
WINTER 2023 | VOL. 43 | ISSUE 1
DAY
WORLD TIME
social studies
JOURNAL
A PUBLICATION OF THE PENNSYLVANIA
COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES

social studies
JOURNAL

Volume 43, Issue 1, Winter 2023

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Aims and Scope

The Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies seeks to publish manuscripts in the *Journal* that focus on any of the following:

- Creative ways of teaching social studies at the elementary, secondary, and higher education levels
- Research articles
- Explanations of new types of materials and/or equipment that directly relate to social studies teaching, particularly those developed and/or implemented by teachers
- Explanations of teacher developed projects that help social studies students and teachers work with community groups
- Reviews of books and other media that are relevant to the teaching of social studies
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- Include a separate title page that contains the title of the article, author(s) name(s), institution(s), and email address(es)
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- Papers must be submitted as Word documents to the editors at editors.ssj@gmail.com

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From the Editor

We are pleased to introduce the Winter 2023 issue of *Social Studies Journal*. While we did not issue a call for a themed issue, the articles published below are serendipitously themed around creating more critical social studies teaching and learning experiences, specifically when it comes to how we teach and learn about race and representation, critical citizenship, and hope for a better future.

Our featured article for this issue is written by Brittany Jones, 2022 recipient of the AERA Teaching History SIG Outstanding Graduate Student Paper Award. We were honored to feature Jones' compelling work about the history we call "difficult." As social studies educators make strides to diversify our curricula, we must be aware of how we frame our pedagogical shifts. Jones encourages us to think critically about *why* Black history is often called "difficult." Jones introduces us to her concept "difficult-ish" as a way to "eliminate binaries, amplify lived experiences, and move past (white) discomfort." We are thrilled that Brittany Jones accepted our invitation to be the first graduate student featured author for *SSJ* and look forward to seeing her work over the course of her career.

In the next piece, Kanushri Wadhwa and Edgar Dîaz contribute to the body of literature that identifies and problematizes the lack of representation of culturally and linguistically diverse groups in our school curricula. Wadhwa and Dîaz conducted a content analysis of the most recently adopted World History textbook in Florida, looking at how the text positions people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, particularly as that positioning relates to STEM identity. The authors encourage social studies teachers to consider how we can (and should) play a role in helping students understand their academic identities in other content areas.

Finally, Casey Holmes invites us to consider how we can guide students toward a more hopeful future through critical citizenship education. In a case study analysis of an experienced, Black woman educator teaching eighth grade social studies, Holmes explores how students were encouraged to have hope by hearing their teacher use "language of possibility." By teaching critical citizenship skills such as problematizing heroes and addressing stereotypes, and normalizing critiques of history, and exploring current events in the classroom, students demonstrated increased optimism for their futures.

As always, I thank Mark Kissling and Stephanie Schroeder, Associate Editors, and Abigail Stebbins, Copy Editor. The editorial team of *SSJ* hopes you enjoy this issue! We invite our readers to consider submitting an article for an upcoming issue of the *Journal*. Soon, a new website will be available featuring a new interface for accessing the *SSJ* archives and video interviews with our authors and editorial team. Special thanks to Kate Van Haren, a Penn State doctoral student, who has been working on this project.

Jessica B. Schocker, Editor

"DIFFICULT" HISTORY IS SIMPLY HISTORY: IT IS TIME TO MOVE BEYOND THE BINARY

Brittany L. Jones, Michigan State University

Earlier today my six-year-old niece and I were discussing the weather. As we stared out the window watching the rain steadily fall, she turned to me and said, "Auntie B. today is a bad weather day because it is raining, and I cannot go outside and play." At that moment, I did not pay any attention to her description of the weather as "bad," and I agreed with her noting that the rain did ruin our plans for playing outside and searching for acorns. But upon further contemplation on this brief conversation, I began to wonder if the weather was indeed "bad" or was my niece just disappointed that we could not go outside to play. Even more, I started to think about how some people might describe rainy days as "good" weather, as rain is necessary to hydrate the soil aiding with the growth of crops or plants. My niece's framing of rainy days as "bad" impelled me to consider how describing or labeling things through a binary lens has the potential to limit our nuanced understandings of events. This, of course, is not to discount the practicality of using binaries to describe some events; I can imagine it might be much easier to tell someone it is cold outside than having to search for the exact temperature. My critique of employing binaries to describe events is concerned with how these labels can lead to an oversimplification of complex ideas and how binaries produce absolutes, which have the potential to erase the lived experiences, perspectives, and narratives of others.

As a social studies teacher educator and researcher, I often think about the utility of labeling and the effects of those labels on teaching and learning history. For example, many history textbooks might position Hitler or Andrew Jackson as evil villains (van Kessel, 2022), while situating Dr. Martin Luther King or Rosa Parks as messiah like characters (Woodson, 2016). And while it is true that Hitler committed atrocious acts and that King and Parks were powerful and brave leaders for civil rights, describing them through binaries limits opportunities to teach and learn about the past through complex and critical lenses. van Kessel (2022) argued that villianification, the process of blaming a single person or group for a harmful event that occurred within society without considering the ways other people and systems perpetuate that harm, creates a barrier that hinders students from considering their own culpability with the current injustices that exist (van Kessel & Crowley, 2017). Additionally, when history curricula or teachers situate historical actors as evil villains and sole perpetrators of harm, learners are not driven to interrogate how societal systems also perpetuate and maintain harm. Similarly, Woodson's (2016) study of Black youth's interpretations of leaders in the Civil Rights Movement demonstrated how presenting civil rights leaders through messianic master narratives (Alridge, 2006) constrains Black youths' civic agency. Woodson (2016) argued that messiah like depictions of civil rights leaders as people who constantly place themselves in risky situations or as people

who "uncritically invoke Judeo-Christian values," (p. 203) are harmful because the Black youth in her study felt as though they could not replicate those expectations, which led them to think that they could not be change agents within society.

Curricular descriptions of historical figures or groups as evil, good, villains, or messiahs are not the only examples of how labels produce binaries within the field. The labeling of histories as "difficult" is a well-researched and popular term that situates certain histories within a difficult binary, which implicitly produces an antithesis that positions some histories as non-difficult, easy, or simple. The aim of this paper, then, is to trouble the labeling of histories as "difficult" by examining how the "difficult" label can do more harm than good when teaching and learning about the past. To do this, first I provide a brief review of the literature on how scholars have defined difficult histories while noting the potential harms these definitions produce. Next, I briefly describe findings from a study where I analyzed Black teachers' attitudes towards the term difficult histories, which inspired the creation of the term *Difficult-ish.* Lastly, I explain the concepts of *Difficult-ish* and how teachers and teacher educators could use these concepts to (re)imagine the viability of the "difficult" in difficult histories.

Defining Difficult Histories

The literature on difficult histories is abundant and scholars have approached this topic through a variety of lenses. Where some scholars have offered and explained helpful approaches to teaching difficult histories (e.g., Epstein & Peck, 2018; Harris et al., 2022; Sheppard, 2010; Stoddard et al., 2017), others have focused on difficult knowledge which examines the affect and emotions that arise when teaching and learning about difficult histories (Britzman, 2000; Garrett, 2017; Zembylas, 2017). This brief literature review, however, explores how scholars have defined and characterized difficult histories, and how the labeling of histories as "difficult" can be harmful.

When defining difficult histories, some scholars have offered broad definitions to distinguish difficult histories from other histories (Epstein & Peck, 2018; Gross & Terra, 2019; Goldberg, 2020; Sheppard, 2010). For example, Epstein and Peck (2018) defined difficult histories as "historical narratives and other forms (learning standards, curricular frameworks) that incorporate contested, painful and/or violent events into regional, national, or global accounts of the past" (p. 2), where Harris et al. (2022) characterized difficult histories as "events in the past where people suffered greatly as a result of unjust actions, policies, or systems that created dehumanizing experiences" (p. 4). Both definitions agree that for history to be difficult it needs to be a historical event that has caused some sort of pain or suffering. Harris et al.'s (2022) definition provides an added multifaceted layer noting that difficult histories are the results of actions OR policies OR systems that lead to dehumanization. This added layer is significant as it emphasizes that "difficult" events in both the past and present are sustained through tacitly unjust systems and policies. Goldberg (2020) included learners in their definition of difficult histories contending that difficult histories are events from the past

that "expose learners to historical suffering and victimization that constitute a collective trauma" (p. 130).

On the surface, nothing is glaringly wrong with the above definitions, but the breadth in which these definitions encompass sits in tension with the utility of the "difficult" label that these definitions are aimed to describe. Said differently, depending on whose perspectives are being considered many events could be characterized as difficult histories; yet much of the literature, within a U.S. context, cites enslavement (Gross & Wotipka, 2019), Indigenous Removal (Miles, 2019), the Holocaust (Levy & Sheppard, 2018) and other oppressive events as difficult histories. Very few scholars, if any, have cited the election of President Obama as a difficult history even though some might argue it is difficult to understand and teach why it took so long for a Black person to become president. Relatedly, there are many reasons one might label the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka supreme court decision as a difficult history (see Bell, 1980), but this event is rarely used as an example to explore the teaching and learning of difficult histories. Given that people have individualized experiences, perspectives, and knowledges about the past, my critique of these broad definitions designed to define and separate certain histories from others is that they are subjective with singular perspectives leaving room for anything to be considered a "difficult" history.

In their book, *Teaching and Learning the Difficult Past: Comparative Perspectives*, Gross and Terra (2019) offered five distinct characteristics to define difficult histories:

1. Difficult histories are central to a nation's history.
2. Difficult histories tend to refute broadly accepted versions of the past or stated national values…or they contradict such national values as tolerance or equality.
3. Difficult histories may connect with questions or problems facing us in the present.
4. Difficult histories often involve violence, usually collective or state-sanctioned.
5. Difficult histories create disequilibria that challenge existing historical understandings (pp. 4-5).

In a different manuscript, Gross and Terra (2018) noted that "What makes difficult history difficult is not how it confirms or complicates a particular student's prior historical understanding but the degree to which it challenges or undermines the dominant societal narratives" (p.55). This definition of difficult histories coupled with their five characteristics impelled me to not only ask difficult for whom, but to also ask what constitutes as "societal dominant narratives" (and why are those narratives centered), and whose national values are difficult histories contradicting. Both questions are important to interrogate because they inquire about how these definitions, and how labels and binaries more generally, might be embedded with assumptions that silence different perspectives and narratives.

