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Changing the Narrative: Building a Conceptual Framework for Advocating Representation in History Textbooks

Valerie Paul
The Graduate Center, City University of New York

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CHANGING THE NARRATIVE:
BUILDING A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR ADVOCATING REPRESENTATION IN
HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

by

VALERIE PAUL

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

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Date

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Kenneth Tobin
Thesis Advisor

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Date

_____

Elizabeth Macaulay-Lewis
Acting Executive Officer

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

ABSTRACT

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Advisor: Kenneth Tobin

At a time where Americans are beginning to engage in critical dialogue about the
representation of minorities in the media, conversations about representation in education have
been somewhat elusive or condensed. With the popular focus for marginalized communities being
on issues of stereotype threat, achievement deficits, and culturally responsive pedagogy, it seems
that policy makers are often left to make decisions that lack considerable connection between the
cognitive, social and emotional implications of inclusivity in educational curriculum.
Furthermore, there hasn't appeared to be an extensive analysis of these issues between and among
relative disciplines. For example, when we discuss representation in film, we very often cite the
importance of people seeing multidimensional examples of themselves on the screen as having an
impact on their identity development, and implications for their self-esteem across the lifespan.
We too acknowledge (though perhaps not enough) the role of emotions in education, and the
connection between sense of self and self-esteem. Yet, and still, it seems we have not yet begun to
piece together the bricolage of information, in psychology, in anthropology, and education, that
might suggest the varying implications of inclusivity for students' engagement in schools.

This thesis seeks to investigate the nature of the connection between representation and
student engagement in schools, through an intersectional analysis of current trends in

representation theory, the role of identity in socio-emotional development, the role of emotions in student engagement and the development of a framework for investigating the connections between cultural validation, expanded diversity and civic engagement across the lifespan. It is my greatest intention that the culmination of this thesis will present sufficient justification for continued investigation and research, and will open up the possibility for interventions that will have a meaningful impact for identities across the spectrum.

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

This manuscript is about investigating the connection between representation and student engagement in schools. In it, I seek to expand upon current research trends in educational psychology and urban education - as well as theoretical research in environmental psychology, anthropology and media studies - to explore the potential connection between student identity and student engagement, and to make inferences regarding the efficacy of culturally-integrated curriculum models for fostering civic engagement across the lifespan.

To begin this discussion, and to better understand the context in which this manuscript was written, one has to understand the fundamental questions that underpin each of the concepts presented in the readings; 'how?' and 'why?' Ever the inquisitive individual, many of the queries of my academic life have revolved around understanding 'how' and 'why' the education system seems to fail black and brown youth who - so far as my own experience has dictated - are just as capable and intelligent as any white child in school. It seemed to me that for many years popular research responses to those questions focused primarily on perceived deficits, and less on student engagement. What I found for myself was these questions led me in the direction of psychology, then urban education, and now public policy; and each discipline offered me a unique angle at which to observe the conceptual phenomena which continues to elude me somewhat to this day. Why are black and brown students seemingly not as engaged?

It was my first exposure to the work of the late John Ogbu, a Nigerian anthropologist who wrote extensively on black culture and engagement, that set me on a quest to better understand the nature of the relationship between black identity and black educational outcomes. In his early works, he developed a theory which postulated that 'non-voluntary' minorities (such as black- and indigenous-Americans) often develop an 'oppositional identity' which negates mainstream

attitudes, behaviors, and values toward those of the 'oppositional culture' (Ogbu, 1978). It is this theorized connection between identity and achievement outcomes, that has shaped my thinking about my own academic life, and why the concepts in this manuscript are so critically important to understand and to discuss further. In order to set the context of these concepts, I feel that I need to share a story about myself:

I grew up in a Haitian immigrant family. My family has always valued dialogue and has always shared with me tidbits and stories of Haiti's history. Now if you didn't know, Haitian people - who American media have long illustrated as destitute and uneducated en mass - are very proud people, and I have always speculated that most of this pride is because we have a legacy that is centered on the triumphs of our ancestors.

You see, in 1804 Haiti became the first black independent nation in the western hemisphere, and for many Haitian people this fact is embedded into the very fabric of our cultural identity - we are freedom fighters and we triumph. So as not to forget this fact, every year on January 1st, Haitian people around the world celebrate our independence with our family and friends, and for me, the tradition has served as a constant reminder of where I come from and what I am capable of when I put my mind to it.

As a Haitian-American, when I watch the news, when I read articles, and occasionally when I sit in a classroom or museum, I have felt the erasure of Haiti's contribution to our shared world history, and even to American history; and when I was young it was the awareness of this erasure that forced me to attach myself to the aspects of history where my identities were valued. This wasn't the case for many of my friends and family, however, and as I got older I found my friends were less and less engaged with the curriculum of our social studies classes. Of course, this was reflected in their grades, but so far as I could tell, my friends suffered no deficiencies,

they just didn't really care. So, I started to think a lot more about it. When I got to college I began to learn more about the history of black people in the United states, and it was this basic access to information, that my college textbooks and databases afforded me, which re-ignited my passion for history and storytelling. It wasn't long, however, before I began to ask myself, 'why didn't we talk about this in grade school?'

Maya Angelou has a famous quote, which I have always taken to heart. The quote states, 'a man cannot know where he's going if he doesn't know where he's been', and for me that quote has always been at the center of my musings on ego and identity, as well as on history and context. The truth is that the forefathers of this country did not build this country alone. In fact, I believe it is fair to say that this country was built on the backs of the black and brown people that modern textbooks have relegated to workers. Yet and still, is it important to talk about these contributions? Does representation really have a significant effect on engagement? If so, how have the contributions of these identities been co-opted for the purposes of creating a streamlined narrative? Further, what are the consequences for students when these identities are obscured or neglected? These questions are among a myriad which have formed the basis of my research, and which I am keenly interested in understanding for myself.

When we talk about representation, we are essentially seeking to shift the narrative, but it can often be difficult to ascertain why this is important. Taking an intersectional perspective on phenomena helps to clarify some of the ways in which this concept can be better understood. If we understand our time in school as foundational to how we perceive ourselves, the world, and ourselves in the world, then we highlight the importance of a curriculum that is inclusive and representational.

We see in current research trends that a greater emphasis is being placed on the influence

of social and motivational factors that mediate outcomes for long-term success. Greater focus on socio-emotional development, cultural identity, and environmental systems, lay the groundwork for a sociocultural framework that seeks to provide answers beyond the standard aptitude-based discussions of the past. Of particular interest to me, are theoretical conceptions of social cognition, which connect, on varying levels, to the discussion of values and motivations that underpin student engagement and achievement.

Theoretical examples like John Ogbu's Oppositional Culture give credence to the idea that marginalization may have significant consequences for an individual's level of trust, engagement, and autonomy within the larger society. After all, why should you value a system that doesn't seem to value you? It seems, a practical response to these issues has largely gone unexplored by school administration or policy-makers.

Studies have shown consistently over the years that there are considerable achievement gaps between white and ethnic, non-white, students (particularly Black, Latino and Native-American) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012; Hemphill & Vanneman, 2011; Vanneman et. al. 2009). This assertion has been so steadily and consistently substantiated by research, that it is essentially indistinguishable from fact. White students seem to outperform minority (particularly black, hispanic and indigenous) students in just about every subject area in our current education system. In fact, one study shows that as early as Kindergarten the achievement gap is a salient phenomenon in the sciences and social studies (Chapin, 2006).

Schools administrators, teachers, researchers and policy makers alike have been attempting, for some time, to introduce theories and potential responses to the achievement gap problem, and leaving aside other mediating factors like socioeconomic status, many minority educators and theorists have developed models for understanding black and Latino student

behavior centered around culture, identity and socialization. As such, there are actually a number of theoretical frameworks, within the silos of different disciplines, which may provide additional contexts for research. Still, there is not enough empirical research being done to provide sufficient evidence for the inclusion into school curriculum. This manuscript, which is broken down into five sections, is my earnest attempt to create meaningful connections which will provide greater depth and specificity into the unique characteristics and nuances that contribute to the discussion of why representation in history textbooks matters. Below, I provide a brief synopsis of the varying sections of this thesis, which should provide some background on the arguments and evidence shared in the text.

In Section II, I conduct a theoretical review of the literature on identity and ego, as well as the current conversations on representation in media studies. The core questions in this section are: 'what are the relationships between culture and identity?' and 'what roles does representation play in facilitating healthy identity development?' I will explore these concepts largely through the lenses of environmental psychology, sociology and anthropology, to gain a deeper understanding of the role of identity for fostering meaningful engagement.

In Section III, I explore current trends in culturally-responsive pedagogy, focusing largely on urban education and educational psychology discussions to form the basis and framework of the discussions in this chapter. In addition, I review literature on socio-emotional factors contributing to student engagement, theoretical discussions on axiology, as well as a review of recent research that focuses on relationships of representation to student engagement.

In Section IV, I do a deep dive into the specific focus on social studies. I explore the history, intentions and status of civics education in this country, and provide research-evidence based argumentation for integrating the curriculum.

