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Recognizing the Power and Potential of Displayed Print in the Elementary Social Studies Classroom

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Abstract

A classroom with rich print displayed around the room is important and beneficial for teachers and elementary students to strengthen students' social studies knowledge. This article describes a process that elementary teachers, or preservice teachers observing educators, can use to evaluate the types and uses of displayed print for social studies instruction. A self-reflection tool is included to support teachers as they seek to improve their use of displayed print. After completing a room scan, as detailed in the article, the tool can be used to assist with self-reflection on the origination of print, purpose of the print, representation of all students, variety of perspectives, and engagement with the print. The purpose is to use the information gained to inform and improve their practice in teaching social studies. While the specific content examples tie to primary grade social studies classrooms, the tool and suggestions outlined in the article can be applied at a variety of grade levels in the elementary school.

Keywords: displayed print, self-reflection tool, improving instruction, elementary social studies

As you enter your classroom, take a moment and look around. What type of print are students seeing in the classroom pertaining to social studies? Is the print on display print created by outside sources and brought into the classroom or is it student-created print? Now think about the purpose the print serves. Is the print an integral part of social studies lessons or is the purpose of the print to show visitors to the classroom what students are learning in social studies? Does the print represent all voices in the classroom and are various perspectives evident? Are students actively engaging with the print? Reflecting on these types of questions ensures that the print in the classroom plays a meaningful role in the development of social studies knowledge. The purpose of this article is to support teachers in evaluating the types and use of social studies print on display in their classrooms. Engaging in a reflective critique of the print on classroom walls can help teachers tap into the power and potential of displayed print to support students' social studies learning as teachers seek to improve their instructional practices.

Rethinking Artificial Boundaries

Research shows that elementary teachers spend less time teaching social studies than the tested subjects of math and reading (Tyner & Kabourek, 2021). A report of research shows that first to fourth-grade students receive minimal social studies instruction (Cox et al, 2016). In fact, according to Huck (2020), even when elementary teachers have more control over the

content taught because their schools lack a scripted program, social studies continues to be devalued due to administrative preference for the teaching of other subjects. In fact, Diliberti et al.(2023) found through an analysis of a recent RAND report that this lack of support compared to math and reading includes less professional development, less assessment of teachers, and less often a curriculum is even purchased for social studies in the elementary classroom.

Often students from lower socio-economic backgrounds do not have the world experience that other students already possess or are gaining from experiences outside the home. This knowledge base is crucial for their understanding of their neighborhood and community. Therefore, it is key to engage all students daily with developing that social studies knowledge base. According to Wexler (2019), it is important to assist these students, at the youngest of ages, to start building this strong foundation of knowledge in a systematic way. It is imperative that the integrated instruction start in the youngest grades.

As Grossman (2023) at the Fordham Institute emphasizes, using time dedicated to the teaching of reading and integrating literacy instruction with social studies content can improve the social studies knowledge base of these young students. Grossman's (2023) findings support past research that also shows the teaching of social studies can have a significant impact on the improvement of literacy skills. In fact, a systematic review of research studies finds that developing content knowledge during ELA instruction can positively influence students' vocabulary and comprehension of content materials (Hwang et al., 2023). The artificial boundaries so often drawn between subjects such as reading and social studies must end.

A Look at the Environment

Research emphasizes that the environment plays an important role with elementary students (Nyabando & Evanshen, 2022; Sunday, 2020). The materials, opportunities for social engagement, flexibility, and organization are important for learning. Both professional development and educational literature emphasize the importance of a print rich environment. In fact, research shows that surrounding young children with print positively influences early literacy growth (Axelrod et al., 2015; Neuman, 2004; Reutzel, 2015).

Therefore, as educators, it is important to look beyond traditional "text" such as social studies textbooks, which teachers often are dissatisfied with (Murray et al., 2022), and realize displayed print in the classroom can serve as an additional type of "text" and another opportunity to strengthen students' social studies knowledge and integrate social studies and literacy learning.

Often when walking through an elementary school classroom, it is not unusual to see some type of print related to social studies in the environment. Perhaps this print includes posters of national symbols, charts graphing student wants and needs which tie to economics, or maps of their neighborhood reinforcing the concept of place. However, to ensure the displayed print develops and extends social studies knowledge, it is necessary to closely examine that print and its use in the classroom. By examining, reflecting, and making

modifications on displayed print, educators can improve the social studies learning environment for students.

While the specific content examples in this article pertain specifically to the primary grades, the tool detailed in this article could easily be used at a variety of grade levels in order to impact social studies learning.

The Self-Reflection Tool

The *Self-Reflection Tool for Analyzing Displayed Print in Social Studies* (see Appendix A) is designed to assist teachers with the examination of the print in the classroom. Print that is meant to be viewed by the students, as opposed to visitors from outside the classroom environment, and is semi-permanent in nature and won't be erased or taken down at the end of the class is the type of print that should be reviewed. The tool can be used by pre-service teachers observing in the social studies classroom or by elementary teachers who currently teach.

The purpose of the tool is to not only look at what is on display but to think about how the print impacts social studies instruction (see Appendix A). Then instructional decisions can be made regarding the print or its use in instruction to strengthen students' social studies learning. While merely displaying print will not increase social studies knowledge, the learning that occurs through the creation of the print, the reinforcement of the knowledge as students interact with the print, and the way the print is incorporated into instructional lessons, is key.

Getting Started

The first step to examining the social studies print on display is to take a visual scan of your classroom or the classroom where you are observing. If desired, take a few snapshots on your cell phone or iPad of the various parts of the learning environment in order to document all the print that is there. Afterwards, print Appendix A and as you look at the images and list the examples of print in the classroom in the left-hand column of the chart. Next, determine the length of time the print has been on display in the next column. If a preservice teacher is completing this exercise, he or she may need to ask their host teacher for this information. Once those columns are complete, it is time to look more closely at the print and think about the role it plays in the teaching and learning of social studies.

Key Considerations

There are five key considerations on which to reflect with each example of print listed on the tool. By considering these areas, it is possible to determine if the print displayed is enriching the social studies learning in the classroom. This involves taking a closer look and reflecting on each example of print on display. Here are key questions to ask when looking at the print on display:

Where does the print originate?

What is the purpose of the print?

Are all student voices represented?
Does the print demonstrate varied perspectives?
How are students engaging with the print?

Origination of Displayed Print

There are two types of print found in a classroom: *local* and *imported* text (Maloch et al., 2004). Local text is created within the classroom environment while imported text is brought in from the outside. Any purchased print on display or even worksheets completed by students is imported because the print did not originate within the classroom setting. However, if teachers create charts that involve student voices while being primarily written by the teacher or if students create timelines, maps, diagrams, and essays, then the print is considered local print.