Amplifying Different Perspectives About Difficult Histories

In a recent study (Jones, 2022), I sought to understand five Black social studies teachers' attitudes towards the term difficult histories and the pedagogies they employed when teaching these topics. The participants all identified as descendants of enslaved peoples in the United States, and they ranged in teaching experience and location (see Table 1), which was

Table 1
Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Grade Level	Years Taught	Subject	Location
Mia	High	17	U.S. History	Southeastern
Donna	Middle	5	U.S. History	Midwestern
Randy	High	10	U.S. History	Eastern
Brian	High	3	Global Justice	Southern
Dimitris	Elementary	7		Southwestern

useful because they all taught from different state standards and curricula and drew from different pedagogical strategies. All the participants also served at schools that served predominantly Black learners. I conducted five semi-structured interviews to understand the teachers' attitudes toward the term difficult histories, and I also conducted think-alouds (Patton, 2002) to understand how they curated an entire lesson on a topic that the social studies literature deems difficult. I analyzed the transcripts using an interpretivist process (Miles et al., 2014) and framed my findings through counterstorytelling and Black storytelling lenses (Banks-Wallace, 1998; Delgado, 1989; Livo & Rietz, 1986; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

Counterstorytelling, with its roots in critical theory and a tenet of critical race theory (CRT; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), challenges racist discourses and beliefs in society, can amplify voices, and can reveal similar experiences amongst groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Black storytelling "reflects the turbulent history of a people subjected to a variety of inhuman abuses" (Banks-Wallace, 2002, p. 2), and can be used to articulate hope, fears, and dreams (Banks-Wallace, 1998; Delgado, 1989; Livo & Rietz, 1986), while also amplifying Black voices as a way to acknowledge the validity of their lived experiences (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Drawing from stories passed down through generations of their families in tandem with their own counterstories, three findings emerged from the study of which the following two will be discussed in this paper: 1) (My) history is not difficult and 2) Survival histories, not difficult histories.

(My) History Is Not Difficult

The first finding is two-fold in that when I asked the teachers whether they considered histories to be difficult, not only did they all exclaim that histories are not difficult, but they also added possession claiming that THEIR histories were not difficult. For example, Mia remarked, "this is *our* history, like really it's *our* history and while it exposes the violence of white people in society it's not difficult for me." In response to the question, Dimitris stated, "it seems strange to call what *we* have been through as difficult. My students don't struggle

with the content and neither do I." When I asked Randy his opinion on the term difficult histories, he commented that he could understand where the term got its name and acknowledged that teaching about some topics may be difficult "for some people," but explained that "it's never been difficult for *my* people and the term makes me think it was created by and therefore considered by what a white teacher may categorize as difficult."

In their rejection of the term difficult histories, the teachers expressed possession because within the subjects that they teach (see Table 1), many of the historical events that the literature defines as "difficult" are associated with Black histories. This finding is significant because the participants not only argued that histories were not difficult, but they rationalized their claims based on their identities as Black Americans. Donna's explanation of why she disagreed with the labeling of histories as "difficult" is quite encompassing as she noted:

> I think the beauty in history has less to do with the pain and more about the resistance—particularly when teaching about these types of topics ["difficult" topics]. When I teach about Jim Crow, I never frame it as difficult but as a lived reality by many people and its effects, its consequences, impact the way *we* live today. *We* live in a world filled with the consequences of the past. To call certain parts of the past difficult, I don't know, just seems odd. I have colleagues who shy away from these topics because they are considered difficult. But if I am being honest, they don't shy away from it because the topic is difficult, they shy away from it because it is difficult for them to talk about these topics to a class full of Black kids.

Here, Donna discussed how she does not consider Jim Crow or other histories to be difficult because it is a normalized lived reality in which its effects impact the present. Additionally, Donna also pointed out that her white colleagues shied away from teaching these topics, not because the histories are difficult but because they find it difficult to teach about these topics to Black kids. This claim is noteworthy because it pushes us to think about how we can shift our framing of difficult histories from focusing on the labeling of histories as "difficult" to interrogating why some people find difficulty teaching certain histories.

Overall, when I asked the teachers about their attitudes towards the term difficult histories, they all agreed that histories were not difficult with an added emphasis on how histories about Black oppression were not "difficult." The next finding provides more explanation on why they disagreed with labeling histories "difficult."

Survival Histories not Difficult Histories

Because the teachers expressed their resentment of the term difficult histories, I wanted to know how and if they characterized these histories (e.g., Enslavement, Jim Crow) and why they do not consider these histories difficult. The teachers expressed that they viewed teaching topics that the literature labels "difficult" as a form of protection for their Black students to navigate oppression within present-day society. Randy linked the past to a "difficult" present remarking:

> teaching these histories to our Black students is like a means of survival, by looking at the past and seeing how that impacts, like the difficult present. Our kids need to know about the past to survive, so that they can build an

> awareness about the past and how that still shows up today. It will help them fight some discrimination—will help them recognize the oppression. It's not difficult it's necessary.

Other teachers, too, spoke about the necessity of teaching these histories, not just because they are important, but because their Black students need to understand how white supremacy and hegemonic structures affect their students' lives and schooling. Dimitris commented, "students need to know that these histories affect structures like schools and their neighborhoods; young kids can and should understand that because they experience these effects too." When describing her understandings of difficultly Mia commented,

> difficult is wondering if cop will shoot me today for having on a hood. Difficult is understanding that I am more likely to be killed just because of the color of my skin, or that it will be harder to buy a house, obtain wealth just because I am Black. Teaching the historical events that caused these difficulties I just named isn't difficult it impacts their [her students'] existence. Shoot it impacts my own existence. They need to know; they have to know about this stuff and nothing about it is difficult.

The other teachers expressed similar sentiments using words such as *survival, protection, humanity, existence,* and *responsibility* to describe the urgency of teaching these topics making it explicit that they teach these histories with a sense of duty to equip their students with knowledge that could literally save their lives. In addition to problematizing the labeling of histories as "difficult," and discussing the urgency to teach these topics, the teachers also alluded to how labeling select histories as "difficult" somehow removes the necessity away from teaching these topics. They argued that the "difficult" framing is problematic because teaching about these histories historicizes why their students experience racialized oppression in the present. Additionally, they noted teaching "difficult" histories in nuanced ways helps to cultivate a critical consciousness amongst their students.

Disrupting the "Difficult" in Difficult Histories

The teachers in this study problematized the blanketed term, difficult histories, used by social studies researchers. Gross and Terra's (2018) concise definition of difficult histories and their specific characteristics of difficult histories (Gross & Terra, 2019) tended to diverge from the teachers' attitudes towards the labeling of histories as "difficult," specifically with the characteristics that describes difficult histories as *contradicting dominant narratives of the nation*. When questioned about the term difficult histories, one of the salient questions the participants asked was through whose lens are these definitions being created? An example of this is when Brian asked, "how would *they* know what's difficult for us?" In this response, the the*y* to whom Brian was referring are the social studies scholars who produced the term difficult histories. Gross and Terra's (2018) current definition of difficult histories assumes that all people adhere to the same dominant narratives of the nation in which difficult histories contradict dominant narratives. Drawing from their counterstories and stories passed down over generations, the teachers asserted that difficult histories

did not *contradict their* dominant narratives of the nation but that difficult histories *reinforce* their narratives of the nation. Their dominant narratives of the nation incorporate the ways white supremacy, both historically and presently, has led to the oppression of Black people and other historically marginalized groups. Take for example Mia who said, "Difficult is understanding… that it will be harder to buy a house, obtain wealth just because I am Black." Mia's approach to teaching segregation, a "difficult" history, was not under the assumption that segregation and gentrification *contradicted* her dominant narrative of the U.S., but that gentrification, and by extension segregation, was a part of her own upbringing and her lived experiences—oppression was *always* a part of her narrative.

The power of the interviews with these teachers is not only located in the ways they used their generational stories and counterstories to disrupt definitions of "difficult" histories but also in the ways they trouble the binary produced when certain histories are specified as "difficult." Though many of the historical topics the teachers teach (e.g., enslavement; Jim Crow) would fall under both Epstein and Peck (2018) and Harris et al.'s (2022) definitions of difficult histories, the binaries produced from the label "difficult" matter. The participants contended that teaching "difficult" histories are necessary for their Black students' survival and claimed denoting certain historical topics as "difficult" diminishes the necessity and urgency to teach these topics well. Expanding upon this point, at least two teachers claimed that their white colleagues failed to teach about "difficult" topics critically when compared to other topics. This switch in pedagogical approaches where white teachers nuanced some topics more so than others led me to wonder if the "difficult" in difficult histories act as a defense for white comfort, or as Brian said "provide a cop out," where we presuppose that because these histories are "difficult" it is ok if teachers do not teach this topic as well as other topics. Even more, if teaching select histories is only difficult for a certain group, in what ways might the utility of the term be seen only through a white gaze? The participants' thoughtful interrogation of the "difficult" in difficult histories coupled with these questions inspired me to imagine a new term, *Difficult-ish*, which is intended to bring attention to the harms of using binary discourse to describe events in the past while also offering strategies to those who may find discomfort in teaching certain histories.

What is Difficult-ish?

Difficult-ish (Jones, 2022) is an acknowledgment of the important work scholars have done on the topic of difficult histories while also acting as a loving call to move the field forward by shifting away from using restrictive language that produces binaries to describe histories.

1. **Difficult-ish eliminates binaries.** Scholars have used a variety of labels (e.g., dark past: Ahonen, 2012; hard histories: Shuster, 2018) to describe historical events about violence, suffering, and oppression. The first concept of Difficult-ish seeks to redirect us from producing labels to categorize histories to

focusing our teaching and learning on how systems (e.g., white supremacy; oppression; anti-Blackness; settler colonialism, etc.) are essential to the making of a society or nation and how these systems cause "difficult" historical events to occur. Instead of creating a subjective label that situates enslavement or Westward expansion as "difficult," a more accurate way to teach history is to focus on how white supremacy, settler colonialism, and anti-Blackness have shaped the trajectories of this country. When we teach about the U.S. as a country that was founded and able to thrive on oppression (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2013), we can teach about enslavement or westward expansion as consequences of the systems in which the country was founded instead of positioning these histories within a fixed binary that oversimplifies the past and disrupts the ways the past is always in conversation with the present and. Eliminating the "difficult" label pushes us to complicate our understandings and teaching of the past while acknowledging that all historical events have been shaped by the systems embedded in the nation.

2. **Difficult-ish amplifies lived experiences.** Difficult-ish is cautious to use exclusive and limiting language such as *dominant narratives* or *national ideals* (Gross and Terra, 2018) because Difficult-ish recognizes that history has consequences and that people experience these consequences differently. To honor these varied experiences, Difficult-ish amplifies lived experiences, particularly those of historically marginalized groups, to acknowledge the varying ways lived experiences inform our understandings of the past and present. Even more, labeling something as "difficult" only amplifies one perspective, without considering how people may embrace teaching and learning these histories without any difficulty. For both teacher and teacher educators, amplifying the lived experiences of people from historically marginalized groups can provide different perspectives that emphasize the normality of oppression and how oppressive systems have shaped both the past and present. Removing the "difficult" label and binary that it produces is one way that teaching and learning about the past remains a dynamic process that invites teachers and learners to consider the "intersections" of history that examines the past through multiple social identity markers (Crenshaw, 1991; Vickery et al., 2019).