Finally, in Section V, I theorize the implications of representation for student engagement, make inferences for achievement, and provide practical suggestions for ongoing research and advocacy. Primarily, this section proposes the use of one of two research frameworks which I believe to be the most meaningful for gleaning additional information for research and policy development. It is my sincerest belief that a holistic and intersectional review of the literature provides sufficient justification for research that is both grounded and collaborative in its theory and methodology.

SECTION II: REPRESENTATION AND IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

American curriculum today has become increasingly standards-based, and it seems most reform efforts are pushing for models that perpetuate more and more conformist constructions of American culture. Standardized models like 'Common Core' have become increasingly popular among education administrators and policymakers alike, as institutions push for greater 'sameness' in thinking among youth who come from a tremendous cross-section of races, nationalities, genders identities, and cultures (Ravitch, 2010). At the same time, critical and developmental theorists in education continue to suggest more responsive curriculum and instruction models that take into consideration the unique and varied epistemologies that students bring into the learning process (Piaget, 1952, Bruner, Goodnow, and Austin, 1956). With such disparate approaches to the pedagogical field, I often wonder, what is the connection between school curriculum and student learning?

As a researcher, what has always been intriguing to me is how the policy push for more standardized curriculum models might impose upon the complex identities of young people and their potential contributions to the public discourse. I ask the question; what is the connection between the student - and all the nuances of their identity, culture and values - and the classroom environment? This question, and the relevant assumptions therein, are threaded throughout this section as guidepost for interpreting the theoretical and practical implications of a truly multicultural education. This question alone exposes a chain of potential contingencies linked to significant differences in achievement outcomes between minority and white students. Through an analysis of literature on phenomenology, the ego and social systems, I attempt to connect the nature of individual development to the contexts of the broader world. While this work is most

notably an inquiry into the urban education field, it's also a contemplation on the transactional nature of experience and psychological development, in shaping the distinct identities, histories, and ontologies of the individual student.

Perhaps not surprisingly, much of the intervention research on academic engagement and achievement focuses on individual deficits or environmental factors, rather than the dialogical relationship of the two. For example, how often does research examine the impact of school curriculum and policy on such students' cognitive and socio-emotional development? It can be argued, that while school administrators, teachers, researchers and policy makers have been proposing theories and potential responses to the achievement gap problem that extend beyond our current policy paradigms, an intersectional review of these issues still seems to remain unexplored in practice. One particular facet of this phenomenon - which forms the basis of this inquiry and proposed research - centers on identity development and the implications for students' academic outcomes. In the section to follow, I aim to unpack the nature of the relationship between internal and external factors in student identity development, and propose several implications for learning and development for students.

Setting Context: Developing a Phenomenological Lense for Discussion

To begin, I ground this discussion in the field of environmental psychology which relies on a holistic understanding of experience, and a contextualization of how people think and act in the world, simultaneously. Such a complex philosophy, under phenomenology, posits that thought and behavior are contemporaneous and reciprocal, and rejects the segmentation of human experience into strictly mental and physical interaction (Thayer, 1970). The relationship between the functions of mind and environment is transactional in that they shape one another. Knowledge,

therefore, is shaped through being in the world, as the mind relies on a conscious reflection on events to develop (Dewey, 1916; Heft, 2001). In order to really investigate the nature of the connection between identity and development, we have to be able to understand the reciprocal relationship between brain, the body, and the external world. Over the years, research in neuropsychology and cognitive science has substantiated the idea that our consciousness is a product of our enactment in the world (Thompson & Varela, 2001). Ecological theories in the social sciences place a great deal of emphasis on how knowledge is internalized simultaneously through interaction with the environment and internal reflection upon it. This dynamic process renders our development contingent upon the meaningfulness of our experiences. We participate in the process of generating meaning, through engagement in dynamic interactions with the world - including other people. Variation in our interpretations are socially-embedded, as our meanings and valuations of experiences are situated within the context of our greater social world (Dewey, 1929; Milgram, 1970). Such a conception places a considerable emphasis on historical and sociocultural factors that contribute to our individual interpretations (Varela, 1993; Heft, 2001). In essence, it is our culturally-embedded perceptual judgements on the nature of things in our environment which precedes our mental development (Dewey, 1916; Varela, 1993).

While human development is contingent upon the space, history and context that surround us, an ecological approach suggests the possibility for emergence through the open-ended process of interpretation and action (Heft, 2001). Meaning is understood in relation to the individual who is interacting with these features (Lewin, 1943). An ecological understanding of human development and behavior relies on an analysis of the complex relational processes, which are culturally and historically embedded, that shape the meaningfulness of our experiences, and therefore shape our development across the lifespan. Such an idea relies on the notion that

individual and collective action are fundamental to individual knowledge attainment, and this knowledge grows out of social processes and sociohistorical contexts (Heft, 2001). As Heft puts it, "By far the most abundant meaningful feature of the environment are those shaped out of the materials of the environment and through coordinated social action." We understand that institutions and social patterns shape our understanding of the world and we navigate, therefore, according to the historical and cultural structures which both precede and are implanted within the making of meaning (Stetsenko & Arievitch, 2004).

What educational psychology and public policy do, in this sense, is fail to address how we develop, transform and assimilate knowledge in relation to our environment. More concretely, such a dualistic mode of analysis neglects to examine the relationship between contextualizing factors which contribute to variation in response. Ultimately, what we are left with is a disjointed theory of learning and development which appears, in some part, to explain the multitude of dichotomous approaches to addressing the achievement gap problem. Environmental psychology, as a discipline, focuses on the relationship between individuals and their environments. It develops a meaningful theoretical framework for understanding how context and situatedness matter in human development. While mainstream psychology has dealt mostly in the world of manufactured absolutes, ecological theory puts forth a complex and nuanced interpretation of phenomena, particularly in relation to an individual's burgeoning sense of self. Understanding the connectedness of these ideas means that we must acknowledge the potential for biased narratives from our institutions to have real consequences for youth in their knowledge attainment, and the development of a healthy sense of self.

Shaping Our Perspectives: Ego, Identity and the Protective Self

A great deal of education research on internal factors of student achievement tend to focus on issues of cognition, self-regulation, and motivation. Within the context of education, these phenomena are often investigated independently, but in relation to one another, also underpin many of the primary facets of ego and identity development. One particularly interesting position to arise in the education literature, is situated within the realm of identity development and the implications for academic outcomes. Researchers have long suggested that identity plays a critical role in development (Erikson, 1959; Waterman, 1982) and a role in learning (Ligorio, 2010). As culture is integral to identity formation which is a critical element of development, it stands to reason that culture may be inherently embedded in the learning process (potentially predicated upon cultural enactment). In fact, according to Hviid and Villadsen, the relationship between culture and learning is incontrovertible truth. Children must draw upon social and cultural resources to create new knowledge. Therefore, education practices cannot be most effective without taking into consideration the ontological experiences that diverse learners bring to the school environment (2014).

One of the most comprehensive constructs in personality psychology is the idea of ego development. As a construct, the ego is defined as "the part of the mind that mediates between the conscious and the unconscious and is responsible for reality testing and a sense of personal identity" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2019). Ego can be understood as the lower operating system of the psyche. The ego identifies itself with external circumstances and is based on past experience. All the same, ego is a personal aspect of identity development shaped by individual reactions to said experience. In that sense, ego distinguishes the self from the rest of life (Bai, et. al. 2017).

The stages of ego development provide a frame of reference regarding the dominant forms

of cognition which exist in both the intrapersonal and interpersonal spheres (Loevinger, 1976). As a basis, un- or under-developed facets of the ego include the impulsive, self-protective, and pre-social expressions of self, while facets associated with maturation include greater self-awareness and external reference to the rules, values and expectations of others (Newman, Tellegen & Bouchard, 2018). Development mediates these egoic reactions to our environment. Adolescence, for example, denotes a critical period in which youthful, ego-centric identifications become synthesized in a way which reinforces the *reciprocal* relationship of the self and society (Marcia, 1966).

By understanding the levels of ego maturation, we begin to underscore the importance of the broader culture in student development. There's an expression that exists which posits, "No man is an island unto themselves," and it this very simple expression which underscores the complex nature of individual development in relation to the broader world. Perhaps ironically, Western philosophical thought posits that stronger the ego is, the stronger the attachment to the institutional belief systems of one's identity group (Erickson, 1963). This is just one way in which philosophies of thought highlight the interplay between the ego, as an internal construction of self, and the experiences that shape our adherence to the beliefs of our cultural sub-groups.

For students who are still developing a sense of personal identity, their environment in many ways shapes the way they perceive themselves within their subgroup, and in the world. The question, 'Who am I?' becomes prevalent in adolescence as rapid changes in physical and brain development, shift how youth interact with their environment. With increasing levels of independence, adolescents are in a sense learning to balance between their perception of self and experimenting with different roles in their environment (Erickson, 1963; Marcia, 1966). At this critical period, the individual may experience what Erickson coined as 'the crisis of commitment.'