Imported print is often on display in the environment. School-provided maps and posters are often placed on the walls to reinforce learning. However, local print is often more meaningful to students than imported. Displaying quality student-created social studies projects develops a sense of community as students work to create their best product such as a group timeline or an individual political campaign display. Local print is valuable because students not only gain from the actual learning reinforced with its creation and the discussion or collaboration with peers who may have been part of the process, but there is a sense of pride in the fact that they are creators of the final product. Consider whether each type of print on display is local or imported. Note the origination of each piece in the third column of the chart.

If there is minimal local print on display, think about how to increase the amount of local print in the classroom. Consider tying local print to imported print already on display in the classroom. For example, take glossy purchased posters of famous people in history, and have students create a timeline with key points for one of the people to display. If a publisher-provided vocabulary list for a unit is visible, have students create a concept map in small groups on chart paper demonstrating the relationship between several of those words.

The goal for strengthening the social studies print on display is not to start over but to expand what is already visible in the classroom so that it is even more meaningful. While there is nothing wrong with imported print, it shouldn't be the only type of print students see in the classroom. Completing the origination column on the tool provided will only take minutes, but it is an important part of the reflection process. Looking at the "why" behind the print will take more time and thought.

Purpose of Print

While there is often a variety of print in the elementary classroom, it is important to know why the print is on display. What purpose does each example of print on display serve to the social studies classroom community? Here are three possible reasons that print may be on display:

- *Expanding Academic Vocabulary* - Building academic and domain specific vocabulary is an important aspect of social studies. Often in the primary grades, terms such as citizen, natural resources, rights, community, and others are introduced to students. An understanding of these terms is needed for students to comprehend social studies text. Along with word walls, perhaps students create illustrations or key words to remember academic terms or maybe they brainstorm ideas on an ABC chart showing a vocabulary term that begins with each letter of the alphabet for the current topic of study. For example, if students are studying rural and urban environments, they may have an ABC map for the concept rural which they list animals for A, farms for F, and woods for W, etc.
- *Strengthening Mapping Skills*- Students must learn to navigate a variety of maps of their school, their neighborhood, and even their city. They learn that maps not only show visible items such as schools, roads, and libraries, but they may show invisible aspects such as boundaries. In order to interpret maps, young children need hands-on experience creating the maps, extended exposure and engagement with maps. Having maps, especially class created maps, as a form of displayed print in the classroom can serve to strengthen their mapping skills so that they can understand why maps are important for the world around them and how to gain information from them.
- *Recognizing National Symbols*- Even at the youngest grades, students learn that a symbol represents a concept. There are symbols that represent various holidays such as a heart for Valentine's Day, symbols that are used in the key on a map, and even symbols that represent their country. Students in the United States are often taught and expected to know symbols for the United States of America and learn the words to The Pledge of Allegiance or to sing It's a Grand Ole Flag. These national symbols might include among others the national flag, Mt. Rushmore, the white house, and the Statue of Liberty. Awareness helps to establish student identity as a citizen in the nation.

There are many possible purposes for print to be displayed in the social studies classroom, and these are just a few examples. As students write specific vocabulary terms, create a variety of maps, and draw symbols, they are not only increasing social studies knowledge, but they are developing literacy skills in a meaningful context.

Ensuring All Student Voices are Represented

When teachers invite participation by all students, all voices will be represented regardless of ability or language. All students, regardless of developmental challenges or level of language acquisition, can add to the richness of quality print. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2011), students with disabilities have difficulty with social studies and only 7% were proficient in the content. For this reason, it is important to incorporate local print in the primary grades as a way to assist students with learning

disabilities social studies background knowledge and knowledge of texts (Ciullo, 2015). By encouraging students to work in various heterogeneous groupings in the creation of print tied to social studies, it ensures that every student is seen and valued. Adaptation of groupings, scaffolding, and differentiating assessments are key (Johnson & Busby, 2015).

Given the diversity within schools, Seltzer (2022) advocates the importance of reexamining our beliefs regarding language-minoritized students. Instead of viewing their language development as a deficit, it is important to acknowledge that all students are writers and creators in our classrooms. Working together, whether students are creating models, reports, or other forms of print, can ensure that all language-minoritized students are represented in the creation of meaningful print in the classroom. It takes many years for second-language students to understand the complexities of academic language unique to content areas (Hakuta et al., 2000), and displaying quality, local print in the classroom, also increases second language learners' exposure to academic language.

Classroom print can take students from their current level of language development and cognitive level of functioning and strengthen their foundation of social studies vocabulary and concepts. Look at the fifth column from the left on the chart. Note if all students are represented in the displayed classroom print pertaining to social studies. Not only should all students be involved, but various perspectives should be evident within the print displayed.

Valuing Varied Perspectives

With the growing diversity in classrooms, it is important to ensure that teaching is culturally responsive to the needs of students and their varying perspectives. How knowledge of ethnicity and culture ties into a culturally responsive curriculum is key (Gay, 2001). According to Bennett (2018), a culturally responsive print rich environment is one of five foundational aspects of culturally responsive teaching. While we want all students to experience academic success, Ladson-Billings (1995) emphasizes the importance of all students having cultural competence and being able to be their true selves.

A large question or thought can be posed to students and then placed on the wall to brainstorm suggestions. Consider using a speech by Martin Luther King, Jr. as a graffiti wall and asking students to express how it makes them feel. Examine how age-appropriate news stories present information or how the classroom social studies text presents information. Are there other views that can be presented to make the text more valuable? Is there a problem in the community, that students can help solve? How might various groups in the community view the issue?

Are multiple viewpoints of historical events taken into consideration in the print? Are various voices on display so that students can see themselves in the print? Print should honor students of color lived experiences and elevate their communities' culture and language. Culturally responsive displayed print can assist with the development of social studies content for all students. As column six is completed on the chart, think about each type of social studies print on display and whether it represents various perspectives and is culturally responsive (see

Appendix A). Having print on display is great, but it is important to make sure that the print is part of the instructional process.

Engagement

Finally, consider how students engage with the social studies print on display. While engagement may be the last column on the tool, it is by far not the least important. Simply displaying print will not ensure social studies growth in and of itself. Having it displayed will reinforce learning but engagement with the print is key to deepening and extending student knowledge. A study conducted with very young learners found that 95% of the print in the environment was not referenced (Gerde et al., 2015). Having print on display in the environment without meaningful student engagement, greatly limits the print's value and potential. Students need to not only interact with the creation of the print but also engage with it once it is a part of their learning environment.

Students need to develop the skills to think like social scientists (Hughes, 2022). They must learn to ask questions, gather information, and make decisions that will be beneficial to the community and enable them to be responsible citizens (Simon & Corr, 2022). The displayed print can easily be part of an inquiry rich learning environment. For example, if the students are learning about recycling and how it improves their community, employees from the sanitation company may visit and engage with the students about trash day and recycling so that students can ask the employees questions, learn about recycling, and determine for themselves if and why recycling is important for their community. Student-created questions can be put on a large sheet of paper on display. They may experience sorting trash items, look at diagrams of how garbage trucks work, and take a virtual or physical field trip to visit a recycling center after using a map to see where the materials go in their community.