3. **Difficult-ish moves past (white) discomfort.** While Difficult-ish invites the field to make explicit that histories are not inherently difficult, it acknowledges that some people may find difficulty in teaching certain histories, to certain students, as alluded by the participants in my study.

Educational scholars have found that some teachers, particularly white teachers, struggle with teaching histories they find "difficult," which led to oversimplified pedagogies of the past or caused them to avoid teaching the topic altogether (Garett, 2011; Matias & Zembylas, 2014). Drawing from how scholars have discussed affect and emotion in relation to history education (Britzman, 2000; Garrett, 2011, 2017; Zembylas, 2014), pre-and in-service teachers should engage in reflection on how their experiences or knowledges impacts their understandings of historical topics. Teacher educators can model this type of reflection with their students by having them reflect and write out which histories they struggle with or are uncomfortable teaching. Then, the students should reflect on and answer the following questions: 1) How have outside influences (such as their families or media) led you to understand these histories? and 2) How have their own *inexperience* with these topics led you to consider these histories "difficult" to teach? Similarly, in-service teachers who struggle with teaching certain histories could use the *Think, Learn, Consider* (TLC; Jones & McCormick, 2022) method for reflection that asks teachers to first *think* about why the topic is difficult for them to teach. Next, teachers should *learn* more about the topic to build their content knowledge and hopefully strengthen their comfortability with teaching the topic. Lastly, teachers should *consider* how they might teach the topic in ways that are not only pedagogically engaging and relevant for their students, but in ways that genuinely disrupt their discomfort so that eventually they can move past it.

Moving Forward

My call for the field to move past or at least (re)imagine the utility of framing histories through binaries is not an attempt to disregard the excellent work scholars have done. But as a former social studies teacher and now social studies teacher educator and researcher who is concerned with preparing socially just teachers, naming the potential harms that are produced when we position select histories within binaries is necessary to move the field forward in equitable ways. Questioning *for whom* histories are "difficult" is useful, but by eliminating the binary we can begin to more thoughtfully focus on *why* some people have difficulty teaching select histories, and perhaps most importantly, *how* do we prepare teachers to move past their discomfort. The concepts of Difficult-ish helps to reframe how we teach and learn about history, and it also compels us to consider the following questions:

1. Are we amplifying the stories and experiences of historically marginalized groups as a legitimate pedagogy to teach and provide nuance to our content?
2. Are we teaching our preservice teachers to be critical of long-standing terms such as "difficult" histories? Or are we accepting these terms without being critical ourselves?

3. Are we ensuring preservice teachers understand that what is difficult for them to teach may not be difficult for everyone, inclusive of their students?

When we take time to deeply consider these questions perhaps as a social studies community we can move from a concrete framing of "difficult" histories to a more fluid, inclusive framing of "Difficult-ish."

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RIFTS IN REPRESENTATION: A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF STEM IDENTITY IN A 9TH-GRADE WORLD HISTORY TEXTBOOK

Kanushri Wadhwa and Edgar Díaz, University of Miami

Edgar and I met while we were both completing our doctoral work in Florida. We bonded quickly as we recognized our mutually critical regard for the different communities in which we found ourselves. Though Edgar was a scholar of social studies education and I of mathematics education, we came together to work on the research we present hereafter. Edgar completed his own textbook analysis about the representation of marginalized groups in U.S. social studies education. During his own analyses, he noticed that the prevalent narratives that perpetrate education are ubiquitous, including the portrayal of individuals' engagement in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and proposed the idea of analyzing how individuals that the U.S. audience might identify from different racial groups contrast in their representation with regards to STEM.

We situate the present study in a time of contention where attempts to criticize the representation of marginalized groups in education are being silenced. In 2022, Florida's governor Ron DeSantis proposed the "Stop Woke Act," attempting to quell the narrative that the systems and structures that undergird the U.S. are inherently hegemonic structures that have disadvantaged individuals based on their gender, race, religion, sexuality, and disability status amongst other factors (Gandel, 2022). In the same year, Alabama's governor Kay Ivey signed a "Don't Say Gay" law, preventing discussion of sexual orientation within elementary education (Sosin, 2022). Before we brush these moves off as the vices of conservative stronghold states, we should remember that common parlance describing "woke" or "critical" as "un-American" perpetuates every corner of the U.S., including Massachusetts, the state where I now reside.

The application of a critical lens to curriculum is not a novel one. Across different areas of schooling, students, teachers, and researchers have recognized the inequities embodied and solidified within textbooks (Subreenduth, 2013). We regard the one-dimensional, tokenistic, and stereotypical characterizations of people from marginalized groups as a detriment to both the accuracy and empowerment ability of social studies education (Busey, 2017; Davis, 2019; Díaz & Deroo, 2020; Wadhwa, 2022). For example, Busey's (2017) examination of the treatment of Afro-Latin@s across three world history books revealed a one-dimensional portrayal of Afro-Latin@ individuals in textbooks that focuses on a linear narrative of enslavement and miscegenation without the dynamic realities of Afro-Latin@ identity and action in a context of oppression. The authors of these books have painted a reality that dishonors the resistance of Afro-Latin@ individuals, resistance without which the freedoms enjoyed by many of us in the Western world would not be possible, and tasked teachers with delivering a biased curriculum.

In conjunction with recognizing the misrepresentations of people from minoritized groups, we know that Black and Latinx students are underrepresented in STEM, even if they demonstrate high abilities in these areas (Andersen & Ward, 2013; Cvencek et al., 2014; Vega et al., 2015). Mau & Li's (2018) study of over 21,000 9th-graders reported the factors that impact STEM career aspirations of a nationally representative sample of students and found that both female and minority students were less interested in STEM careers because of unfair treatment, discrimination, financial pressure, and stereotypes. Thus, our classrooms are not yet the spaces of growth and empowerment we would hope for them to be, alienating some students while supporting others. Therefore, we examine the portrayals of Black and Latinx peoples regarding STEM within the social studies curriculum as one method of empowering our school's diverse learners and call on educators to navigate their curriculum with an eye for bias.

Put plain and simple, contemporary school curricula in 2022 is not inclusive of culturally and linguistically diverse groups, specifically for those who identify as Black and/or Latinx. We believe social studies can assist in changing the ways students look at STEM careers by adding more inclusive language when describing Black and Latinx people in textbooks. In our study, we used the most recently-adopted world history textbook in Florida to analyze how the author's usage of language, specifically their choice of verbal processes, positions individuals of different racial and ethnic identities. Moreover, we believe that our research can provide a starting point for educators to both apply and teach a critical lens to their curriculum, specifically as it relates to how STEM identity is attributed to some racial and ethnic groups while minimizing the contributions of others. We asked (1) What is the frequency of verbal process types across a 9th-grade world history textbook in relation to STEM identity? (2) How, if at all, does transitivity analysis reveal how world history textbook authors position different racial and ethnic groups?

Cross Content Collaboration to Overturn Misrepresentation

Though there is not much research on mathematics and social studies in an interdisciplinary approach, the research that has been conducted (McGee & Hostetler, 2014) suggests that it may be beneficial for both researchers and educators to explore the conjunction of these two subject areas. For example, McGee & Hostetler's (2014) suggested projects for mathematics and social studies include teaching students the mathematics of disenfranchisement, including how many Black voters are barred from the polls historically and in the present day, allowing students to mathematize their historical knowledge and empowering them with the evidence to counteract future voter disenfranchisement. Moreover, researchers have recognized the necessity of developing numeracy and historical knowledge to build an informed citizenry of students (Crowe, 2010). This becomes particularly important in educating linguistically or racially minoritized students, who often receive the education needed to follow leaders and not the education needed to take on leadership

roles (McGee & Hostetler, 2014). As will be seen in our paper, we focused on some of the very first social studies topics a student will encounter upon entering high school, a time where we know stereotypes about who participates in STEM become significantly stronger (Cvencek et al., 2014). At this crucial moment, we suggest that the idea that white and Asian-American students belong in STEM spaces more than their Black and Latinx counterparts must be counteracted vigorously from every direction. Social studies, particularly world history, is the space that we chose to consider this because the narratives about our ancestry, ethnic heritage, and racial heritage in our multicultural nation is a source of pride for us and grows to more strongly identify us as we grow older, particularly as we enter secondary schooling (Tatum, 1997). We believe our study may support the creation of curriculum where students see themselves as doers of STEM and apply the critical logic of STEM to gauge their world within and beyond academic spaces and advocate that educators attempt to collaborate with other educators beyond their core subject area.

Methodology

Data Collection. For this study, we used the most recently adopted 9th-grade world history textbook, *Florida World History* (Ellis & Esler, 2018), in one of the top five largest school districts in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). We limited ourselves to this textbook and the first four topics of the textbook because we wanted to focus on the history and origins of STEM. We also focus our study on the representation of Black and Latinx identity and seek to identify and understand how Black and Latinx identity is excluded or included in relation to STEM. The topics about the earliest time periods available in the book were as follows: (1) Connecting with past learning (Prehistory-1570), (2) Medieval Christian Europe (330-1450), (3) The Muslim World and Africa (730 B.C.- A.D. 1500), and (4) Civilizations of Asia (500-1650). Using the online and print versions of the *Florida World History* textbook (Ellis & Esler, 2018), we identified and coded 387 passages across the four chapters (i.e., n=1069 passages) using an inductive approach (Charmaz, 2014) in relation to STEM.

For our analysis, we did three rounds of analysis or "coding" to find themes and answer our research questions. In the first round, we simply identified who was doing what aspect of STEM very literally. For instance, we used the codes "Arab Muslim architects constructing mosques" or "Japanese ruler building city." Then we did a second round of coding to group together codes that were linked to one particular region. Lastly, we did a round of coding to group together codes that belonged to a particular area of STEM, with our six last codes including "participants engaging in engineering," "participants engaging in science," "participants engaging in trade," "participants engaging in mathematics," "participants engaging in medicine," and "participants engaging in technology."

Additionally, for each passage, we identified the participants (i.e., the actors), the action (i.e., verbs), and recipient of the action (i.e., receiver of action) by organizing and dividing each passage at the group/phrase level. Furthermore, we paid close attention to the processes participants were undertaking by

categorizing them as material (e.g., "build" or "dissect"), sensing (e.g., "theorized" or "thought"), saying (e.g., "said"), or relating verbs (e.g., "was") (Fang & Schleppegrell, 2008). This organization of data allowed us to see small parts or "groups of words" that were involved in action across circumstances (Derewianka, 2011, p. 11). In Table 1, we provide an example of a coded passage.