During this stage, individuals navigate the space between who they are and who they want to be (what Erickson famously coined as the identity v. role confusion paradigm). At such junctures in development egoic attachments to identity are most susceptible to shifting. Critical theorists debate the notion that an individual's personal identity persists over time (Srivastava, John, & Gosling, 2003). It is assumed that just as one's physical body changes, so too does the conception of self in the world. By that token, when our personal identity doesn't shift, it is a result of the cognitive reinforcement received and integrated in relationship to the people and society that surround us. We begin to perceive threatening feelings as "attacks" that we need to "defend" ourselves from, and this is the primary activity of the ego. Such persistent egoic self-perceptions are shaped by similar reactions to ongoing environmental stimuli, namely those of the identified culture.

Cultural and Racialized Identity: Schooling as Behavior Setting

One of the most well-known debates in the social sciences is the question of *nature v. nurture*. Almost invariably, researchers would agree some combination of both internal schema and external stimuli form the basis for the variability of outcomes in human development. In cognitive science, it's called embodiment; in the physical sciences, it's labeled epigenetics, and in the social sciences this phenomenon underpins any number of theories which investigate person-environment interactions and their associated outcomes. At varying scopes and by differing measures, the reflexive nature of the person-environment connection is steadily substantiated by research (Hunt, 1975; Thompson & Varela, 2001; Lynch & Kemp, 2014). With substantial evidence to support the transactional relationship between the individual and the external world, it becomes increasingly critical to highlight the role of culture in identity development.

The question is, is identity inherited or created? It is important to understand identity development as a creative process that weaves society into our personal history. Cultural identity speaks to a feeling of belonging to a group. It is part of an individual's self-conception in relation to the constructs of their social world. It is characteristic not just of the individual, but also the people of the shared subgroup. As individuals, the subject can host a collection of cultural identities which exist on the basis of race, gender, nationality, history and sexuality. It is suggested that these identities tend to follow the social norms as recorded in various forms of media to build on culturally based conceptions of self. Therefore, a range of cultural complexities structure the way individuals interact with the cultural realities of their lives.

Cultural identity is based on historical experiences, which are complemented by factors such as ethnicity, gender, class and so on (Abdi & Richardson, 2008). It emerges at the individual level but each individual has several social identities that have implications at the political and cultural levels. They assume unique meanings in social interactions, particularly when they mediate dominant perceptions of minority experience. Identity is therefore dynamic and situationally responsive. School is often a tool of identity deformation and cultural alienation for marginalized communities (Abdi, 1999). Researchers have suggested that schooling is an agent of social reproduction (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). As one researcher puts it, "Education is to transmit the accumulated wisdom of society and prepare the youth for a future membership in society and active participation in its maintenance and development" (Nyerere, 1967, pp. 167). Schooling teaches the norms, values and dispositions of the dominant culture, and is comprised of varying levels of influence that affect student development. As we've established in the ecological discourse, the processes operating in different settings are not independent of each other, and the changes in society are highlighted by the mediating processes and

relationships between the child's immediate self and family, and the greater society (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Of course, what needs to be addressed, is how these changes affect the life space of the student, how behavior settings have changed, and ultimately what the consequences could be for students in a democratic world. The life space is the amalgamation of the world as it exists for a particular individual, and includes things like thought, memory, motivation, personality, and ideals, as well as parts of the physical and social environment.

The unfurling of the simplest of human interactions with the world has implications of expansive, and perhaps even innumerable potential. Therefore, when we shrink the life space of the child, we must consider how we may, too, be shrinking their development. The potential for transformation, in particular generational transformation, may be threatened by interests which seek to maintain imbalances of power. If qualities of the life space are understood as more than abstract metaphors, but as significant dimensions of a person's psychological world, then overall state of a person's life space - and therefore their goals, motivations, perhaps even hopes and dreams - could also be understood in the context of how stable, fluid, or even limited their environment is (Lewin, 1951). If we pull from Piaget, the construction of knowledge, through the interaction of 'subject' and 'object' is changed. If children's environments are at all times controlled, and there is little or no space given to providing them some level of independence, we then risk stunting the potential of that child. In a way, the idea of shrinking physical life space, coincides with the expansion of children's interest and interaction with the digital world.

Two important controversies which arise from this discussion are the tension between identity work and engagement academic content, and the role of identity work in learning contexts (Nasir, 2011). Having a deeper understanding of these issues has the potential to illuminate further context for interpreting gaps in student achievement. The question is, does identity work in

education require learning contexts that are racially homogenous? Recognizing that coherence of identity categorization can be fraught with tensions for some groups. Sometimes those tensions can be disruptive. Racial dynamics are still seemingly underemployed in theories on schooling and identity development. Still, racialized theories of identity have been prevalent among debates and research literature on race and schooling in the United States for decades (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 1992; O'Connor, Horvat, & Lewis, 2006). Such theories posit that marginalized communities often dis-identify with, or even become oppositional to, the larger culture.

As a historical reservoir, culture is one of the main characteristics in shaping identity, and it is understood in the context of the values, behaviors and institutions that a particular group of people share. Even so, larger societies can be comprised of cultural subgroups whose realities at times contrast their societal frameworks. This can have varying implications for how we assimilate our identity frameworks with those of the larger social group - and in this case the school environment. In this context, it is important to understand how our historical relationship *to* the society or subgroup affects whether or not we identify with said group, or whether our ego fixes upon self-protective modes of interpretation.

For example, the national celebration of the Thanksgiving holiday is a significant part of Anglo-American culture, and is understood in said context, as celebration of the foundation of the neo-historical American cultural heritage. For Native groups however, the Thanksgiving holiday bears a similarly significant context for the genocide, displacement, and systemic erasure of the primordial subgroup of the Americas. In this way, the evidence of differentiated reactions to the Thanksgiving holiday amongst the student body exemplify the culturally- and historically-embedded interpretive frameworks that may influence some students' oppositional reactions to the symbols and traditions of our shared national identity.

Singular theories of dis-identification still do not quite capture the complexities of the 'self' and individual constructs in relation to the school and community contexts that students navigate. Theorists suggest that students must construct a sense of identity that incorporates their experiences and perspectives from the different fields and settings students engage on a day to day basis (Nasir, 2011). Moments in a process of racial identity construction therefore are not necessarily progressive, but relational, simultaneous and constitutive.

Why It Matters: Representation for Knowledge Assimilation

Depictions of knowledge attainment that situate our cognitive development within the context of our physical, social and historical environment are critical to the conversations on representation in Humanistic curriculum. As researchers have pointed out, many school textbooks are ideologically invested – and contribute to the perpetuation of inequalities in and outside of schools (Foroutan, 2012). Textbooks that do not depict people of color, histories that neglect their contributions, and policies that criminalize their culture, could be understood in an ecological sense to diminishing the value of people of color within American society. Such a position, blatant or subversive, has implications for youth development, and the achievement gaps so heavily cited in education literature.

We know now that society provides the framework for the interplay of cultural identity and media. For example, societies often make revisions to their historical records in order to bolster a unified cultural identity. This is evidenced by the streamlined and unilateral historical narratives taught in schools in countries all over the world. Most often these histories reflect primarily on the contexts of civic engagement within the scope of the shared national identity. Proponents of such methods, suggest that identity preservation based on difference is divisive and

that it would be a seemingly insurmountable challenge to incorporate the nuances of a multicultural, multi-logical, narrative into a singular national identity. Instead they suggest that homogeneity gives the individual a greater sense of shared citizenship. One could argue, however, that such positions underplay the role of schools and other institutions in supporting racial and academic identities for students.

One niche element of this disjunction is the notion of representation. Representation, loosely defined, encapsulates an accounting for - be it an individual, an entity or idea. These questions become central to the study of social behavior in human development. In the context of education, we must consider how the images, language and materials we use are relevant to youth of color, and also the consequences for their mental development. To be more concrete, when African-American history and their contributions are relegated to slavery, and symbols of servitude, images of crime, and poverty, what meaning does that convey to a black student? To a white student?

Disparagingly, many studies have suggested that male African American, Latino and Indigenous students often identify with culture that is oppositional to standardized American notions of knowing and being. As such, evidence suggests that some issues of cultural identification can serve positively, or negatively, as factors for academic engagement and achievement (Ogbu, 1998; Irving & Hudley, 2008). For example, one study suggests that among young black males, cultural mistrust and oppositional culture were negatively correlated with academic achievement and outcome expectations, suggesting that educational practices must support an identity development consistent with achievement without compromising positive ethnic identity (Irving & Hudley, 2008). When we consider issues like stereotype threat, it becomes apparent that many youth internalize the notion that society is almost betting upon their

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failure of success based on preconceived associations with group tendencies (Steele, 1997). In fact, the relevance of this suggestion, could be evidenced by current research findings, in which African American youth identification with black media stereotypes was assessed in relation to their socialization and formation of racial identity. The study found that students with a strong knowledge of black history, more readily identified stereotypes, but were less likely to internalize negative stereotypes (Adams-Bass, et. al., 2014). Being able to externalize stereotypes has been shown to correlate with higher self-efficacy for diverse learners (Irving & Hudley, 2008). Self-efficacy denotes the self judgement of capability to perform. Self-efficacy is shaped by experiences which can be enactive or vicarious. Comparison psychological features mirror those of the external culture. Students from marginalized groups for example may struggle with efficacious beliefs in areas in which they have little to no cultural context for understanding. However, they may too struggle with self-belief in areas their cultural subgroup is associated with stereotypes of a negative connotation.