As information is gathered, students can put additional important information on the displayed sheet of paper. Students then decide how to take informed action (Swan et al., 2018) and encourage others in their community to recycle. Perhaps students need to ask those in their community why they do or don't choose to recycle so that they can use that information to determine what to put on student-created posters encouraging those in the community to recycle. What did students learn from their interviews that might be used on the posters to persuade others to change their habits regarding materials thrown away? Perhaps the people students interviewed did not know what materials to recycle or how to recycle. The class can determine where it might be best to hang copies of the posters that are on display in the classroom. Students can also brainstorm important facts that can be shared on the morning announcements at their school. Another idea is to have Post It® notes available. The teacher or students (depending on the age or ability level) can list social studies concepts or terms related to recycling that are unclear to them. Read the notes aloud to the class and ask students if any of the displayed print might clarify the information. Allow students to stick the notes on the displayed print. There are many ways to engage students with the print on display.

Look at the last column in the chart (see Appendix A). When was the last time students engaged with the print? If unsure, leave the space blank. However, think about future ways students may develop their social studies knowledge through their direct engagement with the social studies print on display and modify instruction accordingly. Actively engaging students with the displayed print is key to the value it serves in the classroom. It will ensure that the students are building the knowledge and vocabulary that will enable them to continue to expand their social studies knowledge. If engagement is not occurring with the print, and future engagement is not feasible, then it is time for students to consider creating new print and replacing what is currently on display.

Taking the Next Steps

Once the columns on the chart are complete, the real work begins. Knowing and reflecting on the print present is important, but what are the next steps? The next thing to do is to look at the data collected with the tool. Determine a couple of goals that can be developed regarding displayed print that will improve social studies instruction (see Appendix A). Perhaps it is determined that most of the print on display came from outside the classroom, so increasing the amount of local text is a goal. Maybe the text serves a purpose, but the students have not engaged with it much since its creation or for an extended period of time. A goal may be to find a specific way to get students to engage with the text through classroom instruction. After completion of the chart and listing two goals, it is time to make specific decisions on how instruction will change.

Goals need action items. On the second page of the tool (see Appendix B), there is a place to state specific actions. If a goal is to increase the amount of local text, what specific actions will be taken? What types of local print will be incorporated and how will it fit in with existing print? If it is evident that students need to engage more with print on display, how will that be achieved? What specific actions will you use to engage the students? Perhaps the print will be tied into a future social studies lesson. Which lessons will it tie to? Specifically state how the engagement will occur.

After the actions have been taken, and a reasonable amount of time has passed, it is time to determine if there is any evidence that the actions chosen led to desired student growth. Just making goals or taking actions doesn't always guarantee results. Perhaps it is determined that there needs to be more local text created, and hands-on activities are planned and implemented that enable students to create the print and engage with it on an ongoing basis. Maybe students are showing a stronger depth of understanding through classroom discussions. Is new academic vocabulary being used that previously confused the students? Did the actions achieve the results desired or are there other actions that may be tried?

The tool is designed to help teachers reflect not only on the print displayed but also to reflect on how social studies instruction may be modified to take advantage of the value of print on display through the implementation of changes to instruction. Expanding learning opportunities for students is a primary goal. As the data is analyzed and reflected on and

decisions made for future social studies instruction, growth in knowledge should be experienced.

A teacher who used the tool for the first time to reflect on the social studies print in her elementary classroom, realized that while she had maps to develop geographical knowledge, a timeline to reinforce chronological order that encircled her classroom walls, and social hierarchy posters, all the print on display was imported. The print displayed would better serve the students' needs through the inclusion of more locally created print. In addition, she expressed a need to tie together the social hierarchy posters and the timeline more explicitly by having her students write from the perspective of various social classes (e.g., sharecroppers and slaves). By adding their writings to the local print on display, students will experience various perspectives and grow in their content understanding of social studies. After making changes, the teacher will want to keep track of her room scans, goals, and changes made, so that she can see the professional growth she is making.

Moving Forward

Depending on the classroom, room scans might be done monthly. That time frame ensures that print is regularly being reexamined for its current value in strengthening social studies knowledge. While all environment print won't be removed at the end of each month, there may be modifications to the print already present to increase its value as a learning tool. For example, a word wall of social studies terms might be created during a unit of study in one month, but when the next scan is conducted in the next month, the teacher may determine that the wall is not retaining its value in its current form. The teacher may decide to replace the word wall or modify it for the students to increase their engagement with the terms.

As previously discussed, it is easy to incorporate the language arts across social studies, and it is important to value social studies learning as much as any other content area. The print for social studies is a great way for students to develop their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Spies (2022), makes that connection in an InquirEd/NCSS webinar which focuses on the importance of integrated instruction through hands-on activities for her young students. The depth of learning they develop regarding questioning, labeling, and decision making prepares the students for future learning. The students realize that the decisions they make will impact others in their community.

In summary, analyzing displayed print by scanning the classroom is a powerful activity for preservice teachers during their field experiences as well as seasoned elementary teachers wishing to improve the utility of student-created print in the social studies. Collaborating with other educators will allow for the sharing of ideas and is a way to gain insight into what others are doing in their classrooms. It will also provide additional sets of eyes as learning environments are being discussed.

In Conclusion

Displayed print is an easy and inexpensive way to support elementary students' social studies learning. While print is often on display in classrooms, little attention is given to the power and potential it can play in developing social studies knowledge. The elementary grades are the perfect time to begin using print in the classroom to strengthen social studies knowledge through quality literacy activities. Elementary teachers are often knowledgeable about effective disciplinary literacy strategies which can help students to develop social studies knowledge, while teachers at older grades are often content specialists (Curtis & Green, 2021). Make the most of the environment and the print on display related to social studies content. Remember, a print rich environment is never finalized. A print rich classroom requires continuous reflection and modification to ensure that it continues to play a key role in the development of social studies knowledge with all students.

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Appendix A

Self-Reflection Tool for Analyzing Displayed Print in Social Studies

Date of Classroom Scan _____ Classroom Location _____

Print on Display (Name or Description)	Dates on Display	Origination (local or imported)	Purpose	Representation of All Students	Varied Perspectives	Engagement (How did students Engage with the print?)

Goal 1: _____

Goal 2: _____

Appendix B

Reflecting on Goals with Displayed Print

After determining two goals based on the visual scan and completion of the Self Reflection Tool for Analyzing Displayed Print in Social Studies, it is time to take action. Note specific changes to be made based on the goals.