Table 1. ***Example of Clause Organization and Coding***

Like so many other Renaissance artists, Brunelleschi had many talents. He had studied sculpture with Donatello and was an accomplished engineer, inventing many of the machines used to construct his dome.			
Theme		Rheme	
Circumstance/ Conjunction	Participant	Verb Process (Type)	Participant/Circumstance/Quality/Identity
Like so many other Renaissance artists,	Brunelleschi	Had (relating, active)	many talents (Ellis & Esler, 2018, p. 236).
	He	had studied (material, active)	sculpture with Donatello (Ellis & Esler, 2018, p. 236).
and	[Brunelleschi]	was (relating, active)	an accomplished engineer, inventing many of the machines used to construct his dome (Ellis & Esler, 2018, p. 236).

After breaking down the passages, we ranked the degree of agency of people from the different region in engaging with each of the STEM areas we listed in our final round of analysis. To do so, we expanded upon the resources for enacting agency and impersonality (Martínez, 2011) where material processes with people doing the actions are at the top of the hierarchy, followed by passive and agentless constructions such as nominalizations lower on the hierarchy. For instance, we ranked the sentence "English surgeon John Banister dissects a corpse to teach students about human anatomy" (Ellis & Esler, 2018, p. 260) as giving greater agency to the surgeon than the sentence "Medical treatment included acupuncture to relieve pain or treat illness" did to the acupuncturist (Ellis & Esler, 2018, p. 193). Then, we expanded the hierarchies to include different verb process types. Because sensing and saying verbs are used to elaborate participants' thoughts and to give them a voice, we ranked the use of sensing and saying verbs as higher than material processes (Schleppegrell et al., 2004). Therefore, the sentence "He theorized that if doctors were hopeful with their patients, recovery would be faster" was ranked as giving more agency than either of the sentences listed earlier in this paragraph that included material verbs. Lastly, we ranked the specific verb process (e.g., "design" vs. "build") and participants (e.g., "architects" vs. "craftsman") used within the sentences to reflect the skill traditionally needed to have a certain profession or complete a certain task. For example, the use of the term "surgeon" was ranked as giving more agency than the term "healer.

Findings

After conducting our analysis, we were immediately struck by inequities in the frequencies of different verb types attributed to different groups of individuals and the positioning achieved using different processes and participants. In Table 2, we provide the relative frequencies of the different process types in each of the different sections. We most certainly predicted that sensing and saying verbs would be the least common of the verb processes as is common in history texts. However, we noticed that the textbook authors used the few sensing and saying verbs they did employ to build the persons and characters of participants from the Middle East, Asia, and Europe (Schleppegrell et al., 2004). We also saw that none of the sensing processes or saying processes used in the African section have an African participant as their main sayer or senser. Even the material processes, while they were in higher relative frequency, were not completed by African participants. Based on our findings, we suggest that the use of different process types not only elucidates the thoughts and feelings of European, Middle Eastern, and Asian participants over African participants but gives more agency to the former over the latter as well. Now, we will elaborate on more detailed findings for each of the six themes we found in our analysis and how they may impact teaching.

Table 2. ***Relative Frequencies of Process Types in Different Regions***

Process type	European	Middle Eastern	African	Asian
Material				
Active	71%	73%	81%	78%
Actor	47% (European participant)	47% (Middle Eastern participant)	30% (African participant)	47% (Asian participant)
Passive	12%	6%	5%	9%
Relating				
Active	12%	18%	12%	11%
Passive	0%	0%	0%	0%
Sensing				
Active	2%	1%	0.3%	0.3%
Senser	2% (European participant)	0.7% (Middle Eastern participant)	0% (African participant)	0.3% (Asian participant)
Passive	1%	2%	0.3%	1%
Saying				
Active	2%	0.4%	0.3%	1%
Sayer	2% (European participant)	0.4% (Middle Eastern participant)	0% (African participant)	0.7% (Asian participant)
Passive	0%	0%	0%	0%

Engineering. In comparing Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, we found that individuals from all other regions were positioned as more expert in architecture and engineering than individuals from Africa. In Table 3, we compare the language used across the four regions to show different peoples' accomplishments. The impact of stating that "Expert engineers developed irrigation and flood control projects" in ancient Asia contrasts greatly with "Walls were designed to protect the people from invasions" in ancient Africa. In reading these, we are given the impression that Asian engineers actively conceived and designed modes of supporting their communities, mirroring the stereotypes of Asian students' superiority in STEM that are witnessed in U.S. classrooms (Cvencek et al., 2014). Meanwhile, the walls in Africa are designed without any designer mentioned, removing the accomplishment from the African individuals who were responsible for the engineering of these structures. In order to avoid the reifying of stereotypes about who does STEM (Cvencek et al., 2014) in social studies classrooms, we suggest teachers may want to teach their students to analyze the usage of different language choices, introduce counternarratives of African engineers from other sources, and collaborate with STEM teachers to make sure that these narratives appear in multiple content classrooms.

Table 3. ***Agency in Engineering (Ellis & Esler, 2018)***

Europe	Middle East	Africa	Asia
"Renaissance architects rejected the Gothic style of the late Middle Ages" (p. 236).	"The royal architect Sinan, a janizary military engineer, designed hundreds of mosques and palaces" (p. 142).	"Walls were designed to protect the people from invasions" (p. 156).	"Expert engineers developed irrigation and flood control projects" (p. 132).
"Emperors after Constantine built an elaborate system of land and sea walls to bolster its defense" (p. 49).	"Muslim scholars built libraries and schools (in Africa section)" (p. 157).	"King Lalibela directed building of eleven remarkable churches" (p. 165).	"To honor his favorite wife, Shah Jahan ordered the building of a magnificent tomb, the Taj Mahal" (p. 127).
"Hagia Sophia's immense, arching dome improved on earlier Roman buildings" (p. 49).	"Adapted from Byzantine buildings, domes and arches became symbolic of Muslim architecture" (p. 139).	"These amazing structures still exist today and illustrate the architectural and artistic skill of the craftsmen who created them" (p. 165).	"Buddhist themes dominated sculpture and influenced Chinese architecture" (p. 135).
"These magnificent buildings were a source of pride to the communities that built them" (p. 63).	"Each mosque also featured a mihrab, an indented wall that faced toward Mecca" (p. 139).	"One example of Ethiopia's distinct culture is the unique churches of Lalibela" (p. 165).	

Technology. As in the field of engineering, main participants (i.e., actors) from Europe, Asia, and the Middle East were portrayed as more advanced and agentive when it came to developing technology than were participants from

Africa. Table 4 shows the comparison of participants and verb processes amongst the four regions, which we believe further a racialized, hierarchical system to position certain groups above others. For instance, we thought that the language painted individuals from the Middle East and Asia as being involved in making important technological contributions. By referring to individuals from the Middle East and Asia as being "astronomers" or involved with "acupuncture," the authors have either knowingly or unknowingly tied these participants more closely to our modern practices in the western world. In contrast, Africa's role was minimized through the authors' referring to their technological advances in unspecific terms. Collectively, textbook authors created a hierarchy with how they refer to participants that allow those who have identities from Asia, Europe, and the Middle East to feel present in history about technological contributions. We suggest that the textbook authors' language choices reinforce a falsehood about Africa as a space wherein innovation and invention do not take place and believe social studies teachers, along with teaching students how to analyze language, can play a role in undoing this reinforcement of hierarchy. While we believe the example of the "smelting furnaces of Meroë" seen in Table 4 diminishes African participants, we think social studies teachers can elect to introduce further information, including how these participants invented a variety of methods to smelt iron using different types of furnaces depending on the region of Africa from which they came (Killick, 2015).

Table 4. ***Agency in Technology (Ellis & Esler, 2018)***

Europe	Middle East	Africa	Asia
"They [Nuns and monks] also experimented with crops" (p. 64).	"Astronomers like these at a Turkish observatory made significant scientific advances that helped change how people thought about and explored the world" (p. 139).	"These newcomers brought iron, mining methods, and improved farming skills" (p. 165).	"During this time, the Chinese improved on their ancient practice of acupuncture to treat many ailments" (p. 194)
"The development of printing set off revolutionary changes that would transform Europe" (p. 25).	"In addition to other crops raised for food, farmers cultivated sugar cane, cotton, medicinal herbs, and flowers that were sold in far-off markers" (p. 140).	"In time, these settlers improved their building methods and erected large walls and palaces" (p. 151).	"As people became more educated, they developed technology such as an improved compass, shipbuilding innovations, and gunpowder" (p. 194)
"The result was an agricultural revolution that transformed Europe" (p. 25)	"But Nubian armies could not match the iron weapons of the Assyrians who invaded from southwest Asia" (p. 151).	"Fueled by the region's large quantities of timber, the smelting furnaces of Meroë produced the iron tools and weaponry needed to feed, control, and defend the kingdom" (p. 151).	"They helped spread technologies, advances in science and mathematics, religious beliefs, music, and artistic styles" (p. 194)

Mathematics. As is reflected in Table 5, we suggest that the textbook's authors use processes and participants in sentences about mathematics in a manner that continues to segregate African participants, particularly from the developments in the Muslim world but also from those in Europe and Asia.

We recognized that the textbook authors' abstract conception of what mathematics is excludes the careful design of the Nubian pyramids or the other geometric considerations necessary to build Ethiopian rock churches from thinking "mathematically." While terms such as "mathematics" and "accounting" are readily applied to Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, Africa appears to be a world without mathematics, where this is impossible. The authors' approach to mathematics promotes not only an exclusionary view of African participants but also what it means to participate in mathematical practices, reinforcing to students that their own diverse ways of thinking mathematically are invalid. In a modern context where people often easily label themselves as "math people" or not, we already see an exclusionary perspective of what mathematics is, when the reality is that many of us have to conduct mathematical thinking on a regular basis (Martin & Gourley-Delaney, 2014). We believe that social studies and mathematics teachers should work in conjunction to overturn these perspectives in their respective content areas. Social studies teachers might continue to point out the hierarchies created by curricular texts and overturn them by asking students to consider exactly who was working mathematically during different parts of history, while mathematics teachers could strive to validate diverse and non-traditional modes of mathematical thinking.

Table 5. ***Agency in Mathematics (Ellis & Esler, 2018)***

Europe	Middle East	Africa	Asia
"After Brahe's death, his assistant, the brilliant German astronomer and mathematician Johannes Kepler used Brahe's data to calculate the orbits of the planets revolving around the sun" (p. 258). "In the 1400s, the Medici (med dee chee) family of Florence organized a banking business" (p. 234). "To provide efficient government and a steady source of income, feudal monarchs set up government bureaucracies that administered justice and taxation" (p. 29).	"One of the greatest Muslim mathematicians was al-Khwarizmi" (Ellis & Esler, 2018, p. 140) "Bankers developed a sophisticated system of accounting" (Ellis & Esler, 2018, p. 139). "(Al-Khwarizmi) pioneered the study of algebra (from the Arabic word *al-jabr*)" (p. 140) "In the 800s, he wrote a book that was translated into Latin and became a standard mathematics textbook in Europe" (p. 140)	"For example, some African Muslim rulers imposed the *zakat,* or a yearly tax on certain kinds of property that was used for charitable purposes" (Ellis & Esler, p. 157). "(Salt) was easily worth its weight in gold pound for pound" (p. 151). "The zakat reflected the Islamic practice of alms giving, or charity" (p. 157).	"Later mathematicians used these books as references for their own calculations" (Ellis & Esler, p. 194). "To explain arithmetic on the abacus, Cheng Dawei wrote the *Suanfa tongzong* ("Systematic Treatise on Mathematics," 1592) and included his summary of contemporary mathematical knowledge" (p. 200). "Other departments were devoted to the study of disciplines such as medicine, astronomy, and mathematics" (p. 194).