Schools should help to foster a culture among minority students that facilitates academic identity development, without invalidating their own cultural concepts of self to foster positive identity assimilation. With regard to engagement, one researcher found that students whose heritage was tied to a history lesson were more interested in, and made more meaningful connections with, the material presented in class (Levy, 2014). The inclusion of 'heritage histories,' as per the author could facilitate students' development of identification with history, as well as the multidimensional actors rooted within it. As culture and identity seem to be deeply entrenched in one another, it seems that traditional, standardized curriculum practices could be detrimental to the identity formation, and motivation of diverse students. While there are several distinct directions that academic identity formation can go, identifying with academics is, by some

measures, a key element of student motivation, and subsequent achievement (Matthews, 2014).

The notion of democracy is that every person should have a stake in their government - or in this context shaping their field. It makes a great deal of sense if you consider how many facets of today's society are designed for children to conform to set standards and to regulate their behavior. Institutional focus on assessment, the school to prison pipeline, underfunding of arts and exploration; all of these systems can be said to perpetuate the status quo which is comprised of severe inequalities. Today's curriculum can negatively impact children's confidence in institutionalized environments, their ability to form their own critical theoretical frameworks for the world, and contribute to meaningful change. We now understand that different environments produce discernible difference in human relations and the ways in which each culture and subculture influences the next generation. As one researcher puts it, "The process and product of making human beings human clearly varies by place and time. Viewed in historical as well as cross-cultural perspective, this diversity suggests the possibility of ecologies as yet untried that hold a potential for human natures yet unseen, perhaps possessed of a wiser blend of power" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Lack of representation, and diversity of images and ideas could do more to undermine the potential for transformation and may maintain societal imbalances of power. When the state of a person's life space - and therefore their goals, motivations, perhaps even hopes and dreams - are contingent upon meaningful representations. Deficits in these areas can be understood in the context of how stable, fluid, or even limited their environment is (Lewin, 1951).

Evaluation of youths' performance in humanities should include social, historical and cultural contexts as well as investigating the subjective interpretive framework in which these ideas are grounded. To do so, psychology and educational assessment can implement analytical methods that seek to situate the individual within the environment to begin the process of

developing an understanding of the individuals' emergent interactions with the world. In regards to the question of representation, the notion of self becomes pertinent to the conversation.

Our concept of self is inherently tied to life around the self. Understanding the complexity of the interaction between self and the environment coupled with the rich environmental availability of information, cultural and historical social contexts, and our unique interpretive propensities, the development of new approaches to understanding the phenomenological consequences of representation are emergent and complex.

Ecological psychologists acknowledge the contradiction between the lack of a self that analysis discovers and our ongoing sense of self (Varela, 1993). Therefore, while there is no inherent self, our development and emergence are contingent upon a sense of self. Development of a social identity, in differentiated society, is a critical element to addressing historical inequalities. Such an idea would mean that young people of color should see themselves represented in schools so that they will continue to engage the content. Vice versa, white children need to see diversity in curriculum to counter the 'othering' that society imposes upon youth of color. Acknowledgement of an identity and an integrated curriculum, has the potential to deconstruct conceptions of individualism that stringently adhere to a sense of separateness from the world.

People construct a perception of themselves and others by means of abstract social categories, and these perceptions - mitigated by institutional messages - become part of people's self-concepts. While environmental psychology negates the imposition of a self, social identity is still a relevant and tenable facet of psychological development. An individual's knowledge of belonging to certain social groups, as well as the emotions and values constituted around it, can be said to have implications for human development and the greater social world. Social identity

depends on the quality of the groups or entities we belong to or have as a positive reference, such as nationality, culture, religion, family, neighborhood, to mitigate some level of distinction in interpretive processes. Misidentification distorts the ontologies of marginalized groups, placing students in a context to either become complicit in the project of their oppression, or otherwise reject the social group or context in which they feel othered (Ghosh, Abdi & Naseem, 2008). Such rejection, however, only solidifies the cultural and political disenfranchisement of diverse students.

Shifting Toward a Collective Identity which Values Diversity

Collective identity is a sense of who a person is within the context of the group to which they belong. It is a facet of how a person identifies and expresses themselves which reflect their cultural attitudes, beliefs, feelings and behaviors, among other things. In comparing the collective identity of blacks after emancipation and in contemporary society, it is noted that both forms of identity were bred out of embedded social relations (remnants from slavery) that include discrimination, subordination and degradation of expression of the black collective. Each era however, has a noted shift in response to these culturally embedded themes. In the post-emancipation era, the black collective identity was formed in response to issues of blatant discrimination and degradation that led to the black response around self-expression and reliance, equal opportunities, and social justice movements, and other such pro-active pushes for equal status in society.

In the contemporary era, many of these same initiatives evolved in larger movements, and the oppositional culture wherein blacks promote the use of their own vernacular, their own school programs, and other movements toward promoting the black collective identity. In the latter

situation, promotion of the black collective identity creates a position of 'blackness' as being in opposition to 'whiteness' and those things which are perceptibly attributed to the latter. Therefore, the use of common black vernacular would be held to a higher standard than common English vernacular, which could be attributed to 'acting white'. In the post-emancipation era, focus on access to jobs, housing, and other opportunities made it that black Americans would be more likely to either assimilate to or accommodate for the 'common American standard' in order to gain access to the same wealth and opportunities.

It seems that post-emancipation collective identity for black people was more-so about creating a separate standard for blacks, and carving out a niche for themselves, wherein blackness could be celebrated within the culture. Contemporary black identity formed a reclamation of black expression, and created a culture where-in access to jobs, housing and other opportunities that were not decidedly black, were seen as in accordance with white majority culture, and therefore outcast. They are the same in that they are creations of distinctions of black identity from standard American culture, but are different in how they approached that opposition.

Children must draw upon social and cultural resources to create new knowledge. Therefore, education practices cannot be most effective without taking into consideration the diverse ontologies that students bring to the school environment (Hviid & Villadsen, 2014). In the following chapter, I further explore the ways students engage school culture and curriculum, and the implications for achievement.

SECTION III: EXPANDING CULTURALLY-RESPONSIVE EDUCATION FOR

ENGAGEMENT

One of the current major curricular paradigms to address the goals of multicultural education is culturally-responsive pedagogy. In common historically didactic pedagogies, students learn to expect their education is conforming to the standards of the school, rather than the school conforming to meet the needs of the student. The theory posits that educators must recognize the importance of integrating students' cultural references into their learning, Ladson-Billings Culturally-Relevant Pedagogy, draws from a keen understanding of the variance in cultural ontologies and epistemologies, in an attempt to create effective and sustainable social, political and economic spaces and practices that best serve student population. Facets of a culturally-relevant pedagogy, focus on diversifying perspectives. Through authentic communication and engagement, educators practice responsive methods of curriculum design and instruction that incorporate varied perspectives on the basis of race, gender, class, etc. Such methods seek to redefine classroom culture. Our development is transactional and therefore everyone is simultaneously a student and a teacher.

From an ecological perspective, this is a critical observation because one of the greatest tenets to the notion of democracy is that every person should have a stake in their government - or in this context shaping their field (Lewin, 1951). It makes a great deal of sense if you consider how many facets of today's society are designed for children to conform to set standards and regulation on their behavior. Institutional focus on assessment, the school to prison pipeline,

underfunding of arts and exploration; all of these systems can be said to perpetuate the status quo which - as we know - is comprised of severe inequalities.

Through engaging their environments, students are developing a sense of their role and/or purpose in society. To observe a child in institutional spaces, for example, is to observe many of the specific influences on the child, both in the external environment, and implicitly in the internal personal environment. Children's behavior in the field is derived from several influences in their memory and ideology. It is not characteristic to particular individuals, but an 'extra-individual' behavioral phenomenon comprised of unique characteristics that persist when the participants change (Lewin, 1943; Barker, 1968). Through engaging their environments, and finding or developing spaces of their own, students are developing a greater sense of autonomy, cooperation, and communication. Where disengagement is said to be a greater issue for youth of color in schools, it could be understood as a classroom behavior setting, and shapes how we engage with the contexts of our education.

The logic herein, falls neatly into a current pedagogical theory centered around culturally-responsive teaching (Gay, 2000). In Gay's article, she presents a framework for improving academic achievement among diverse students, through teaching practices that are "culturally-relevant" and accepting of the background knowledge and experiences of historically underachieving groups of students. The article, written for teachers, discusses key elements for developing a culturally responsive classroom, and suggests that the results are more engaged students, and more meaningful connections to the material. In fact, studies have provided evidence that minority children do in fact prefer culturally relevant instruction, to traditional monolithic lessons in and out of the classroom (Howard, 2001; Rodriguez, et. al, 2004; Sampson & Garrison-Wade, 2011). These studies provide evidence that African American and Latino students not only

preferred culturally-relevant curriculum, but benefited academically, as well. At the program evaluation level, one mixed-method study found that students' preferences for diverse curriculum, was also accompanied by significant increases in processing skills for science and mathematics (Rodriguez, et. al, 2004).