Specific Actions to be Taken on Goal 1-

_____

_____

_____

Specific Actions to be Taken on Goal 2-

_____

_____

_____

Take the time to determine if there is evidence that the actions taken above are leading to social studies growth. List any evidence of Social Studies growth based on actions taken related to Goal 1 and Goal 2. Then think about why growth could or could not be determined, and any future ideas that may benefit the students related to displayed print.

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The Myth of the American Cowboy

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Abstract
There are many images of the American West. However, one cannot think about the West without envisioning the American Cowboy, clad in chaps, spurs, and of course his iconic 10- gallon hat. Popular television shows such as *Yellowstone* (Sheridan & Linson, 2018) have contributed to a revival of sorts of cowboy culture and dress. In this article, the cowboy is examined for what he was and was not, and then suggestions are provided about how to teach about the cowboy. Additionally, a lesson outline is provided to show what it would look like to teach such a lesson in the social studies classroom.

Keywords: cowboy; the American West, dispelling the myth

There are innumerable images of the West; some of these include outlaws, mountain men, miners, Native Americans, farmers, and railroad workers. However, there is one particular image that has been fostered and nurtured through tall tales, dime store novels, Hollywood movies, and television. That image is the Anglo-American Cowboy. He is the most enduring, fascinating, and appealing image of the West. The fascination and appeal rests in the mystery of the cowboy.

The show *Yellowstone* (Sheridan & Linson, 2018) as well as its prequels *1883* (Sheridan, 2021) and *1923* (Sheridan, 2022) have spurned a resurgence of cowboy culture, ironically among many people who have no connection to livestock, farming, or ranching. PreK-12 classrooms are rife with students wearing the *Yellowstone* (Sheridan & Linson, 2018) brand, cowboy boots, and Wrangler® jeans. While this new fad is not necessarily new, it is important that students realize the history of the American cowboy and understand that even though popular culture paints the image of a white, gruff man in a saddle conquering the West, the history of the cowboy is much more diverse and complicated than media portrays them to be. In this article, I discuss the birth, the life, and dress of the cowboy. I will then examine the ethnicity and leisure of the cowboy, followed by a discussion of the cowboy's lure today. I will then provide suggestions for how to teach about the American cowboy, and then conclude by arguing that it is still difficult to dispel the myth of the American cowboy.

The Birth of the Cowboy

To understand the cowboy, one must understand and realize how and where the "cowboy" was born. Iber (2000) stated, "The earliest mounted men herding cattle in the Western Hemisphere bear little resemblance to the romantic, dime store novel cowboy" (p. 22). In fact, the first real cowboys of the western hemisphere were not L, they were Spanish and they were given the name *gaucho* in Argentina, *vaquero* in Mexico, *llanero* in Venezuela, and *huaso* in Chile (Iber, 2000). Nevertheless, as the principal of herding cattle reached the continental United

States, people began calling the young men herding cattle and living on the trail by the name cowboy.

The Life of the Cowboy

   The cowboy's "average age was only 24" (Forbis, 1973, p. 17). Usually, young men were attracted to the trail because of the hazards and challenges that were apparent (Westermeier, 1955). Although young, the cowboy would shortly be worn out. Life on the trail was tough and overbearing at times. They were exposed to the elements. They had to ride through blizzards, drought, tornadoes, dust storms and whatever severe weather was present on the trail. Miles were covered on horseback and foot every day. As one could imagine, the cowboy probably had sores, boils, and calluses all over his body. There were little luxuries on the trail to make up for these present problems.

   Often for thirty-six hours continuously in the saddle, the hardships of their lot are apparent, cold black coffee, without sugar, drunk whenever the opportunity offers, is the sole luxury of the cowboy. With a piece of bread in one hand and some jerked beef in the other, he will ride around a stampeded herd, eating as he goes, and as happy as a king on his throne. (Westermeier, 1955, p. 24-25)

While this depiction seems to place a heroic slant on the image of the cowboy, it still embodies the difficulty of life on the trail. For example, 36 hours on a horse would be excruciating for even the toughest person. The reason for the assumption that the cowboy "was as happy as a king on his throne" (Westermeier, 1955, p. 24-25), is because most likely the cowboy may have looked as if he was happy since he did not complain, for there was not any need to.

   The not-so-pleasant life of the cowboy can be best seen by an excerpt from a journal of the cowboy George Duffield in which he wrote:

   May 1: Big Stampede. Lost 200 head of Cattle.

   May 2: Spent the day hunting and found but 25 head. It has been Raining for three days. These are dark days for me.

   May 3: Day spent hunting cattle. Found 23. Hard rain and wind. Lots of trouble.

   May 8: Rain pouring down in torrents. Ran my horse into a ditch and got my Knee badly sprained-15 miles.

   May 9: Still dark and gloomy. River up. Everything looks Blue to me.

   May 14: Swam our cattle and horses and built raft and rafted our provisions and blankets over. Swam river with rope and then hauled wagon over. Lost most of our Kitchen furniture such as camp Kittles Coffee Pots cups Plates Canteens &c &c.

   May 16: Hunt Beeves is the word-all Hands discouraged and we are determined to go. 200 Beeves out and nothing to eat.

   May 17: Not Breakfast. Pack and off is the order. All hands gave the Brazos one good harty damn and started for Buchanan.

   May 31: Swimming Cattle is the order. We worked all day in the River and at dusk got the last Beefe over. I am now out of Texas. This day will long be remembered by me. There was one of our party drowned today

   June 1: Stampede last night among 6 droves and a general mixup and loss of Beeves. Hunt Cattle again. Men all tired and want to leave

   June 2: Hard rain and wind storm. Beeves ran and I had to be on Horse back all Night. Awful night Men still lost. Quit the Beeves and go to Hunting men is the word 4p.m. Found our men with Indian guide and 195 Beeves 14 miles from camp.

Allmost starved not having had a bite to eat for sixty hours. Got to camp about 12M
Tired
Next Day: 15 Indians came to Herd and tried to take some Beeves. Would not let
them. Had a big Muss. One drew his Knife and I my revolver. Made them leave but
fear they have gone for others
June 27: My back is Blistered badly from exposure while in the River and I with
two others are suffering very much. I was attacked by a Beefe in the River and had
a very narrow escape from being hurt by Diving
July 26: The day was warm and the Flies was worse than I ever saw them Our
animals were almost ungovernable (Duffield, 1866, as cited in Brown, 1994, p. 74).

In a short time, Duffield had sprained his knee, faced the elements, lost men from his party, lost
cattle, almost starved to death, had confrontations with Indians, had a blistered back, got attacked by a
cow and plagued by flies. Duffield exemplifies that the trail was hard and undesirable, but it was his
job, so he had to do it.