Medicine. As is reflected in Table 6, our analysis revealed that the terminology that the authors employed for medical practices primitivize African practices by portraying them as more distant and alien from modern U.S. medical care. Because the textbook's audience will have more familiarity with the "surgeons," "hospitals," "medical schools," "doctors," and "acupuncture" of Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, the authors ensure that the readers will regard the alignment between medieval and modern equivalents of medical practices more favorably than the exotic "diviners" and "healers" of Africa. Moreover, though the religious and, consequently, "non-scientific" nature of African medicine serves to make African participants appear less advanced than counterparts elsewhere, the authors express the centrality of religion in the Muslim Middle East and Christian Europe as well. Even in the U.S. today, our medical field continues to shift at the mercy of our religious beliefs (Greenhouse, 2022). We suggest that the textbook's lens makes it easier for students to regard white-identifying Europeans throughout the ages as more advanced. Once more, educators have the opportunity to give their students a critical eye for modern beliefs about who participates in medicine and what medicine even is, meaning that even after many centuries of advancement, it is still in a state of flux and feels the effect of non-scientific influence.

Table 6
Agency in Medicine (Ellis & Esler, 2018)

Europe	Middle East	Africa	Asia
"English surgeon John Banister dissects a corpse to teach students about human anatomy" (p. 260). "As Muslim civilization developed, many Jews and Christians played key roles as officials, doctors, and translators" (p. 134). "As early as the 900s, Salerno in Italy had a respected medical school" (p. 93).	"Other Muslim surgeons developed a way to treat cataracts, drawing fluid out of the eye lenses with a hollow needle" (p. 142). "A Jewish apothecary, or pharmacist, dispenses medicine in a Spanish market" (p. 133). "The government set up hospitals, where injured people could get quick treatment at a facility similar to today's emergency room" (p. 142).	"Diviners and healers also had knowledge of herbal medicines" (p. 172). "These men and women (diviners and healers) were well educated in the traditions of their societies" (p. 172). "They (diviners) might explain the cause of misfortune such as illness" (p. 172). "For hundreds of years, the city drew some of the best scholars from the Muslim world, including doctors, priests, and judges" (p. 159).	"During this time, the Chinese improved on their ancient practice of acupuncture to treat many ailments" (p. 193). "Using earlier advances, close observation, and analysis, the Chinese made breakthroughs in astronomy, agriculture, medicine, and military technology" (p. 193). "Medical treatment included acupuncture to relieve pain or treat illness" (p. 193).

Science. Not only do the sentences that were coded as related to science shown in Table 7 replicate the dearth of STEM practices said to occur amongst African cultures, but it shows that the textbook authors morph the boundaries of different regions to make sure scientific accomplishments remain consigned to Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. The textbook authors designate the Middle East from North, East, and Sub-Saharan Africa, but when detailing the scientific accomplishments of the Middle East, they refer to the "Arab thinker, Ibn Khaldun," who was born and lived in Tunisia on the African continent (Savant & de Felipe, 2014). Even though the descriptor of an African-born participant as "Arab" is accurate, it is notable that while Arab individuals move to the African continent, the textbook maintains that they retain their Middle Eastern identity (Ellis & Esler, 2018). African identity, when it is attached to individuals who are doing STEM, seems to get absorbed into other identities, making it difficult for participants from different African cultures to keep ownership and agency in their STEM achievements. In a parallel reality today, we feel that anti-Black bias creates an environment where people will not recognize the Black heritage of successful individuals and quickly affiliate them more strongly with other groups. People are quick to balk or express disbelief at the idea that famed French author Alexandre Dumas and Alessandro de' Medici had Black ancestry (Moore, 2014). Teachers should point out these oversights and misalignments based on what is convenient for the anti-Black agenda and teach their students to espouse a discourse that honors the identities of Black individuals engaging with science.

Table 7. ***Agency in Science (Ellis & Esler, 2018)***

Europe	Middle East	Africa	Asia
"In the 1600s, English chemist **Robert Boyle** explained that all matter was composed of tiny particles that behave in knowable ways" (p. 259).	"Astronomers like these at a Turkish observatory made significant scientific advances that helped change how people thought about and explored the world" (p. 142).	"Another Arab thinker, Ibn Khaldun, set standards for the scientific study of history (In Middle East section)" (2018, p. 140)	"Astronomers produced accurate star maps and calendars" (p. 195).
"Over time, the microscope would lead to still more startling discoveries" (p. 259).	"Muslim scholars studied the works of the ancient Greeks, such as Euclid and Ptolemy" (p. 141).		"Xu Guangqi led the imperial research program" (p. 201).
"The branch of science today called chemistry was known as alchemy in medieval times" (p. 259)	"These two instruments (the quadrant and the astrolabe) were used to observe the positions of stars and aid in navigation" (p. 141).		"By using the new data and tools, movements of the sun, moon, and planets could be more accurately predicted and the calendar could be corrected" (p. 201).

Trade. As with the other portrayals of STEM practices, we believe the textbook authors' portrayals of trade practices diminish the contribution of African participants, as is shown in Table 8. Firstly, it is clear that trade is an area where technological developments such as the creation of guilds, the spread of currency, the development of canal systems, and non-economic ideas moving through trade occur only in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. Furthermore, modern practices such as the use of credit cards are tied more closely to Europe. The authors make a deliberate attempt to tie modern finance practices with medieval and Renaissance European practices. We believe trade is significant by virtue of its centrality to our capitalistic system here in the U.S., leading us to suggest that seeing oneself as a participant in trade may support development of agency in modern commerce. Social studies teachers can support this development amongst all students by making sure that narratives of individuals of different racial identities participating in and creating innovations in trade are readily available.

Table 8. ***Agency in Trade***

Europe	Middle East	Africa	Asia
"First, merchants and artisans formed associations known as guilds" (p. 77). "Letters of credit worked like medieval credit cards. capital in the company" (p. 76). "In the north, city-states like Florence, Milan, Venice, and Genoa grew into prosperous centers of trade and manufacturing" (). "Russia's network of rivers provided transportation for both people and goods" (p. 105).	"Muslim merchants introduced an Indian number system to Europe, where they became known as Hindu-Arabic numerals, or Arabic numerals" (p. 201). "The heads of the guilds, chosen by their members, often had the authority to regulate prices, weights and measures, methods of production, and the quality of the product" (p. 184). "This gold dinar, dating from 695–6, shows a Umayyad caliph dressed in traditional Arab head-dress and robes and holding a sword" (p. 134).	"The people of early Africa developed a system of trade routes that connected much of the continent" (p. 156). "A great variety of goods and enslaved people funneled in and out of the markets of these two cities" (p. 164). "Muslim, Jewish, and Christian traders and merchants lived, bartered, and interacted with one another as commerce expanded throughout North and West Africa" (p. 152) "Meroë's location was a major reason for its development into a successful center of commerce" (p. 151).	"Over time, one Chinese trade practice significantly impacted global trade" (p. 201). "The Ming repaired the extensive canal system that linked various regions, made trade easier, and allowed cities to grow" (p. 201). "Food, tools, cloth, and other items were bought and sold at a market like this one" (p. 191).

Discussion

Like the findings of other studies that show the alienation and stagnant portrayal of Black-identifying individuals in STEM and social studies spaces (Cvencek et al., 2014), we found the language used by this textbook to devalue the contributions of African participants while glorifying those of participants from Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. We also suggest that the textbook's limited view of what constitutes STEM further disadvantages those practices that seem more alien to the western viewpoint. The language choices of the authors, both as to constructing agency for participants of different identities and what activities are included in STEM practices, reveal an anti-Black perspective, which we argue will lessen the textbook's ability to serve its diverse readership. While we are aware that Black identity is not synonymous with African identity, it is difficult not to attribute the misrepresentation of an entire continent to anti-Black biases.

As a result of our research, we call on educators to build upon the curricular materials with which they are provided to empower their students from marginalized groups, though we may be in a time where this might not always be welcome. Whether in aligning the practices of different peoples with more modern STEM practices (i.e., doctor vs. diviner) or defining what STEM even is, we see that the participants from Africa are constantly disadvantaged and excluded from having a high impact on STEM developments, which is simply untrue. Teachers can use linguistic frameworks such as systemic functional linguistics (SFL) (Halliday, 1993) to help their students analyze the insinuations of different vocabulary choices, allowing them to point out whether it makes sense to draw a distinction between a Renaissance architect and an Ethiopian craftsman who built a rock church (See Appendix to learn more about SFL). I recall my own 8th-grade social studies teacher, who, after conducting the analysis herself, presented us with two textbook narratives, one from India and one from the U.K., describing British colonization in India. Asking us to recognize the differences, she gave us our first sense of how the same facts can be presented to further multiple different agendas. We believe teachers today can do the same, empowering students to not only perceive such agendas but be leaders in overturning those that are not advantageous to them. Additionally, a linguistics approach to text analysis will allow educational researchers, teacher educators, and teachers to contest histories that often perpetuate and position racial and ethnic groups in a hierarchy where some groups are ranked higher than others in doing STEM. Teachers specifically can seek out and teach counternarratives to displace ideas about what kinds of people are STEM innovators. Though films such as *Hidden Figures* have tried to expand mainstream understanding of what kinds of people are mathematicians, we feel that the field is still very emergent and that many of the images we recall when we hear the words "mathematician" and "scientist" still do not reflect the diversity amongst those individuals whose ideas have supported our advancement as humanity. Whenever we glance over the nutrition facts for the dairy and meat products we enjoy here in the U.S., we may be likely to forget that the discovery that there was a relationship

between cholesterol and clogged arteries belonged to Dr. Marie M. Daly, the first Black woman to receive a Ph.D. in chemistry in the U.S (Lee, 2014). Whenever we look back in horror at thinking about the forced sterilization of U.S. women from low-SES backgrounds in the 60s and 70s, we forget that the champion, who fought for women of many racial backgrounds to be assured that their reproductive rights could not be violated with impunity, was Puerto Rican pediatrician Dr. Helen Rodríguez-Trías (Wilcox, 2002).