Dewey highlighted how a uniformity of method can actually suppress knowledge attainment in the individual (1929). Consequently, lack of motivational achievement has been found to accompany declines in academic achievement (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). These factors and consequences, all contribute to a vicious cycle for marginalized students, in which they lack many of the basic resources for success and, as a consequence, fall-behind in the system. On a positive note, there is evidence that suggests other community members can affect positive change by modeling socioeconomic resilience, providing parental support and acting as role-models for these children (McLoyd, 1998, Masten & Coatsworth, 1998).

Presently, schools, classrooms and textbooks set up to build a narrative that credits white male actors. Most of the power and knowledge in American society is created and distributed by white male heroes. The subtext of these narratives suggest that communities of difference play little, if any, part in shaping American society. We know, however, that this isn't true. The classroom is enhanced by having a diversity of culture.

Segregated Settings as Behavior Settings

The test of any school system should be based on its relationship to the most vulnerable students - typically the underperforming, the cognitively or behaviorally challenged, and others that typically fall through the cracks of the educational industrial complex. Whether based upon racial mistrust, disability, or social and economic standing, students who are not able to engage

with the institutions that serve them, will not identity with education or often with the outcomes that are assumed. Instead these students may seek intellectual development in spaces outside of the school environment. Progressive models of education recognize the need for more critical and relevant perspectives in education practice. Progressive models often stress the need to reject existing cultural structures that promote or perpetuate exclusionism in school culture. Schooling has historically been understood as the basis of knowledge and skill acquisition for entry into the larger society.

People retain habits of thinking situated within their identified cultural constructs. The opportunity to evolve beyond those modes of thinking requires access to perspectives and modes of thinking very different than their own. Currently our system draws from unilateral perspectives of participation. Often it is about the student meeting the standards and requirements of the school, rather than the school meeting the needs of the learner. Institutions rarely seek to diversify their content, and the culture of standardization often makes attempts at differentiation confusing and fraught with contradiction. Much of what is understood about shifting toward a more inclusive school culture centers on the concepts of culture, curriculum, and collaboration. By acknowledging cultural context schools begin to shift the narrative, but there is still a need for a shift in the material and collaborative expressions of school reform movement. Many of the alternative pedagogical theories such as action research, problem-based inquiry, and ecological practices have been research-evidenced as effective means of engaging a diversity of learners who benefit less from traditional didactic instruction. Students may be able to identify with unique models that make space for the skills, talents and abilities associated with their personal or cultural identity.

Brown v. Board of Education is the hallmark case that pushed the institution into a new era

through the material integration of racially diverse student enclaves, but a lack of change in the curriculum and the contradiction to certain racial identities means that we are still awaiting a cultural shift toward integration. Evidenced by studies like Prudence Carter which suggested that students in more ethnically diverse schools tend to self-segregate (Carter, 2010), and that in many respects this self-segregation stunts the intellectual and social development of students (Carter, 2017). Integration in theory is supposed to prepare people from different backgrounds to operate in society with people different from themselves. Instead schools have become institutions which reinforce identities of difference by way of erasure, cultural mistrust, and disengagement. Students who don't see teachers who look or speak like them, who don't see images reflected in the curriculum that think or act like them, are effectively isolated by the context in which they are being 'educated'. Studies show that people are often uncomfortable moving across social and cultural boundaries. Context matters. Cultural flexibility allows for students to navigate from the margins toward the center. Integration is about social and organizational change. Schools should provide the resources and opportunity to cultivate cultural flexibility in order to cultivate meaningful engagement. Developing a culture of engagement is about focusing on the student. It is developing a relationship, which is transactional. Methods of culturally responsive pedagogy often underscore the necessity for authentic communication (Kafele, 2013).

History tells us that we make progress through our educational institutions. Education is one of the most critical elements of a progressive society because it provides us with the context of our past, and methods to shape our future. It is important for both teachers and students to understand and facilitate the shared responsibility in pursuing the goals and mission of education. Integration should be a goal, because it facilitates the opportunities to connect. It could be said that people feel more comfortable going to schools with people of their own race, most of the

time, not because of an inherent disregard for 'others', but because the perceived inability to relate to groups unlike their own. Diversity in schools prepares students to interact in the broader society. People learn most from a diversity of thought. Diversity breeds innovation; we follow the standards set before us by our forefathers with the intention of preparing students to be college and career ready. However, through popular media platforms like 'Are you smarter than a fifth grader?' we now know that most people do not recall a great deal of the content knowledge that was expected of them in school. In many respects, what gets assimilated is more often than not, that which is most relevant to the learner (Neckerman, Carter, & Lee, 1999). Rather, schooling should be about diversifying rather than unifying thought forms, toward the advancement of human potential.

SECTION IV: WHY FOCUS ON SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION?

It's important to understand man's proclivity to repeat history. In 400 years since the founding of this country, it appears as if our institutions have struggled to keep up with the massive cultural shift that has taken place since the civil rights era. As a relatively young country, America has been interpreted as one of the greatest social democracies on the planet. It is through our diversity and democratic ideals that we have seen tremendous gains in industry and technology. Yet, and still, for the most vulnerable populations in this country, America seems to have changed very little. The institutions have failed and continue to fail those at the margins, and when it comes to schools, teachers, administrators and policy makers seem all but at a loss for effective strategies to resolve pervasive cultural issues. This is where it all comes together. There's a famous quote that says, "a man cannot know where he's going until he knows where he's been" and in many respects I feel it speaks to the cycles of history that shape our development and the trajectory of our lives. In this section, I discuss our past, our present, and the projected future of civic education and engagement given our current state of affairs.

History and Context of Social Studies

Modern Social Studies education in the United States began as a means to assimilate immigrant groups to the dominant culture of America. In over a century since the original curriculum was designed, it seems very little has changed. Research has shown that civics courses like government, economics, and history influence our understanding of society (Straughn & Andriot, 2011). It could be said that civic education breeds civic mindedness. Social Studies education offers such an opportunity, and in many respects it is too often overlooked as a potential

sign in our ever unfolding push for greater socio-political change. Social Studies education offers us the opportunity to assess where we've been, where we are presently, and where we are headed as a collective.

Research supports the idea that human beings create a legacy out of narrative (Stetsenko, 2003). It is through being and learning of communal thought, and legacy, that we develop (Stetsenko, 2008). In fact, one of the primary tenets of democratic education posits that civically engaged education requires we acknowledge all of our contributions to society and the public good (Dewey, 1927). As eloquently stated, "although the stewards of history sought to maintain the traditional history curriculum to train the intellect, social studies practitioners relentlessly pressed their demands that every content area must pass the test of social utility as a subject area that contributed to understanding and resolving contemporary social problems" (Saxe, 2004, pp. 2). What we understand is that successful democracies depend on the participation of informed citizens. That being said, what has been experienced historically is a systemic erasure of the perspectives, notions and contributions of a diversity of American thought, toward a streamlined revisionist history that favors white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant narratives on the history, evolution, and status of this countries development. There is a famous quote that states, "history is almost always written by the victors and conquerors and gives their view. Or, at any rate, the victor's version is given prominence and holds the field." (Nehru, 1946, pp. 289). It may be fair to argue then that it has been used for centuries as a tool of subjugation by the greatest world leaders in the world, and in this country; and it is with this perspective that we must interpret our current paradigms for understanding the social and historical context in which our collective American identity is shaped, as well as how it continues to be shaped, and the implications for the future.

Policy Paradigms: Standardizing Our Students

It can be argued that the institution of education in this country has struggled to remain relevant in the field. This is especially true for civics education despite its importance in our socio-cultural development. It seems that in over a century there has yet to be a significant shift in the curriculum, professional development or assessment of civic education, as more schools are reducing the requirements (Gallstone, 2004). Since the civil rights era, research has demonstrated a troubling downward trend with regard to student motivation, engagement or achievement in the social studies (Ravitch, 2003). Citing high levels of apathy, disenfranchisement, and so on, the average American student has only a superficial knowledge of the history, laws or politics of our society. This is in direct contradiction to the goals and standards of social studies education, to build a more informed, engaged and dynamic citizenry (Vinson, 1999).

The agenda for education policy reform pushes for stricter standards and assessment for improving student outcomes (Kearns, 2011). Policy makers are pushing for more accountability from teachers and students to produce a strong workforce, but many researchers have spotlighted the potential negative consequences of high-stakes educational practices for culturally and developmentally marginalized students (Ogbu, 1992; Wexler, 2014). Still it seems very little is being done on the policy level to address the concerns of educators, parents, and students alike who claim that high-stakes testing and standardized education practices are hurting more than helping struggling students. While teachers are being primed to create culturally-sensitive classrooms, and differentiate instruction for different types of learners, they are also being held up to strict guidelines for producing content knowledge. The two ideologies appear contradictory and it follows that the valuation of these systems can be, at times, imbalanced.