The Cowboy's Attire

Every article of clothing on the trail was for utility, not fashion. However, much old western
literature portrays the cowboy in these clothes for different reasons. For example, Westermeier
(1955) wrote:

Right then was the day of the cowman in all his glory. He was King of the West, clad
in his green shirt, red handkerchief, wide-brimmed sombrero, and arsenal of weapons,
his chaps, spurs, saddle and gloves ornamented as the fancy and pocketbook of their
owner detailed-he was a picturesque character. At home, in the saddle, on the
windswept ranges, he was a creature lean swarthy, sinewy and taciturn. (p. 32)

The reason for the cowboys' apparel was not to be picturesque. The cowboy did not wear a coat,
because he could not move as freely. If he wore a vest, he did not button it for fear of catching a cold.
He wore chaps, but not for show. He had to protect his legs from briars and thorns, and that was the
only thing to do the job. His boots kept his feet from slipping through the stirrups and gloves not for
egotism, but to protect his hands from rope burn while he was roping cattle. His wide brimmed hat
protected him from the sun, rain, or whatever weather he encountered. Last

but not least was his bandana. The cowboy's bandana was a major necessity on the trail. It
protected his neck from the sun, served as a dust mask, an ear cover, a towel, and a blind fold for
horses, a makeshift rope while trying to hold an unruly cow, a water strainer, a sling, and a variety
of other uses (Brown, 1994). The cowboy was not trying to be handsome; he was trying to survive.

The Ethnicity of the Cowboy

Not only is the cowboy often portrayed as being a handsome, picturesque man, he is portrayed
as a handsome, picturesque white man. Very rarely in stories, descriptions, tall tales, or Hollywood
film is the cowboy cast as anything but a white male. Nevertheless, there were Mexican cowboys,
black cowboys, Irish cowboys, and many other cowboys from various ethnic descents. An excerpt
Philip Rollins (1922) reveals this fact:

While the men of the Range were mainly of English or Irish descent or birth, and had,

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in frequent instances, claim to early American ancestors of Scottish origin, the
Southwest added to its quota of such bloods numerous men of Mexican extraction,
and a more than occasional negro, with here and there men of strain partly Indian.
The great majority of all the men were American born. (p. 22)

Although most were American born, they were not all white. It seems that various ethnic groups were ignored in the history of the West, and Rollins' depiction is a prime example.

Cowboy Fun, Guns, and Leisure

Even though the difficult life on the trail seemed as if it would never end, there was a finale to every big cattle drive. When the cowboys finally reached the town that they were going to, it was time to celebrate. This aspect is exemplified by Brown (1994):

Finally, after three months of mud, dust, rain, rivers, Indians, rustlers, short rations,
and stampedes, most of the men and cattle and horses still endured. And when the
cowboys heard the whistle of a train on the railroad, or saw the first sprawling false
fronts on the trail town buildings, they broke into rebel yells, and sometimes song:
I've finished the drive and drawn my money, Goin'
into town to see my honey.
It was the end of the drive, at last. (p. 76)

They had been on the trail for a long time without any relaxation or stress relievers. As one could imagine, when they reached their destination they were excited, so they usually entered with guns blazing in celebration.

People were sitting in town, talking to their neighbors, eating lunch, and living their everyday lives when all of a sudden yells and gunshots rumbled into the town. Therefore, the cowboy appeared as a rather rough individual. As Westermeier (1955) notes:

It is a deplorable fact that young men in our western cities are becoming too familiar
with the use of firearms. They have a sort of desperado spirit instilled

into them by constant association with those older than themselves who carry
weapons. They should be taught that safety to life does not lie in the 44-cartridge but
in the avoidance of melees and bad men, and in the maintenance of order.
Whatever may have been the condition of this Territory when it was a veritable
border it is certain that young boys of your communities should be forbidden to carry
firearms. (p. 111-112)

There are many people who think that the cowboy had the "desperado spirit" (Westermeier, 1955, p.111-112), and perhaps some did. Nevertheless, gun control of which the author wrote is something that was often instituted in cattle towns. Many towns required that the men upon entering the town were to give up whatever firearms they possessed (Dykstra, 1997). However, gun control as it relates to cowboys is not something that is present in the minds of citizens today, most likely because historical narratives about cowboys more so capture events like the blazing guns at the end of a cattle drive. Therefore, that is the image that the cowboy has carried throughout time.

After the cowboy entered the town, it was time to cleanup himself.
The usual first action of a trail's end cowboy was to get a haircut and have his
mustache or beard properly shaped and blacked. Then he visited a clothing store for a

new outfit. Emerging with new clothes, the hat and boots he embellished with Texas

stars, he was ready for fun and frolic. (Brown 1994, p. 198)

Most scenarios like the one described above helped add to the myth of the picturesque cowboy. Most people did not view the cowboy as the unpleasant looking man that he was when he entered the town, they saw him after he was shaved and finely dressed.

After the cowboy was cleaned up, it was time to spend money and have fun in the town. The cowboy probably spent his leisure time spending money in the bars, drinking, playing poker, talking, and often fighting. The cowboy in the town setting was intriguing. One Kansas traveler described a cowboy as such, "In appearance a species of centaur, half horse, half man, with immense rattling spurs, tanned skin, and dare-devil, almost ferocious face" (Brown 1994, p.

199). The cowboy sitting in the bar, in his new clothes and hat, with his suntanned face was something to behold. Obviously, the cowboy's spirit was hardened by the trail and he was what many would have called a rough and tumble character. The people in the town saw him sitting there, looking like a painting. Their recollections of him are very romantic and are often exaggerated for this reason. The people in the towns did not see him out on the trail, sleeping in the dirt or fighting the elements and insects. They did not see him with his legs broken, boils on his feet, in the middle of a stampede, famished, parched, in need of sleep, and in some cases, dead. Therefore, the image of the cowboy as seen in the cattle towns was as the Kansas traveler remembered. Nevertheless, that was not the "real" cowboy.

There were not many people besides cowboys that knew about life out on the trail. Aside from a few journals and recollections such as the "Journals of George Duffield," there are not many personal accounts of the trail. Because of this, many people assumed that the life of the cowboy was very romantic. Many people assume that the cowboy's life was free and limit-less

and he answered to nobody but himself. He was a lawmaker, and when necessary, he would enforce the law as a vigilante. The freeness of the cowboy can be seen in an excerpt about the sheer personality of the cowboy regarding law and social restrictions.

Certain characteristics run through the whole tribe… their taciturnity, their surface

gravity, their keen sense of humor, their courage, their kindness, their freedom, their

lawlessness, their foulness of the mouth, and their supreme skill in the handling of

horses and cattle…

If one thinks down doggedly to the last analysis, he will find that the basic reason fro

the difference between a cowboy and other men rests finally on an individual liberty,

freedom from restraint either of society or convention, lawlessness, and accepting of

his standard alone. (Westermeier, 1955, p. 35)

This persona of the cowboy is portrayed in works of fiction, Hollywood presentations, and even "Old Western" history.