We also hold that all teachers can work to invite a more inclusive definition of what doing STEM is into their school communities. While papering the walls with posters of thinkers from every diverse background is important, actively resisting the oppressive messaging of education right now must start with conscious efforts to change and integrate empowering exercises into the curriculum. For example, research has shown that STEM practices used by Black students outside of school, which include argumentation, representation, and imagining across visual and symbolic systems, are seen by students and teachers alike as unbefitting of the academic math and science contexts (Wright, 2011). Teachers can try and bridge the rift between school STEM identity and extracurricular STEM identity by drawing upon the practices they recognize in students' lives and featuring them in the curriculum. Mathematics teachers can decide not to judge the usage of hand gestures to show a rising line, rather than the term "positive association" as indicative of valid mathematical thought. Rather, they can adopt these gestures to show other students what different words mean, thereby adopting their students' communication practices rather than deeming them unworthy of the formal mathematics classroom. They can elect not to see students' usage of repeated addition rather than multiplication as a less advanced procedure than multiplication by the standard algorithm, but rather, teach them how to practice with repeated addition to see trends that can help them multiply more quickly. Science teachers can teach the physics and chemistry of liberation, teaching students how chemical reactions pollute air, particularly in neighborhoods of low-SES residents, and illuminate science as a way to overturn extant inequities. Teachers in every content area can collaboratively make the conscious effort to invite these practices rather than invalidating them.

Additionally, in his work as a social studies teacher, my colleague Edgar found that teaching specific word choices within a text can support students' ability to critically consume curriculum in many ways. For instance, an awareness of who is the main participant and what actions they are involved in can aid students in understanding whose history is being represented and whose is being suppressed. Thus, frameworks such as SFL can be a useful tool to uncover inequalities of representation in history textbooks. Moreover, this language approach can also be beneficial to students' writing, allowing them to have access to more synonyms for the different words they want to use and to be more deliberate about which ones they will use. For instance, many of Edgar's students would always ask, "What is another way to say that word?" Together, Edgar and his students found additional ways to say World War, as well as other vital terms to

avoid repetition, creating the chart of synonyms as a result (Figure 1).

Though the words are synonyms in some instances, "domination" and "authority" make the often violent and coercive nature of nations' controlling other nations far more explicit than do terms like "colonialism" and "imperialism." This implementation of a language focus in history allows students to become more critical of what they read while also learning ways to apply it to their own writing. It is important as social studies teachers that we understand that language cannot be separated from content (Díaz, 2021), which is why we propose the infusion of language and content teaching for all subjects.

Finally, we urge teachers to shirk the perspective that it is not their role to support students' development of academic identity in different content areas. My own time as a mathematics teacher has taught me that I am an integral cog in overturning the whitewashing of history, just as my fellow social studies teachers can support me in overturning the whitewashing of mathematics. This collaboration will allow for collective brainstorming to solve issues affecting schooling, including but not limited to representation across texts in various subject areas. Not in a vacuum, but drawing upon resources from all content areas, our students grow into informed, critical, and compassionate citizens with an eye to rebuild systems that are riddled with the invalidation and dehumanization of so many peoples. In fostering future collaboration amongst different content areas, teachers can reimagine and recreate the future of social studies education and lay the foundation for new realities.

Figure 1. ***Synonym Activity for Social Studies Classes***

Synonyms					
World War I	**Country**	**Imperialism**	**The underlying cause**	**Fought**	**Allies**
The Great War	Nation	Colonization	The main cause	Battled	Supporters
The World to End All Wars	Motherland	Domination	The primary cause	Clashed	Partners
The First World War	Colony	Control	The essential cause	Attacked	Coalitions
WWI		Colonialism	The major reason	Challenged	Alliances
		Authority			Unions
		Force			Collaborators

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Appendix

In our society, language plays an important role whether it is used in our social, educational, or occupational lives (de Oliveira & Smith, 2019). Specifically, in school settings, students use language to show "what they have learned in order for their progress and achievement" to occur (Humphrey et al., 2012). Since content and language cannot be separated (de Oliveira & Avalos, 2018), the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory can be adopted to provide authentic learning experiences where content and language are both developed (Brisk & Parra, 2018). At its core, Michael Halliday's (1993) SFL is built on a series of assumptions: (1) language is a dynamic and complex system; (2) language "reflects the culture in which it has evolved;" (3) language choices change from situation to situation whether they are written or spoken; (4) text

language is used to achieve specific social purposes; and (5) "knowledge of grammar can help to critically evaluate our own texts and those of others" (Derewianka, 2011, p. 3). Put another way, SFL sees language as a way to construct, organize, negotiate, and reconstruct human experiences (Fang, 2005).

While SFL has three "metafunctions that govern how language is organized according to the functions they are structured to achieve" (Webster, 2009; Díaz & Deroo, 2020, pp. 379-380), in this study, we focused on the ideational metafunction. This metafunction represents experience (Martin & Rose, 2007), which looks at the word choices of a clause including the participant(s), verbs (i.e., actions), and recipient(s) of the actions (Díaz & Deroo, 2020). The use of the ideational metafunction allows us to identify how groups are classified and described in relation to STEM identity.

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TOWARDS A MORE HOPEFUL FUTURE THROUGH CRITICAL CIVIC EDUCATION

Casey Holmes, Drake University

An Opening Vignette

On a mid-September Wednesday morning in 2020, 28 eighth-grade students filter into the Zoom room to begin their Humanities class. Twenty have their cameras on and 8 are black boxes. Some sit at desks or kitchen tables. Many are in their bedrooms. One is snuggled up in a chair and another dances in her seat. A cat walks across one student's desk as class begins. There are three adults in the Zoom room: co-teachers Sally Bailey (social studies) and Anne Matthews (English), and me, a former high school teacher and current teacher educator and researcher.

Sally and Anne collectively greet their students before Sally asks them: "What are some things that you think have improved since we've gone virtual?" Anne quickly jokes in the chat: "MUTE ALL FEATURE." Students share benefits of virtual learning, like having more breaks during the day and being able to get more sleep. They also appreciate comforts of home: eating whenever they want, wearing hats and blankets, and learning alongside their pets.

Anne transitions students' attention to the first portion of class focused on last night's "Mystery Questions" English homework. Students had to respond to questions using the vocabulary root stems they had been studying. As students volunteer answers, Sally comments on the number of social studies terms that appear in the vocabulary list, such as anarchy *and* anthropology. *"It's almost like Humanities is a perfect blend," Anne responds.*

A brief review of last night's social studies homework ensues and then it's time to move on. Sally tells students that they will begin their study of the next group of people that came to the United States – "well, it wasn't the United States yet" – the Europeans. She previews the four nations they will explore – Spain, France, the Netherlands, and Great Britain – and then asks students to make a prediction: How might this convergence conflict with people that already live in the Americas?

Sally conducts a short lecture, using Google Earth, in which she traces the purposes and routes of Spanish conquistadors and recounts some details of Spanish interactions with Indigenous peoples throughout the Americas. At the end of class, she reminds students of the term "convergence," which is the theme of the course's first trimester, and asks them to start thinking about the effects of this convergence between Europeans and Native Americans. As the teachers say goodbye and students begin to leave the Zoom room, Sally offhandedly says how much she loves teaching using Google Earth, rather than traditional slides.

Contextualizing this Inquiry

The events of 2020 offered a unique glimpse into the dilemmas and questions of citizenship in the United States as communities responded to problems of political polarization, racial injustice, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Three years into the pandemic, we remain mired in debate around appropriate precautionary measures and responses even as the worldwide coronavirus death toll has

surpassed 6.6 million people[1] (Our World in Data, n.d.). At the same time, dozens of anti-LGBTQIA+ and anti-critical race theory (CRT) bills have been introduced - and in many cases, passed – in state legislatures across the country (PEN America, 2022). While the underlying issues involved in these contemporary crises have deep historical roots, renewed societal attention to addressing these issues has forced people to (re)consider what they owe to one another as citizens in a democracy.

The external political, social, and cultural societal context affects what happens inside teachers' classrooms (e.g., Dunn et al., 2019; Long et al., 2022). In the context of persistently difficult world events, it is possible for young people to feel discouraged about the future. Yet, it is essential that students believe in their ability to change the world around them in order to avoid helplessness and cynicism.

As demonstrated in the vignette above, Sally's social studies instruction (in tandem with Anne's English instruction) occurred within an environment of positive community and student-teacher relationships. While building trust and mutual respect with her students, Sally sought to engage them in a critical investigation of U.S. history. Stemming from her ardent belief in her students' ability to be the impetus for change, she wrapped her critical instruction around a fundamental message of hope. In this article, I detail results from a study in which I explored Sally's enactment of critical citizenship education in her social studies teaching. Her embodiment of critical citizenship and portrayal of U.S. history to her students offered them hopeful possibilities for the future.

Background Literature

Traditional History Education. The predominant approach to history instruction in the United States is an "archaic" process through which students learn a variety of facts about government and internalize a single story: the "same patriotic, Eurocentric narrative that has been taught since the nation's founding" (Journell, 2011, p. 11). Without critical examination of the typical narrative of constant progress and American exceptionalism, history education may perpetuate the status quo (Castro & Knowles, 2017; VanSledright, 2010). When social studies instruction reinforces this narrowly-defined vision of whose stories matter, it negates the validity of the real experiences of many immigrant youths, youth of color, girls, non-binary students, and students with disabilities who see their own identities or cultures vilified, misrepresented, or ignored (Choi, 2013).

American history education centers White people as the main protagonists, presenting Black histories "only if the narratives closely align, or can be manufactured to align, with the attitudes, dispositions, and characteristics of white-centered historical narratives" (King, 2020, p. 336). Black experiences that are included in the curriculum often take the form of messianic master narratives (Alridge, 2006) that position a heroic figure as the savior of an oppressed group. Individuals like Martin Luther King, Jr. are portrayed as "charismatic saviors" (Alridge, 2006, p. 667) and presented

[1] This figure is accurate as of January 13, 2023

without "personal weaknesses, struggles, or shortcomings" (p. 669). Images of seemingly mythical leaders prevent students from understanding how ordinary citizens might impact positive change (Alridge, 2006) and may limit Black students' ability to envision themselves as leaders in civic spaces (Woodson, 2016).

These traditional narratives are problematic in other ways. Asian American experiences are rarely visible in most states' K-12 U.S. history standards, and the events that are included often focus on anti-Asian discrimination and Japanese incarceration (An, 2016). Indigenous nationhood and sovereignty are ignored or erased in many K-12 civics and government standards (Sabzalian et al., 2021). When they are included, Indigenous peoples are often portrayed as having lived in the past (Shear et al., 2015). Both heroification (Alridge, 2006; Loewen, 2018) and the potentially more harmful process of villainification (Van Kessel & Crowley, 2017) flatten complex connections and events and make them the responsibility of a single actor.

Connections Between History and Citizenship Education. The way history is taught in social studies classrooms has important consequences for citizenship education. Historical narratives offer implicit lessons about whose stories are considered to be valid or important. Teachers' beliefs about the purpose of social studies and citizenship affect their pedagogical decisions (Thornton, 1991), so teachers' own understandings of citizenship are vital contributions to their students' engagement with these ideas. The use of "citizenship" here moves beyond a vision of patriotism or representation of legal status and instead captures the knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions that might be embodied by any member of a community.