Still, I find that there is not enough *empirical* research into these theoretical frameworks to

yet substantiate such claims for integration into national standards-based curriculum. With the current political climate geared towards research-evidence pedagogical practices, it can appear as if our schools are shifting away from differentiated to more uniform standards of knowing and being. There is good reason to believe that both history and the social sciences have something crucial to offer each other. As history understands and interprets phenomena based on the "temporalities of social life," social science can glean a great deal from applying nuanced interpretive frameworks to their interpretations of social phenomena (Sewell, 2005). We have to remember history and context matter, even in our attempts to objectively apply our interpretations of the field. While it may be common sense that universality is not easily addressed in social science, socio-political programs like Common Core and standardized testing, seem to reinforce the problem of inequitable appraisal of students' talents and abilities. If we truly understand that culture is deeply rooted aspect of the human experience, we must see the need for increased contextualization in addressing learning outcomes. By no means should expectations for achievement be villainized, but are policy-makers and researchers really conscious of the effect of these initiatives at the most basic level? for a diversity of learners?

If students are provided a culturally-relevant basis for understanding history, civic duty and themselves, schools may be able to provide a platform for greater motivation and success. Democratic education suggests that responsive education practices could facilitate students' identification with heritage, learning, and their personal study. By making history more personally engaging, students may be presented with a long-term basis for social and community engagement, and useful tools for everyday life (Lempert, 2013). What seems to be critical at every level of these studies, is a student-centered, culturally-embedded, concept of development and consequences for learning.

Integration as a Necessity, Not Just a Right

During the civil rights era in the 1960s Martin Luther King, Jr. was famed for his call to integrate Black and White institutions around the country. His world famous "I Have a Dream" speech illustrated the ideals of an integrated social world. and is still heavily cited to this day. Of course, shortly before his assassination in 1968, he is less famously quoted as saying "I fear that I have integrated my people into a burning house." Even then, Dr. King realized that the existing institutions would not, and might likely never, give true deference to the black and brown communities as whole citizens. Even when we sat together, we were still relegated to "second-class" citizens. This fear continues to be reflected in the injustices of our system which still fail to value or acknowledge the black experience outside of biased rhetoric of subjugate narrative. I believe we often fail, as a society, to acknowledge the ways our current value systems highlight certain truths, while obscuring others. We fail to consider how the contributions of different cultural and political groups have been co-opted for the purposes of presenting a concise and streamlined story.

Representation matters because it has so many potential implications for youth of color with regard to cognition, motivation, and ideals. Representation in textbooks and cultural dialogue signifies social existence. It precedes individual emergence. For marginalized youth seeing historical figures who look like them, reading literature by people who speak like them, and being able to bring their own contextual understanding to their spaces of learning is empowering. The negation of which can have a limiting effect, in that it doesn't reflect the breadth of their memories, ideologies and lived experiences. In education, it is understood that children's early experiences shape what they imagine to be possible. Giving them tools and positive reflections of

their social groups, relay a sense of who and what they can be. I think in many ways this is critical.

We have the propensity to form defenses against the ongoing internal imagery and messaging. When they come at us we can form defense mechanisms that will allow us to navigate the world protecting ourselves from the psychological damage from negative reinforcements in our environment. As part of a democratic education, students need to be able to challenge these narratives and be empowered enough to hold our institutions accountable for sharing our stories and seeking solutions to social and historical concerns.

Decolonizing Thought Forms: Multi-logicality in Practice

Empowering learners to appreciate a diversity of thought is central to much educational research in multiculturalism (Steinberg, 1992; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997). Such critical theories, highlight a critical democratic ethos as foundational in decolonizing education in this country. Such a means of multicultural education, not only passively educates students on the unique contributions of a diversity of subgroups, but provide a basis for students to see themselves in the scope and potential for social change. There is a need for more collaboration between educators, social researchers and policy makers in order to effectively reshape the form and function of American education and social life. Critical forms of multiculturalism provide a basis for the effective application of the aims and goals of social studies education, in that students are provided with the tools to begin to think about, and shift their own perspectives of social life, toward the aim of enhanced engagement and social change over time.

SECTION V: IMPLICATIONS FOR ACHIEVEMENT AND SUGGESTIONS FOR ONGOING

RESEARCH

There are varying degrees in which it seems that representation can be explored as a tool for engagement. In the following section, I propose several study ideas which explore the nature of the relationship, as well as suggestions for interventions. Each study suggestion proposes a distinct level of analysis which explores some of the underpinning themes in this manuscript. Such a research endeavor could provide disciplinary examples of how the pragmatics of psychology extend into the realms of research and political theory. Researchers have appealed for a reconception of research as an opportunity for intervention, utilizing pragmatic tools of transactional development (Schusterman, 1994; Hobson, 2006). The idea is to develop a reconfigured conception of research, and in some sense activism, as an opportunity for exchange and pragmatic application. In other words, rather than perpetuating research as passive observation, utilize it as an opportunity for ongoing experimentation. Schools as contained environments that pull youth from the real world. The goal of a democratic education is to prepare youth for the world, and as such opportunities for intervention are likely best explored within the school setting.

Though it is no easy task to address the different needs of a diverse population of learners, it seems fairly critical that efforts should be made to address the achievement gap in ways that are meaningful to the student. I am interested in investigating exposure to "obscured" histories as a tool for enhancing academic engagement and motivation among African American, Latino and Native-American students. If culturally-relevant histories were more accessible, it could not only provide a platform for increasing student engagement, but also affirm students' collective

identities in the school system, and in the larger society. Hopefully, it would have implications for students' expected outcomes and achievement. If schools would affirm the lived experiences, and background knowledge, of their most marginalized student groups, they may find a wellspring of optimism in their students that may not have existed before.

The goal, therefore, is to implement a program of research and practice that acknowledges individual cultural identity, and grants it an equitable position in the classroom curriculum. The assumption is that students' ability to enact funds of knowledge from their own background and cultural experiences, and utilize in interacting with classroom content, is a necessary predecessor to their learning and development. The intention of my research, therefore, would be to highlight the dialectical nature of learning and development, and situate culture within that framework in order to glean some deeper understanding of how culture plays a role in achievement and other outcomes. Such an initiative may provide a platform to determine the potential consequences of cultural affirmation for adolescent interest and motivation in the social studies, civic engagement and possibly academic achievement. The goal is for individual students to acknowledge and understand how their culture has played a role in the shaping of American history and politics, as well as to be able to see themselves as vital characters in an ongoing narrative. Should students be able to see themselves reflected in the curriculum, the presumption is that it may facilitate their development of academic identity and universal citizenry.

Grounded Theory and Participatory Action Research

Two overarching theories of research that would help to guide the research into curriculum and behavior settings are grounded theory and participatory action research. Both methods rely on an exploratory analysis of phenomena which shift existing research protocols on their heads.

Grounded theory allows for the simultaneous involvement of the researcher in the analysis of data without the need for preconceived hypotheses. It provides a blank slate in which researchers can make-meaning of their observations of phenomena in real time. (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Since grounded approaches to research provide for more nuanced ways of interpreting data, it seems it would be most fitting to the task of reviewing qualitative research and intervention models. Along with grounded theory, then, comes the opportunity to use a participatory action framework. Participatory action research (PAR) makes space for the co-development of research programs with the intended study subjects (McIntyre, 2007). Intended as a means of shifting power imbalances, such modes of research treat study subjects as experts and provide the opportunity for students, in this case, to contribute to the data collection, reflection and action that follows in a program of research. These methods provide the ample space and opportunity to re-explore classroom phenomena in ways that are most meaningful to both the subject and researcher, and in my view, expand the possibilities for interpretation and action coming out the program of research.

Multimodality in Research Protocols

Another seemingly important layer to the proposed research is the use of multimodality, in composing research messages. Considering that this is an intended interdisciplinary undertaking, it seems important that the work adopt a system of research which is based in different research contexts in order to paint a more holistic and nuanced picture of the current phenomena around representation, engagement and achievement. The first approach would be quantitative, utilizing typical psychology research paradigms such as surveys, which can be enhanced by short answer, interviews, and reflections such as in proposed PAR studies. Both levels of analysis can be useful

for the design of interventions which could then be research-evidenced by both the quantitative and qualitative outputs of the program itself.

Research Questions

The purpose of this program study is to determine significant findings, and directions for further research. The research questions are as follows:

- Do participants have a preference for culturally-responsive, forum-based, extra-institutional learning?
- What are the consequences of this program for overall student engagement, in school? out of school?
- Post-Hoc: How does this approach reflect the academic achievement of marginalized students (if it all)?