The Cowboys' Lure Today

Because of the romanticism and heroism placed on the cowboy, many people in the present time want to be a cowboy (Carlson, 2000). Although there were other roles in the West such as mountain men, miners, Native Americans, ranchers, settlers, and railroad workers, to name a few, not many people claim to be one of those. In fact, the cowboy persona and image have been fostered and nurtured not only in literature and film, but has also been used in the country music genre

(Carlson, 2000). The individuals who sing country music have adopted the cowboy dress and constantly sing about cowboy themes. There are numerous songs about being a cowboy, but there are hardly any singers that have been a cowboy or even know what a cowboy really is. A cowboy was a man that herded and drove cattle. However, the definition of a cowboy has changed considerably in recent years. Many people consider themselves cowboys, but not because they herd cattle. A cowboy, by today's standards may be someone who is tough, "country", uncomplaining, sometimes arrogant, good –looking, proud…the definition goes on and on because the definition rests in the eye of the beholder, whereas a cowboy used to be an occupation. While there are not many true cowboys today, there are some. As Carlson (2000) states:

> Modern–day cowboys come in a variety of guises. In part because of low wages and long hours, two-thirds of them are recent immigrants, underpaid-like the Childers brothers-overworked, and often unemployed in the winter. A few are summertime ranch hands on break from school who, when working, wear t-shirts and tennis shoes more often than they wear the traditional cowboy garb of boots and hats. A few more are permanent ranch hands, many of whom are caught up in myths about the Old West, and partly as a result, dress in Wrangler jeans tucked inside tall boots, long-sleeved shirts and vests, and large Stetson-style hats. (p. 1)

The life of the cowboy as written about in history books cannot be relived. There are modern day cowboys, but the old west definition of a cowboy is no longer in existence.

"New Western" historians seek to dispel the myth of the American Cowboy. Among those is Richard White. As White (1991) noted:

> Owen Wister's *The Virginian* (1902) became the classic literary Western, and its author's premodern preferences ran through it pure and unadulterated. The cowboy's of Wister's West had wild and manly faces…In their flesh natural passions ran tumultuous; but often in their spirit sat hidden a true nobility, and often beneath its unexpected shining their figures took on heroic stature. Western saloons, Wister wrote, contained more death than New York City saloons, but less vice, and death is a thing much cleaner than vice.
> Wister's cowboys got drunk, frequented prostitutes, gambled, slept with other men's wives, and killed each other, but their life and violence, was nonetheless, pure. It set them apart from the eastern immigrant worker. The Virginian ran a subtext of inequality, an attempt by Wister to explain why some Americans were, by the very human nature that the West laid bare, destined to rule and command others. (White, 1991, p. 621-622)

Although the cowboys in *The Virginian* drank, fought, committed adultery, gambled, and committed murder, they were still considered "good men"; they were dignified. White (1991) realized that myth takes events out of context and robs them of their historical accuracy. White (1991) sought to dismiss such falsehoods and replace them with accurate history.

People are still fascinated with the cowboy and that is why he tends to be the enduring symbol of the American West. The reason for this is complex. As stated before, there is not a lot of evidence about the actual life lived by cowboys while out on the trail. Because of this, the cowboy was easily romanticized by writers and story tellers. Due to the lack of evidence, many companies

could easily sell the idea of the great cowboy. As Savage (1979) states:

> The Cowboy Hero has always been a commodity. He may be part of a mythic construct of America's past, and his image in popular culture may be rife with sociological and psychological implications, but he exists in the first place because of a superior act of marketing. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century the cowboy hero has manufactured and sold to the American public in a manner similar to that employed in the manufacture and sale of any other product of the industrial revolution. He resulted from the efforts of men working in the best American entrepreneurial tradition of making something from nothing. (p. 109)

Marketers could have made the cowboy to be anything that they wanted if it would sell. There was so little evidence to contradict their stereotypes and portrayals of the cowboy, so he was easily configured.

Another possible reason for the exaggeration of the cowboy lies in the spirit of a country. America is the land of the free and the home of the brave. Many people in America want to think that the United States can conquer and tame anything that stands in its way. Nevertheless, America needed something to embody its spirit. Savage (1979) revealed this fact:

> The cowboy's facility of mind explains much of this popularity in our culture, for Americans espouse nothing if not common sense. Whether or not they have it themselves, they agree that it is a good thing, and they will recall from their public school education a reading or two of Franklin's Autobiography and at least the name of Paine's pamphlet, remarking in the process that common sense- another name from pragmatism-had a lot to do with how America came into being in the first place. They would not, perhaps make common sense a conscious measure by which to judge their cultural heroes, because it is what mathematicians and other logicians call a given: it is present in all but accidental heroes, and the cowboy hero is not accident. He is popular because he, more than any other historical or mythical figure from America's past, represents the fine middle-class virtue of common sense, and in action at that. (p. 20)

Heroes are often born because of virtues or values that people or countries hold. America needed a hero, and the cowboy was the best possible candidate for the job. As aforementioned, there was not a lot of evidence to contradict a person, so the cowboy was easily manipulated to capture and embody the spirit of America.

Another possible reason that the cowboy is the enduring symbol of the American West is very simple. When one thinks about the West there are various images and symbols that enter the mind. Some of them include cowboy hats, boots, spurs, chaps, horses, cattle, Native Americans, barbed wire, saddles, cattle towns, lawlessness, outlaws, and a variety of other images and depictions. The cowboy was related to most of the images previously discussed. Because of this, the cowboy tends to be the symbol of the West because it captures people's ideas of the West and its culture. Because many people in the West dressed in apparel similar to the cowboy, most people classify all those that wore cowboy hats and dressed in so called "western" apparel, cowboys.

The main problem with the myth of the cowboy is that many people do not wish to dispel it.

There are many authors who know that what they are writing is not exactly accurate, but they continue to do so just because it makes for a good story and they do not see the need to change it. For example, Hoig (1958) states:

> While I have tried to point out a few of the relevant facts concerning the cowboy's personality, my aim has largely been to pass on the cowboy's humor for the entertainment and enlightenment of the uninitiated. Most of these jokes and stories are old mossybacks and have been around a plenty. But for those not overly familiar with the Old West, this humor should be just as fresh as it was when a man could ride a hundred miles and never see a fence. The biggest part of the gather has been rounded up from back brush of libraries. Some are a little wooly, but I'm sure that whoever sinks his teeth into this beef will agree that it's salty! (p. 8)

The author knows that he is adding to the myth. He holds an admiration for the cowboy, so much so he wants to add to the myth. There are countless authors who continue writing about historical aspects that are not entirely true. By doing this, they are not only adding to the myth—they are generating sheer historical ignorance.