The complex problems of our modern world require teachers who believe it necessary for their students to truly grapple with difficult questions of inequality, justice, and power. Many teachers already engage in more critical approaches to citizenship education (e.g., King, 2020; Magill & Salinas, 2019; Rodríguez, 2018; Vickery, 2017), and social studies scholars have developed a variety of conceptual frameworks that advocate for a deeper vision of citizenship that goes beyond critical thinking skills. Proponents of critical citizenship education suggest that students must learn to identify, reflect, and act upon social and political injustices that benefit one group(s) at the expense of another group(s) (Burbules & Berk, 1999).

My work in this study was guided by the framework for critical citizenship proposed by Johnson and Morris (2010). Rooted in the elements of critical pedagogy, Johnson and Morris (2010) conceptualize a critical citizen as an individual who: identifies the purposeful and inequitable distribution of power; recognizes the importance of collective action and collaborative dialogue; interrogates one's own space and identity within existing systems of power; and engages in a cycle of reflexive action, or *praxis* (Freire, 1972).

The Importance of Hope to Critical Citizenship and Democracy. For students to develop any sense of agency, the cycle of reflection and action (praxis) must be accompanied by hope (Freire, 1970/2018). Hope is the vital link between critique and possibility (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1986) because hopelessness can

both cause and result in inaction or immobilism (Freire, 1992). By itself, hope is not enough to achieve liberation, but it is necessary for transformation of oppressive conditions. Therefore, hope is central to critical citizenship (Giroux, 2020).

More generally, hope is essential for the process of democracy. Stitzlein (2020) describes hoping as involving "reflection, action, and consequences that concern and impact other people in one's environment" (p. 62). Shared hoping, or "hoping together" (Stitzlein, 2020, p. 63), is crucial for democracy because it ties communities together in both individual and collective efforts to identify and solve shared social problems. To hope together in community, citizenship must reflect an "ethic of care" (Monchinski, 2010; Noddings, 1984) that values people as human beings rather than as "the other" (Spreen & Vally, 2012, p. 94).

Democracy and citizenship must be viewed as dynamic, fluid, changing constructs in order to imagine a better future, as these are the only conditions under which social change is imaginable and actually possible (Hyslop-Margison & Thayer, 2009; Moore et al., 2011). To achieve this goal of social change, students must reclaim their agency as both active citizens and active students, recognizing their potential to act as legitimate social agents (Dudley et al., 1999). In this way, Stitzlein (2020) suggests that democracy and hope are "mutually supportive of one another" (p. 60).

Given the importance of hope to democracy and the challenge of maintaining hope in difficult sociopolitical circumstances, additional empirical research is needed to understand how critical citizenship education may foster students' hope. Here I focus specifically on Sally's emphasis on cultivating students' hope as part of her broader project of critical citizenship education.

Author Positionality

All social studies research is conducted through the lens of a particular perspective about the nature of citizenship education, and I acknowledge the need to attend to my own worldview (Becker, 1967; Dinkelman & Cuenca, 2017). Like the vast majority of U.S. public-school teachers (Spiegelman, 2020), I am a White woman and I recognize that my own upbringing in a middle-class family afforded me privileges in my personal, professional, and educational pursuits.

I am particularly interested in the implementation of critical citizenship education in secondary schools because I believe that this is what it means to be a "good citizen" in U.S. society today. Acknowledging that many systems and structures were designed to benefit White people like myself, I operate from the assumption that the United States is not truly democratic. Systemic injustices both in and outside of schooling have been perpetuated by White people generally and White women more specifically. As a White, female teacher, I understand that my presence, possible inaction, and potential lack of advocacy related to these issues may have contributed to the problem.

While I now teach pre-service teachers and conduct research through the lens of critical citizenship, I do not believe that I engaged in truly critical pedagogy when I was teaching high school social studies. I made a dedicated effort to highlight alternative narratives that are

often missing in social studies classes, but I would not have classified my teaching as critical more generally. I still operated within the boundaries of the existing systems and did not consistently encourage collective action to make society more just. I found myself frequently frustrated by the pushback I received from students when I taught about societal realities, such as income inequality, and was considered to be advocating for a partisan agenda.

These experiences affect my research perspectives. My purpose in articulating these values and beliefs is not to ignore or cast aside these influences or to attempt to operate from a falsely objective lens but is instead to improve the transparency of my research design. My background, experiences, skills, and beliefs are all important to allowing others to understand the context and results of this study (Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2015).

Studying Sally's Teaching

Sally's Teaching Context: Community School. I conducted this qualitative case study (Stake, 1995) in an eighth-grade classroom in a public charter school in a large southeastern capital city during the Fall of 2020. The focal teacher, Sally Bailey[2], was a Black woman and veteran middle school teacher with over twenty years of teaching experience. At the time of this study, Sally was in her fourth year teaching at Community School, where she taught two sections of eighth-grade Humanities along with her White female co-teacher, Anne Matthews. Humanities is a combination of English-language arts (ELA) and U.S. history content. ELA and social studies are generally taught separately within the one-hour class period. For example, the class might begin with a review of root words, but the rest of the lesson might be devoted to analyzing primary sources related to the Jamestown settlement. Anne did not factor significantly into the findings of this study.

There were 74 total students enrolled in Humanities, with 31 students in the first block and 43 students in the second. Approximately 58% of the students were girls and approximately 76% of the students were White. The demographic makeup of the Humanities classes paralleled the student body of Community School overall, which had a predominantly White and middle-class student body. The school's student population had consistently hovered around 83% White but decreased to approximately 65% White in the 2021-2022 school year (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.).

Research Process. During the study period, I conducted over 30 classroom observations, ten interviews with Sally, and eight student interviews. I also collected instructional materials from each day's class and Sally kept a daily teacher's journal. All students enrolled in either section of Humanities were invited to participate in the study. Four students, all White girls, completed interviews. See Table 1 for a description of teacher and student study participants. (Anne is included in Table 1 for reference.)

Table 1

[2] All names are pseudonyms.

Participant Descriptions

Name	Role	Gender	Race	Years at Community School
Sally Bailey	Humanities Teacher	Female	Black	Four
Anne Matthews	Humanities Teacher	Female	White	Five
Lacy	Student	Female	White	Three (6th grade+)
Emilia	Student	Female	White	Seven (2nd grade+)
Eliza	Student	Female	White	Seven (2nd grade+)
Nate	Student	Female	White	Three (6th grade+)

Note. All participants are identified using pseudonyms for confidentiality.

I employed an inductive and ongoing process for data analysis (Merriam, 1998). Analysis began early in the study and occurred simultaneously with data collection for the purpose of making comparisons among different data sources and using emerging themes to inform data collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The process of data analysis was a process of "meaning making" through "consolidating, reducing, and interpreting" the data (Merriam, 1998, p. 178). Data collection and analysis continued until the point of saturation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Sally's Evolution as a Critical Educator

Sally intentionally employed a lens of critical citizenship to teach eighth grade U.S. history. Her beliefs about citizenship education and the purposes of social studies more generally were shaped by a combination of her identities and experiences. As a Black woman, Sally did not see herself reflected in the narratives she learned about the United States in her own K-12 education. When people of color were included in the history curriculum, she remembered the stories as inaccurate or dehumanizing. For example, Sally recalled that her ninth grade U.S. history textbook conveyed that "some slaves were happy with being slaves, and they were happy on their plantations and they had a great culture with their masters" (interview, September 2, 2020). It was not until she majored in history in college that she learned deeply about enslaved peoples' persistent resistance against their enslavers. In contrast to the simple story she learned in high school that Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves, in college she learned a more complex narrative in which "Abraham Lincoln was really lukewarm about freeing slaves" and that Black people "won their own freedom" (interview, September 2, 2020).

Early professional experiences solidified Sally's critical orientation towards citizenship. In prior teaching positions, Sally was always one of few Black teachers, and was often the only Black social studies teacher. At her previous school, a private school in the same city, she experienced feeling "silenced" (interview, September 2, 2020) due to her identity. She reported that parents took their children out of her class due to their discomfort with their children having a Black social studies teacher. In one case, she was reassigned from

teaching American history to world history because of the administration's perception that she "could not be objective" and therefore "could not teach on Black things" (interview, September 2, 2020).

Sally's own schooling and later professional experiences revealed to her the inadequacy of her K-12 social studies education. The inconsistencies between her education and her lived experiences propelled her evolution as a critical citizenship educator. As a result, Sally believed that the primary focus of her history teaching was to encourage students' critical thinking and complicate the historical narrative.

Components of Sally's Critical Approach to Hopeful History Education

My analysis of Sally's teaching revealed that her optimistic messaging was integrated into her history instruction in three key areas: problematizing heroes and addressing stereotypes; normalizing critiques of history and curricula; and discussing current events and controversial topics. I discuss each of these components below.

Problematizing Heroes and Addressing Stereotypes. Through the use of varied sources and perspectives, Sally portrayed traditional American heroes like Christopher Columbus and Thomas Jefferson as multidimensional humans. For example, when students learned about the Declaration of Independence, they also explored virtual museum exhibits from Jefferson's plantation, Monticello, which detailed his role as an enslaver and told stories of those he enslaved. In the context of this dichotomy, students grappled with the question of what Thomas Jefferson's legacy should be. Sally told them that the complexity of his character "is reflective of the complexity that rests at America's core. We often say things that [we] emulate or that we profess to do, but we actually do another" (observation, October 2, 2020). These efforts were a first step for students towards interrogating existing systems and structures as they learned crucial historical knowledge and alternative narratives in addition to dominant discourses.

Sally also incorporated materials into her instruction that would directly address misconceptions or stereotypes, such as an *Upfront Magazine* article, "6 Myths About Slavery" (artifact, September 25, 2020). The authors detailed the ways that enslaved people advocated for their own liberation in order to refute the misconception of enslaved people as helpless victims. Similarly, when teaching about Indigenous communities in North America, Sally showed a video from *Teen Vogue*, "6 Misconceptions About Native American People" (artifact, September 10, 2020). In this three-minute video, five Native American girls directly debunked common myths about their people, such as "Native Americans still live in tipis" and "Native Americans are rich off casinos." These instructional materials supported Sally's humanistic approach to history education (Barton & Levstik, 2004). By reframing individuals and groups as dynamic, multidimensional, and often flawed, Sally aimed to humanize them and make their stories and agency more accessible to her students.

Although students learned some hard historical truths for the first time, there were no instances during the study period in which students publicly doubted or questioned whether these facts

could be true. As part of the collective element of critical citizenship, Sally emphasized the inherent value in simply having these conversations together. For example, after a lively discussion about whether to celebrate Columbus Day or Indigenous Peoples Day, Sally told her students that she was proud of their discussion: "I think the value is in having this discussion, not necessarily one student being right over another. But I think the value is… most of us agree that the discussion needs to be had" (observation, October 12, 2020).