Study 1: Academic Investment Survey

The proposed assessment would investigate the nature of "academic investment" and its implications for student achievement. As such, it would utilize achievement motivation and academic engagement as the central theoretical tenets of its implementation. I expect that the study will make at least two contributions to education in its broader contexts by addressing the topic of cultural-relevance and identity (and implicitly, the current hidden curriculum). Primarily, I anticipate it will contribute to the expanding knowledge base centered around the significance of educational justice. Additionally, I hope it will inspire more investigation into the role of culture

on learning. Insights and findings from this research should provide educators, tutors, and other program faculty with evidence-based alternatives to traditional and in-class instruction.

One of the means of investigating this connection could be done through the development of a survey on "academic investment." For the purposes of this study, academic investment would be a concept coined in particular to investigate any phenomena that exist in the relationship between students' engagement with the curriculum and their motivation to engage in the curriculum. The Academic Investment Survey [AIS; pronounced Ace] would be designed to measure students' perceptions of their investment in social studies education. The survey would serve as a tool for the design and implementation of an intervention focused on improving investment in civics education through democratic pedagogical practice. As such, it would serve as a pre-test measure for the intended construct.

The intention of this assessment would be to emphasize the role of emotional development in student outcomes and how social studies education addresses that area of development. This notion, largely inspired research in developmental theory, posits that adolescents typically possess the ability to think at almost the same level as adults (Piaget, 1976). However, there are still significant differences between adolescents and adults in terms of their social, emotional and behavioral development, which has implications for teens' reasoning ability (Steinberg, 2005). This developmental disconnect could be related to deficits in achievement in early adolescence. The idea is that increases in investment can translate to increased achievement over time (Akey, 2006; Heller, Calderon & Medrich, 2003).

The self-report assessment will take on a multidimensional character by investigating the relationship between students' perceptions of their engagement in social studies (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive), and their motivation to perform well (valuation of the academic content

and self-concept), and would later compare them with outcome scores from an implemented intervention. The survey would include 35 items, including 4 demographic questions, and an open response item. The items would be used for separate post-hoc analysis. Reliability of the test would be determined by using factor analysis, and validity would be established through a pilot study. Academic investment would be operationally defined as "the devotion of time, attention, and emotional energy to academic pursuits." Further development of this definition would focus on the significant contribution of achievement motivation and engagement as subordinate themes for interpretation. As such, items generated for this survey would be generated between two subscales, and itemized accordingly.

It is important to note that distinct, achievement motivation and academic engagement appear to be interrelated constructs. Achievement motivation is loosely defined as the need for knowledge attainment success, and it is situated in students' subjective valuation of academic content/climate, and their academic self-concept. Academic engagement refers to the degree of interest and attention that students have for said content or climate. As such, achievement motivation may act as precursor to engagement, and conversely, engagement as secondary implications for achievement motivation. In other words, a student who is highly motivated to succeed in social studies will likely be engaged with the content being introduced. On the other hand, it could also be said, that a student who is highly engaged by a concept or idea, may thusly become motivated to achieve in that area. The complex dialectical relationship between the two, therefore, creates a seemingly appropriate platform for investigating them as part of the notion of investment. The 'investment' model can then, subsequently, be correlated with achievement outcomes.

The survey could be used to address two distinct hypotheses; (1) that there is a significant

relationship between achievement motivation and engagement (the basis for academic investment), (2) there is a significant relationship between academic investment and academic achievement in social studies.

Participants

The target population would consist of students grade 6 to 9 - the age range for which research shows a considerable decline in student achievement, motivation, and engagement (Heller, Calderon, & Medrich, 2003).

Instrumentation

Tools for the development of this study would include quantitative research platforms such as Survey Monkey or Google Forms, with the survey questions piloted in advance of dissemination.

Methodology

The study would include a 25-item Likert scale questionnaire with two distinct sub-scales (10 items each). The first four items will be utilized for the purposes of collecting pertinent demographic data including age, sex, grade-level and GPA which can be used for post-hoc analysis. Item responses range from 1 - strongly disagree- to 5 - strongly agree. As single free-response item would be included for additional qualitative analysis. As such, a coding scheme would be generated for interpretation purposes and two raters would be used to score separately. The scores would be calculated summatively for each of the subscales, and a composite core would be yielded for the overall concept of "investment," A correlational analysis would be run

between the two subscales to determine if there is a significant relationship between responses, and a second correlational analysis run to determine the relationship between overall investment and achievement outcomes (likely in the form of GPA or class standing).

A factor analysis would be run to determine which items best correspond to a facet or motivation or engagement (e.g., self-concept, valuation of academics, academic interest, and attention). An item must have a least a .60 loading with one of the factors to be included in the survey. A secondary reliability score would be yielded from the overall survey, the goal would be projected at .7. As there are no right or wrong responses, test statistics geared toward proportions of correct answers would not be appropriate. Short answer responses will be coded and must correspond to one of the four above factors for inclusion in analysis. the two raters must have an 80% agreement for the free-response section.

Limitations

Limitations to this research model are that it doesn't capture the nuances of the intended phenomena, and cannot provide sufficient access to 'how' and 'why' certain responses are observed. The lack of context in this matter provides a false sense of homogeneity in response, that might not otherwise be reflected in the human populace.

Study 2: Field Interviews

Aside from pulling together a theoretical overview of the issues, I would be interested in buttressing my arguments with what may boil down to simple examples. My intention would be to provide support for my theoretical assertions based on a small sample of individual responses. Study 2 in this program, would be aimed at nuancing observations with qualitative research

paradigms integrated into research programs. Such qualitative observations, it seems, could be conducted in tandem with the survey in study 1 or independently post-hoc.

Participants

Participants in this study would include teachers and students from the middle school grades, much like those in Study 1.

Instrumentation

Instruments for this study would include journals, written handouts, and workshopping materials that would provide sufficient access and space for student and teacher reflections to be captured and reviewed in real-time.

Methodology

I would conduct a series of informal interviews and request participants to keep reflective journals over the course of the school year, addressing their overall feelings about the curriculum, the classroom workload, feelings of self-efficacy. Interviews and journals would later be coded for analysis. Being primarily interested in marginalized populations, participants would be from a number of diverse backgrounds, including dominant classroom cultures to create bases for comparison between attitudes. A brief summative ethnography on individual participants' backgrounds would be included to produce some deeper insight into the mindsets influencing their responses. Following these descriptions, I would run an exploratory analysis by coding transcripts of interviews, as well as manual coding of journal entries and conduct in a loose interpretation of perceived attitudes and beliefs. Given the design of the study, the intention would not be to

generalize or dichotomize population variables. Instead, I would prefer that the subject-oriented nature of the study would lend itself to a review of the axiological, ontological, and epistemological underpinnings that students bring into their learning and classroom experiences every day. The idea would be to develop a narrative based impressionistic overview of the issues and concerns facing students of color in their social studies education.

Limitations

It is important to note that the findings of this study would be situated within the socio-historic and cultural backdrop of the participant pool, myself, and the reader, and would therefore not lend itself to generalization. As opposed to generalizing quantitative results, this research proposes only to draw insights from the individuals involved in the study. The intention would be to gather ontological impressions of the phenomenon, rather than to make validated conclusions.

Study 3: An Interventional Approach

The proposed intervention to help ameliorate the problems associated with poor cultural salience in schools would be to create a safe space for exploration of content that both reinforces students' own cultural identity, while simultaneously exposing them to new and diverse content. Situated outside of a traditional institutional setting (as a proposed non-profit organization), the intervention would seek to create a community pillar providing references, resources tools, and strategies for students to supplement their education, as well as provide them a safe-haven while parents are at work. The mission of the organization would be three-fold; to provide supplemental instruction in the humanities; to create resources and exposure opportunities; and to facilitate collaboration and discussion for emergent civic engagement. By creating a centralized location for

education, resources, and community partnership, the researcher hopes one might develop a strong sense of "personal process" (i.e., self-directed process of critical thinking and garnering understanding) (Powell & Kalina, 2009), in order to facilitate a sense of agency for diverse learners. While agency and identity are distinct constructs, they are interrelated, and the intention is to redirect current sociocultural programming (read: status quo) in a way that allows students the opportunity to develop empowered identities so that they may act as knowledgeable and concerned global citizens.

Meant to function as an addendum to traditional in-school instruction, the program would seek to facilitate students' social studies engagement by exposing them to unique and relevant historical, artistic, and literary content, as well as techniques and technological resources for researching said content. Quoting John Dewey's pedagogic creed, the intervention mission would be to create a "social institution" as an extension of the school and family, and as a consequence "bring the child to share in the inherited resources of the race, and to use his own powers for social ends" (1897, pp. 78). In other words, by bringing the students' own community into the learning environment, we may be able to bridge the gap between academia and social life. In doing so, I would hope that students become more informed and engaged in the process of learning, and current events in broader society. By utilizing a culturally-responsive and democratic approach to instruction, the intent is to provide students with a platform to explore content through collaboration and discussion, rather than didactic instruction.

The overall process, would mean a year-round operational facility that provides a support network for students, that attempts to foster community, sharing, and growth through local histories, constructive criticisms, and active reconfiguration of program goals (when necessary), to keep to the needs of the participants at the forefront of its work. As such, the program would

likely be reflexively evaluated (i.e., evaluated, edited, and re-evaluated based on the needs and interests of students. This would of course have to be done after each program of research, in order to maintain treatment consistency during the 'assessment' phase). Along the way, and at subsequent phases of this research, I would like to investigate demographic and comparative findings to better understand who, and how, such a program might actually help.