Teaching About the Cowboy

Teaching about the cowboy in context of the social studies, would most likely fall under a unit on westward expansion. To teach a balanced view of the American Cowboy, a teacher could take several approaches:

- The teacher could have students analyze primary source excerpts similar to the ones provided in this article as a means to show students what life on the trail was really like.
- Additionally, students could compare primary source evidence to popular depictions of the cowboy in such media as John Wayne movies or even *Yellowstone* (Sheridan & Linson, 2018).
- Lastly, country music lyrics could also provide another source of evidence, in which students could analyze how the cowboy is depicted in song. Some artists that would be helpful for this include Garth Brooks, George Strait, and Chris Ledoux. There may be other artists that could be analyzed as well, but these three specifically address the life and legend of the cowboy.

To be more specific with these ideas, here is what a sample day could look like when starting the lesson.

Warm Up: Students are asked to answer the following question: Does the cowboy way of life allure you? If so, why? If not, why not?

Introductory Discussion: The previous question would allow the teacher to gauge prior knowledge and common misconceptions regarding the life of the cowboy. The teacher could follow up with questions based on student responses. An example of this could be, why do you see this as alluring and what have you read or seen that makes that life seem appealing?

Source Analysis: The teacher could take one of the sources in this paper, such as the diary of the

cowboy on the trail and compare that to a clip from *Yellowstone* (Sheridan & Linson, 2018) or compare the diary to a country music song such as Rodeo by Garth Brooks. Students could also compare the cowboy diary to one of the many popular homesteading/farming/cowboy YouTube channels which number in the thousands. An excellent strategy for source analysis is the SCIM-C scaffold. SCIM-C is an acronym that stands for: Summarizing, Contextualizing, Inferring, Monitoring, and Corroborating primary sources (Hicks, et al., 2004; National History Education Clearinghouse, 2018; TeacherTube, 2009).

Discussion: The teacher can then lead the discussion based on the question prompts provided with the SCIM-C strategy, which will make the discussion much more robust and rigorous.

Closing the Lesson: The teacher could then have students respond to the following prompt: The cowboy way of life is much more difficult and different than you expected; why then do you think it is popularized in media? This question will allow the teacher to dive deeper into the popularization of the cowboy and this will in turn provide opportunities for students to interrogate the nature of the American Cowboy as depicted in modern media.

Conclusion

This article described how idealistically constructed depictions of the West have shaped our perceptions and emulations of the American Cowboy. The American Cowboy has been portrayed as the hero of the American West in dime store novels, Hollywood films, and tall tales. To dispel the myths and the public's naïve fascination about the American Cowboy, Western historians continue to research and publish works that more accurately describe the cowboy experience. Teachers can (and should) utilize primary and secondary sources—such as the ones presented in this article—to promote a more informed understanding of the American Cowboy of the past and the present. Hopefully, this article will serve as a catalyst for other ideas related to teaching about the American West generally, and the American Cowboy specifically.

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To Erase or Embrace the Electoral College

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to provide social studies educators with a brief historical overview of the Electoral College, while emphasizing inquiry-based learning, and introduce the Inquiry Design Model as a tool for students to critically evaluate the effectiveness of the Electoral College in presidential elections. While utilizing the Inquiry Design Model (IDM), students will have the opportunity to extensively investigate and assess primary sources, websites, and news articles as they construct their own arguments and articulate their own conclusions through project based summative assessments. At the culmination of the inquiry, during the informed action phase of the IDM, students will be able to make a real-world connection as they consider to embrace the Electoral College or advocate to erase it from the presidential election process.

Keywords: Social Studies, Inquiry Design Model, Electoral College.

Introduction

One of the most important aspects of teaching civics and government is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the processes of electing the president of the United States. As our nation approaches the 2024 presidential election, the Electoral College looms large in the forefront the upcoming election cycle. During the most recent presidential election, a growing public discourse surrounding the popular vote and the Electoral College's relevance in the electoral process emerged as a significant point of contention. Even though the Electoral College has been a deep-rooted American tradition since the founding of our Constitution, there have been several presidential elections in which electoral college and the popular vote had different voting outcomes. The presidential elections of 1824, 1876, 1888, 2000, and 2016 had presidential nominations in which winning the popular vote did not lead to winning the Electoral College and eventually the presidency (United States House of Representatives, 2023). Therefore, public opinion has varied as the usefulness of the Electoral College and whether or not the U.S. Constitution should be changed to simply rely on the popular vote for presidential elections. Some Electoral College provisions include one person one vote, differences between large states and small states, the role of political parties, checks and balances, separation of powers, and majority rule rights (Turner, 2007). However, the Electoral College preserves several fundamental principles established during our nation's founding, such as the preservation of federalism, the conservation of balanced representation, and, in most elections, enabling the people to determine the winning presidential candidate. The aim of this article is to provide

social studies educators with a brief historical overview of the Electoral College, emphasize the importance of inquiry-based teaching, and introduce the Inquiry Design Model as a tool for students to critically evaluate the effectiveness of the Electoral College in determining the presidency of the United States.

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Relevance for Teachers/ Practitioners

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For classroom practitioners considering evaluating the Electoral College, one of the first places to investigate is our U.S. Constitution. Article II of the U.S. Constitution clearly states that the President and Vice President of the United States are elected by the Electoral College. The United States House of Representatives (2023):

> Established in Article II, Section 1 of the U.S. Constitution, the Electoral College is the formal body which elects the President and Vice President of the United States. Each state has as many "electors" in the Electoral College as it has Representatives and Senators in the United States Congress, and the District of Columbia has three electors. When voters go to the polls in a Presidential election, they actually vote for the slate of electors who have vowed to cast their ballots for that ticket in the Electoral College. (p.1)

Additionally, the specific number of electors from each state is explicitly indicated by the combination total of senators and representatives. Therefore, the Constitution gives strict oversight in the state allocation and the process of the Electoral College in determining the presidency. In the U.S. Constitution (1789):

> The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America. He shall hold his Office during the Term of four Years, and, together with the Vice President, chosen for the same Term, be elected, as follows Each State shall appoint, in such Manner as the Legislature thereof may direct, a Number of Electors, equal to the whole Number of Senators and Representatives to which the State may be entitled in the Congress: but no Senator or Representative, or Person holding an Office of Trust or Profit under the United States, shall be / an Elector. (p.2)

For presidential candidates to win the actual election, a candidate must receive a total of 270 electoral votes out of the 538 possible (National Archives, 2023).