Normalizing Critiques of History and Curricula. As part of her effort to reframe history as open to interpretation, Sally modeled habits of reflective critique. She regularly critiqued traditional social studies textbooks and intentionally highlighted areas in which she hoped that "young people can do a much better job than we adults are doing right now" (observation, September 29, 2020). For example, referencing the tendency for many American history textbooks to superficially recount or even ignore early Indigenous communities, Sally told students that she was "confident that your generation is going to do this right, and you're going to end up giving a more comprehensive history" (observation, September 10, 2020). Similarly, after playing a video describing how people commonly treat politics like a sport, Sally relayed her hope that "young people can do a much better job than we adults are doing right now, and that you guys will be able to get back to the issues and focus on that" (observation, September 29, 2020). The use of collective phrases like "your generation," "you guys," and "young people" emphasized the need for a cooperative effort towards critical democracy.

Sally also freely critiqued her own past (mis)understandings, such as her prior belief that the Spanish Flu had begun in Spain. Instead, the name derived from lower levels of war-time censorship in Spain, where the media reported most consistently on the 1918 Flu Pandemic. Modeling the cycle of praxis, Sally noted that she "didn't know [she] was helping to spread stuff like that, so [she was] going to change" how she talked about the flu now that she had more information (observation, September 9, 2020). She emphasized the need for continual self-reflection upon one's own knowledge, as well as the ability to make a conscious choice to improve upon these missteps in the future.

Sally expanded her critiques to considerations of language and terminology. She invited students to question the description of the New World being "quote/unquote discovered by Christopher Columbus" (observation, September 16, 2020) and the description of the "five Civilized [Native American] Tribes" by acknowledging that the terminology "might be problematic" (observation, September 10, 2020). Sally helped students problematize language and consider how knowledge and language can be tied to power.

By openly questioning the use of language and narratives, Sally sought to "empower [students] with this knowledge so that [they] can do things about it. We've done some great things, but we've also done some things that we need to solve. And I think you guys have the power to solve it" (observation, September 23, 2020). She hoped to convey to her students that they are capable and agentic beings

who can make change and "right the wrongs of past textbooks" (observation, September 10, 2020) – in other words, that a better future is possible.

Students demonstrated their willingness to engage with more critical perspectives as they considered what they had been taught about slavery and the historical contributions of Black Americans. Most students recalled learning about slavery in elementary school, but when they reflected upon what they had learned, several students suggested that the "teacher tried to water stuff down," that "it was presented as it being sort of a one-and-done type situation where racism magically went away," or even that "I don't think I really learned about it. I think people only taught us what they wanted us to know" (observation, September 22, 2020). Reacting to their collective lack of knowledge about Black Americans' historical contributions, students suggested that "we don't know much" and even that "the school system has failed to teach us about it" (observation, September 22, 2020). Given the opportunity, students were willing to critique their own educational experiences and even begin to grow towards identifying the connection between power and knowledge – whether it be "the school system," "people," or "the teacher" who controlled students' access to historical narratives.

In follow-up interviews, students reiterated critiques that their prior history education was insufficient. Nate wanted to learn more about "what actually happened" related to slavery "because no one ever talked about that before – they just skipped over it" (interview, October 15, 2020), while Emilia identified the new kind of learning she was doing in eighth grade:

> I have learned things that I did not expect would be true, and that kind of were - this is what's true, and what you have heard are kind of what most people think, or what most people wish would be true. (Interview, September 22, 2020)

Through these comments, Emilia pinpointed the danger of learning one unexamined narrative of history – the narrative may be simply "what most people think" or what they "wish would be true" rather than being truly accurate. As she considered her own learning experiences, Emilia demonstrated her ability to adopt a more critical perspective towards history.

Three of the four participating interview students revealed at least some internalization of the hope that Sally attempted to cultivate by normalizing critiques of the past. Nate and Lacy both suggested that learning history was helpful to "learn from mistakes" (Nate, interview, October 15, 2020) and "to fix our mistakes now" (Lacy, interview, September 21, 2020). Emilia highlighted the COVID-19 pandemic as an example of the "whole 'making sure history doesn't repeat itself and learn from it'" phenomenon and framed history as a means for people to "always keep in mind that we can make a difference" (interview, September 22, 2020). In their comments, these students expressed the importance of critical social analysis and some belief that it was possible to create a better world by acting upon previous mistakes.

Discussing Current Events and Controversial Topics. Her message of agency and possibility factored into Sally's inclusion of current events and

controversial topics in her classroom. Some teachers cite students' age and maturity as reasons to avoid political issues in middle school (Conklin, 2011), but Sally regularly incorporated election-related current events into her class because she viewed the social studies classroom as a "[site] to cultivate youth empowerment and engagement precisely because of students' age" (Dunn et al., 2019, p. 455). Sally understood eighth grade to be a time in which students were beginning to develop their own political identities, and her inclusion of these issues into her class sent an implicit signal to students that she deemed them capable of forming their own opinions.

Despite the divisive and vitriolic nature of the 2020 presidential election, Sally believed that part of being an informed citizen in 2020 was learning about and engaging with the election cycle. During the study period, student assignments related to the presidential election included: reading and answering questions about an *Upfront* magazine article describing the differences between the candidates' policy positions; reading background information about the Electoral College; preparing for, watching, and reflecting upon the presidential debate; writing a letter to the incoming president outlining issues of interest; and reflecting upon the impact of the 2020 election season on students' personal relationships.

Students were encouraged to share their opinions around controversial questions, even when their viewpoints were potentially unpopular or different from those of their classmates. For example, when students discussed the presidential debate, 63% of students in the first class block rated Trump's presentation as "poor," while 13% percent rated it as "average," six percent as "good," and 10% as "excellent." Adam, a White male student, noted in the chat that Trump's "presentation of his ideas was rough but I can understand getting into Bidens *[sic]* head and taking jabs," later verbally commenting:

> So, you gotta go into these debates with an open mind… And I think Trump could've really won over some of Biden's viewers and some people from the Democratic Party. But he kind of blew it because Biden went on the attack early, and then Trump took it too personally, and he got aggressive, and he kind of made himself look immature. (Observation, September 30, 2020)

Adam's comments are representative of the students' willingness to engage with difficult issues such as the 2020 presidential election and the divisive character of Donald Trump.

Similarly, Sally perceived the topic of White supremacy and racism to be integral to her history curriculum. She introduced the year-long theme of racism and White supremacy on the very first day of school, telling students that "we are really going to focus on the history of race in American society" (observation, August 19, 2020) as part of the social studies curriculum. She acknowledged to students,

> Some of that's going to be uncomfortable. We're going to have some really frank and real conversations about supremacy, White supremacy, segregation… One thing I like about history is why we are the way we are today. As you guys know, there have been a lot of things in the news about racial unrest in the United States, and historically speaking, what led up to all of those protests, and police brutality, and riots, and looting, and how we're all

> connected through that throughout history. (Observation, August 19, 2020)

In the first moments of class, Sally made clear to her students that White supremacy and systemic racism are real social forces that not only continue to exist today but are also central to the study of American history. Later in the semester, students read first-hand accounts from American teenagers who experienced discrimination due to their racial identity and/or immigration status. Through these types of statements and instructional materials, students began to explore the existence and influence of personal identity on one's lived experiences.

Implications of Sally's Teaching and Importance of the Study

Hope is necessary for critical citizenship education so that students can overcome potential feelings of cynicism or helplessness when learning about oppression in their communities (Hackman, 2005; Schmidt, 2008). Students must believe that they can disrupt the replication of injustices by "being able to imagine otherwise" (Giroux, 2020, p. 121) and acting to reconstruct the world around them (Kincheloe, 2008; Stitzlein, 2020).

Sally adopted a "language of possibility" (Giroux, 2001, p. 81) to advance her message of hope in implicit and explicit ways. Implicitly, Sally encouraged hopefulness by validating student-created knowledge and providing students with myriad opportunities to navigate complex issues, form their own opinions, and share conclusions with their peers. She intentionally integrated youth voices and experiences into her instruction as a means of affirming the power and legitimacy of young people's voices. Belief in her students' ability to ask thoughtful questions was also foundational to Sally's desire for students to critically interrogate the past. She provided students with "access to stories that have not been sanitized to produce happy endings, but [instead] include accounts of struggle and failure in decision-making" in order to help students better understand how the present arose out of the past (Stitzlein, 2020, p. 118).

Sharing stories of struggle and failure highlighted the interpretive and multidimensional nature of history, which continues to be flattened in many social studies classrooms (Castro & Knowles, 2017). By centering humanization rather than heroification (Loewen, 2018) or villainification (Van Kessel & Crowley, 2017), politicians and other historical figures were revealed to simply be agentic individuals working within collective systems. When history is a story of humans rather than a series of messianic master narratives or a myth of "superhuman figures" (Alridge, 2006, p. 669), students are better able to see themselves as actors in history. Since none of the traditional "heroes" were perfect, students do not need to themselves be perfect to make a difference. Portrayals of three-dimensional and morally complex historical figures allows students to envision that there is room for improvement and that change may be possible.

Explicitly, Sally conveyed messages of hope when she repeatedly assured her students that not only was it possible "that the world can be changed and even improved" (Stitzlein, 2020, p. 14), but that the students themselves could play a transformative role in society

(Moore et al., 2011). Her students gave Sally herself hope for a better future. She consistently reminded students that their generation would right past wrongs and make improvements, assuring them that the purpose of critique was not to berate historical actors but instead to help students envision something better for themselves and for society. In the context of potentially difficult historical truths, Sally intended for her students to understand the mistakes and failures of the past as an opportunity for them to build a better future. In other words, Sally believed that students "have to know history to know how to answer, 'What should I hope for?'" (Stitzlein, 2020, p. 118).

In combination with her direct statements to students and emphasis on student capabilities, Sally's framing of history as fallible, relevant, and accessible sent a message to students that they could actively participate and make a meaningful difference in their world. Rather than becoming visibly discouraged due to missteps in American history, students believed Sally that they could and would do better than people had done in the past. Sally engaged her students in historical critique, but by infusing those critiques with messages of hope, she was able to maintain students' optimism and belief in a more just future. Her explicit and implicit messages of hope helped to link the critiques with possibility, enabling students to develop a sense of agency and imagination for change (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1986).

As the power of Sally's language of possibility demonstrates in this study, students need messaging that affirms the power of students' voices and their ability to solve problems and make real change. By engaging with multiple perspectives about historical events and social issues, students will have the opportunity to make claims and judgments and take some ownership over their learning process. As part of these various perspectives, students also benefit from the incorporation of young adult literature (Groenke et al., 2010) and stories from other teenagers, past and present. These perspectives again serve to reaffirm the power of students' voices and legitimize young people as real sources of potential action and change.

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