it may not have shown up during classroom instruction, it was apparent by the number of students who wanted to share their personal stories or family connections to the bombing. Each day I was in a classroom for observations, several students stayed behind to talk to their teacher about their own knowledge or story of the bombing. When it happened in Jean-Pierre's class I thought it was a result of his good relationship with his students. But then it happened each day I observed in Katie's room, and I began to wonder if this was something to expect with this topic. Adriana's students confirmed my suspicion--every class I visited had this same student interest.

The student's desire to stay behind and talk about history with a teacher feels like a rare experience; one I find myself longing for as a social studies teacher. But it is indicative of our students' thirst for information and a critical examination of relevant history. This experience, teaching about the Oklahoma City Bombing, may be particularly unique in this way; our students are hooked before they even set foot in our class or listen to a word of our instruction. If we have them hooked, the question then becomes, what are we going to do with them?

What we should do is engage them in meaningful conversations that complicate and critique the dominant narratives of the Oklahoma City Bombing. We must talk about white supremacy when we teach about the OKC Bombing, doing anything less is irresponsible. While the teachers in this study either ignore or do not meaningfully address white supremacy in their instruction, there was more acknowledgment of white supremacy than I thought would occur. Jean-Pierre and Katie both mention white supremacy when talking about Timothy McVeigh's ideologies, but they approach them differently. Jean-Pierre alludes to McVeigh's relationship to

the white power movement, but quickly brushes past it. Katie mentions that McVeigh was a white supremacist, but explicitly tells her students this ideology is irrelevant to the bombing. During our interview, Adriana mentions that her previous students brought up white supremacy in their conversation about domestic terrorism during their lesson on the bombing. During her instruction, however, she does not mention white supremacy or the white power movement at all.

There are many reasons why white supremacy does not dominate instruction on the OKC Bombing, many of which have been addressed throughout this thesis, but the results are the same. White supremacy stays intact and continues to threaten all of us when we do not acknowledge, name, and deconstruct it. This work is critical in social studies classrooms and can take the form of complicating and critiquing dominant narratives and including various multimodal sources that add new layers and complexities to instruction. These actions must be taken by Oklahoma History teachers as they teach about the 1995 Oklahoma City Bombing.

You cannot brush past, deny, or ignore that Timothy McVeigh was a white supremacist who was radicalized by the white power movement. McVeigh's actions represented and hoped to achieve the movement's goals to rid the world of non-white people. The white power movement argues that the only way to exterminate all non-whites is to start a race war, something they believe will only happen after starting a revolution to overthrow the government (Illings, 2018). The movement thought attacking federal buildings would be the spark the revolution needed; they even had their eyes on the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. While McVeigh worked mostly alone, having help from a couple of others, in the planning, building, and execution of the bomb, he was not a lone-actor; he was part of the white power movement, carrying out white supremacist goals (Illings, 2018). While it may be hard to follow the logic at first, we, as teachers, must make sense of the connections between this ideology and the bombing of the

Murrah Building. Once we work through these connections, we can craft lessons that support our students through this same process. This highlights the importance teachers play as gatekeepers, shaping students' understanding of truth and reality through the curriculum they present and avoid (Thornton, 1989; Eisner, 1985).

The importance of naming and deconstructing white supremacy as we complicate historical narratives cannot be overstated. We collectively lived through the attempted coup on January 6th, 2021; but many were and continue to be reluctant to call out the white supremacist motivations for the insurrection. This is true for other events covered in social studies classrooms. Whether this reluctance comes from fear of backlash or ignorance of the connections, there are clear dangers. When we are unable to name the root causes of events that happen, we diminish our ability to learn from them, making them more likely to happen in the future.

Concerns about acts like the OKC Bombing and the January 6th, 2021, insurrection are valid. White supremacy acts are on the rise in the United States and around the world (U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation & U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2021, May). And when we do not teach students about the impact this ideology has on acts of terror, like the OKC Bombing, they sit in ignorance about the reality of our country and world. One of the most challenging aspects of addressing this ignorance is that white supremacy is so deeply ingrained in our society and culture, that it can be hard to identify. This is the space in which consistent, critical social studies education is situated. Supporting students as they develop the skills and 5dispositions of critical, engaged citizens is the work of social studies educators and social studies classes. That is why critical instruction on the OKC Bombing, and other events, that challenge dominant narratives and include discussions about white supremacy and the white

power movement are so important. While it may be scary to have these conversations with students, let us be honest with ourselves, the potential outcomes are equally, if not more, scary (van Kessel & Crowley, 2017). Without this explicit instruction, students remain ignorant of these connections. This ignorance is dangerous because it makes us, as a citizenry, complacent. If we as teachers are not actively identifying, deconstructing, and rejecting white supremacy, and supporting our students to do the same, we protect and perpetuate it.

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