Because this intervention is also exploratory, I would like to investigate the potential relationships without making any strong suppositions to the nature of my findings. While the null hypothesis would be a lack of growth in engagement or achievement, my testable hypotheses would be quite broadly defined in terms of significant changes in students' engagement with content. As such, there are no pre-generated hypotheses to explore the multitude of influences that could be playing a role. This sort of open-ended evaluation could be useful for a program of research, and to future directions in the study of culturally-responsive pedagogy.

Participants

Study participants will be selected on volunteer-basis from a district in a large urban borough in New York City (e.g., Brooklyn, the Bronx). A single district will include 3 - 6 middle grade schools, for the purposes of this study. Parent/Student sign-up sheets will be available, through school faculty and external outreach and 120 will be selected for each program semester. Selection to the program will be based on a stratified sampling criteria, in which the student demographic will be roughly proportional to the outlying community. Demographic criteria will largely focus on racial and ethnic background, and socioeconomic status. Students will be between 6th and 8th Grade, ages 11 - 14. In addition, 8 teaching assistants [here-to-for called Instructors] will be assigned to groups to lead instruction and research on a myriad of rich cultural

histories. The cooperation of teachers and school administration will be utilized where necessary (i.e., to garner information on current curriculum, to acquire test scores and demographic information, etc.)

Instrumentation

Curriculum will be embedded in the National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies. Instruments for this research will include various cultural texts (fiction and nonfiction), online resources like web quests, and pre-validated studies on identity and engagement (4-H Study of Positive Youth Development, Engagement versus Disaffection with Learning scale [EVsD], Identification with School Questionnaire [ISQ]). The 4-H Positive Youth Development measure is designed to elicit student reports of development based on 5 sub-scales; competence, confidence, connection, character and caring. This tool would be useful in determining the impact of the program on students' conceptions of themselves and their development. Engagement v. Disaffection Scale is a teacher and student self-report questionnaire which assesses the "manifestations of behavioral and emotional participation and alienation from learning" (Fredricks, et. al., 2011, pp. 28). It primarily focuses on the construct of engagement as "enthusiastic, effortful, and emotionally positive interactions" and disaffection as apathy or withdrawal. The third engagement measure, is the Identification with School Questionnaire, which looks at students' identification with school in regards to their values and sense of belonging. This idea is to determine if this aspect of academic identity is correlated with current institutional practices (in regard to racial, ethnic and other cultural representation in the curriculum) (Fredricks, et. al, 2011) A researcher generated pre- and post- test of grade appropriate social studies content will be integral to the first tier of assessment (general achievement), and engagement and

motivation scales will be useful for the second.

Methodology

  The main objective of this research is to introduce students to unique content and approaches to understanding their heritage and community, as well as to further consider the implications for students based on demographic factors. Using a 3-phase intervention model, I would attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of this approach compared to traditional in-school models of history instruction. The phases will include; training and information collection, implementation, and results and re-evaluation.

  The format of this research will include a tabular breakdown for implementation and analysis, which requires that of the 120 participants, with 8 instructors, and two daily rotating sessions of 15 students each. Rotating schedules would be used as a method to control for timing effects when testing students (i.e., students who are in the later evening session may be more tired and less apt to participate than student in the earlier evening session). Students involved in the intervention will be compared with their classmates (a control group of students from corresponding schools and grade who have not participated in the program) through pre- and post-intervention questionnaires. An 80% attendance goal with serve as the cut-off for case inclusion in the data analysis.

  A parent survey would also be utilized, as well as collaboration with school administrators to gather demographic information on students' age, grade, gender, GPA, class average, household income, parent education, prior-year exam scores (Regents), IEP or ELL status, class attendance, race, ethnicity, discipline record, receipt of public assistance, school grade, school type, and other pertinent information.

Program outcomes could be assessed by monthly progress reports, interviews, and surveys. By using both qualitative and quantitative means of assessment, the goal is to create well-rounded picture of students' engagement and development. In an effort to capture participant interest, and differentiate instruction, it seems important that regular feedback and progress should be monitored in order to tailor the program so that it best suits the needs of its constituency (these changes would, of course, take effect after each series of research). As a side, it would also be interesting to consider if any aspects of the intervention could be applicable to issues of stereotype threat. For example, through affirmation of cultural contribution (with readings and discussions), and subsequent identity, we may be able to address students' conceptions of themselves as weaker/stronger in a particular subject area. To make it more concrete, if a black student learns of the contributions of black scientists, for example, how might that impact his implicit socially-constructed beliefs about black students ability to achieve in Math and Science? I believe questions like these could be worth exploring in the future.

There are several elements included in the procedural breakdown of this study. Below I will cite, as clearly as possible, the intentions of this research through the step by step methodology proposed.

Before study implementation, instructors will participate in a 6-week training program on theory and instructional strategies. In order to maintain fidelity of instruction, Instructors will only receive training for relevant approaches (culturally-responsive and democratic pedagogy). During this time, student participation outreach will be taking place, and parent surveys will be collected. Once students' recruitment has been completed, demographic surveys will precede program implementation. A 24-week program will be initiated in which students will attend after-school activities, on a rotating weekly schedule (Monday through Thursday), 2 days a week per group,

for 1.5 hours each day (not including half an hour to work on homework). In total there will be 72 hours of additional instruction (84 if you include time designated for homework). Two weekly observations will be conducted to gather any qualitative information that might be useful in post-hoc analysis.

In the "treatment," students will learn new and/or appended historical narratives, and discuss concepts, with minimal scaffolding from program Instructors. They will also have the opportunity to utilize technology through Web quests and educational videos. The control group will be randomly selected from schools within the district, and students will complete engagement questionnaires. Content/achievement tests will not be utilized for the purposes of comparison, as the primary concern is to address engagement and motivation. Achievement measures will be used, strictly on the basis on monitoring student growth. No assumptions therefore will be made on the part of the researcher, as to the effectiveness of the program for academic achievement (as of yet).

In week one, students will take a pretest measure (content-based), and self-report survey. At the end of 24 weeks, participants will take a post-exam and secondary self-report. Pre- and Post- measures will be split to control for testing effects (Part A and B). Parent and teacher reports may also be utilized for additional qualitative analysis.

Participant data will be collected, organized and input in SPSS for analysis. Any additional qualitative data may be coded for inclusion in later research. More in-depth analysis for particular facets of the raw data collected may be conducted, post-hoc, dependent upon the relevance to the study findings.

Pre- and post- test data will be analyzed for regression analysis. Other demographic variables will be used for focus-group vs. population comparison. These variables could include

information on race, parent education and income (to establish levels of socioeconomic status), ethnicity and language, and needs-based protocols (e.g., IEP or ELL). Results will be used to establish the basis for further post-hoc research, as well as help the reader develop a clear understanding of the dynamics of the participant population. Several inferential statistical analyses may be done, including a one-way ANOVA or ANCOVA (to control for other factors like socioeconomic status).

Limitations

The major limitation to this research is the seeming lack of evidence to support such an endeavor, however, it is my belief that this is a topic which warrants further discussion, and starting of the road to evidence-based cultural pedagogy will at least start a real conversation about the nature of standardization and hidden curriculum standards and their implications for minority students.

Other limitations to the research will be identified, post hoc, along with suggestions for how future research can expand upon the findings of the current study, and potentiate further research. Potential confounds include instructor effects, selection bias on the basis of volunteer placement, and risk of attrition. As such, there may be limitations in terms of generalizability to the adolescent population. As with any groups, students and schools represent a very heterogeneous population. While the proposed study sample should still be diverse, it remains that we have not used random selection for participants, and it will affect research assumptions.

Conclusion

It is widely accepted that students have the capacity for uniform academic behavior, and so school socialization aims to standardize into acceptable and unacceptable. This issue, perpetuated by the biases in research often contributes to the Us v. Them culture which is evident in our social world. There is a great need to shift toward creating communities of difference. I believe the more students can identify or feel a sense of belonging in their institutions, the better they will perform in and outside of the classroom. The research requires a socio-cultural shift. Educators require the tools and strategies to meet learners. Methods in critical pedagogy seek to address the need for differentiated ways of knowing, and incorporates "Critical pedagogy . . . needs to be less informative and more performative, less a pedagogy directed toward the interrogation of written texts than a corporeal pedagogy grounded in the lived experience of students… a pedagogy in which multicultural ethic is performed…" (McLaren, 1998, pp. 452). It is with this core belief that I believe this ethic can be best explored. A multicultural, multi-logical and interdisciplinary review of issues can provide opportunities to enhance students' and teachers' socio-emotional competence. Such a change could signify a meaningful shift toward the 21st century competencies which are emerging out of a changing cultural ethic, toward greater critical thinking, collaboration and civic literacy among our global citizenry (Wolters, 2010; Dede, 2010).

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