Historically, making this decision concerning the Electoral College posed significant challenges, even in the early days of our nation's founding. During the constitutional convention, clashes between representatives from large and small states played an important role in decisions concerning the executive branch. The implementation of the Electoral College represented the first primary compromise of selecting the executive of our government (Slonim, 1986). Even during constitutional convention, many of the delegates favored direct popular election of the executive, which was referred to as the Democratic doctrine. (Slonim, 1986). "Generally, opponents object to the fact that the system violates the one-person, one-vote principle and may result in the election of a popular vote loser or produce congressional deadlock in close elections" (Harvard Law Review Association, 2001, p. 2526). Jones (2020) stated:

Imagine a presidential election, the first in history, where every vote truly counted as an expression of popular will. Presidential candidates could and would no longer fly over red and blue states. They would be forced to fully engage with rural, suburban and urban voters in ways that could potentially diminish polarization. (p.1)

Still, under the current Electoral College, larger states in population such as California (54), Texas (40), Florida (30), New York (28) receive the largest number of electoral votes (Leip, 1999). Therefore, presidential candidates must be strategic in assessing their own campaigning plans with an emphasis on larger states with a significant number of electoral votes. In addition, presidential campaigns might also strongly consider swing states, that are not typically Democrat or Republican, and yet have a large number of electors. These states could include Wisconsin (10), Ohio (17), Pennsylvania (19), North Carolina (16), Georgia (16), and Colorado (10). "Indeed, the very origins of the Electoral College lay in attempts by the framers of the Constitution to overcome the nation's deep geographical divisions by forcing candidates to construct geographically diverse bases of support. Candidates must win states, not simply votes, and winners must seek consensus by building broad coalitions of local interests that stretch across state boundaries" (Warf, 2009, p.187). Based on past electoral history, some states have traditionally voted for Republican candidates, and some states have traditionally voted for Democratic candidates (Dulio, 2004). Therefore, students that have a deep understanding of the mathematics and process of the Electoral College will become better informed citizens before they have a chance to vote (Markworth & Willox, 2012).

Problematic Issues with the Electoral College and the Popular Vote

Perhaps the main and continuous argument against the Electoral College is that it systematically distorts the results of the popular vote and therefore removes the democratic principles of the electorate (Ross & Josephson, 1996). By retaining the Electoral College, the voice of the majority of voters are silenced by not allowing the victor of the popular vote to hold the office of the presidency. Another argument is that the Electoral College forces presidential candidates to concentrating on a few battle ground states as opposed to campaigning throughout the nation (Warf, 2009). Instead of focusing on the need to the states, presidential candidates will be concentrating with winning a handful of elections in states that only represent the majority of the electoral votes. "Allowing the Electoral College to select a candidate who is failed to win the greatest number of votes is an exception to the standard for elected officials" (Bolinger, 2007, p.180).

Yet, the founders of our nation desired a Republic, with representation from all states including the smaller states with a fewer population. "The Electoral College plan earned support because it was uniquely fitted to the eighteenth century ideological requirements for republican government, its institutional arrangements, and accepted means of conducting public business" (Turner, 2007, p.412). In addition, supporters claim that having the Electoral College in place forces presidential candidates to engage in a state by state campaign; thus, not being able to neglect smaller states and also focus on local issues (Best, 1975). By eliminating the Electoral

College, presidential candidates would no longer need support throughout the country. Instead, the primary campaign focus would be on populous areas of the nation and ignoring smaller states, which would give less power and voice to marginalized states during the election process (McCollester, 2007). " It made a place for the states as well as the people in electing the president by giving them a say at different points in a federal process and preventing big-city populations from dominating the election of a president" (Guelzo & Hulme, 2016, p.1). Adkinson and Elliot (1997) contend that ending the Electoral College would enhance television campaigning, perhaps split political parties, and encourage electoral fraud.

Context for Teaching and Learning Inquiry Based Instruction

To have students actively investigate the Electoral College, we propose using an inquiry-based form of instruction, specifically the IDM. Since 2013, the National Council for the Social Studies developed the C3 framework, which encourages social studies instruction focused on the implementation of inquiry-based disciplinary concepts including: student led investigations, analysis, explanations, and developing arguments (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013). Through academic investigation and answering questions, students receive benefits such as cognitive and motivational capabilities, increased engagement, and greater development of students' critical thinking skills (Ness, 2016). Neurologically, students engage in inquiry-based instruction have an increased brain activity associated with pleasure, reward, and creation of memory (Singh, 2014). Wilhelm (2007) argues that this type of student centered and teacher guided classroom helps students develop their curiosities, drive learning, and answer questions to help address real world issues. Inquiry based instruction allows for asking questions, carrying out investigations, analyzing and interpreting data, and developing conclusions and explanations to promote a deep understanding (Wilcox, Kruse, & Clough, 2015). In this type of historical inquiry, students not only deepen their own understanding of the content, but they are also able to conduct their own investigations (Voet & De Wever, 2017). In doing so, students are able to collect and analyze evidence, even if it is contradictory evidence, in constructing their arguments about the past (Wilson & Wineburg, 1993). Therefore, inquiry based instruction gives rise to historical reasoning, a process in which students use evidence, logically analyze information, and use this evidence in a form of argument to support specific conclusions (Monte-Sano, 2010). The purpose of any inquiry is for students to ask meaningful questions, draw and develop their own conclusions from various sources, and communicate their conclusions which will lead to an increase in social studies content knowledge (Barton & Levstik, 2004).

To explore the Electoral College using a model centered on inquiry-based learning, we recommend the IDM. The IDM was created by educators at C3 teachers.org and currently aligns with the principles of the C3 framework established by National Council for the Social Studies. Our IDM on the Electoral College presents a compelling question, an introductory activity to start the inquiry, multiple supporting questions along with future resources, and daily formative tasks. The inquiry culminates with two types of summative assessments as well as a taking informed action activity to allow students to become active participatory citizens while engaging

with the topic of electoral college. The intent of this IDM is to provide teachers with a practical tool that they can readily incorporate into their classrooms, either in its entirety or by selectively integrating specific components to craft their own inquiry-based lessons on the Electoral College.

Implementation and Impact

The Inquiry Design Model provides a unique inquiry-based teaching framework to accomplish the context of the C3 (C3 Teachers.org, 2023). "Inquiry, which is the central concept that grounds the C3 Framework and the IDM approach leads to powerful learning opportunities for social studies students" (Cuenca, 2021, p. 301). The IDM does provide students the opportunity to evaluate sources, develop claims, communicate critically, and to take informed action. At the heart of the IDM is the compelling question. This compelling question is typically an overarching question, usually developed by the social studies teacher, that is answered after multiple days of instruction at the end of a learning segment. The compelling question not only provides a framework for the IDM, but it's a question that students will answer through the exploration and examination of documents and sources; thus, leading to the development of their own arguments. For this specific IDM on the Electoral College, our question is "Should the United States continue to use the Electoral College to decide the Presidency?" (**Appendix**)

At the start of the IDM is a section referred to as staging the question. This presents students with a brief introduction to the ideas and concepts that are part of the compelling question. We decided on a brief visual introduction of the Electoral College with a video from TEDEd that gives a concise overview for students. Next, students move to answer the supporting questions of the IDM. The supporting questions involve students in researching multiple sources, including primary sources, and completing performance based tasks. These supporting questions included subjects related to the Constitution, the popular vote, and the census, and explored how these factors collectively influenced the Electoral College. "Supporting questions focus on descriptions, definitions, and processes about which there is general agreement within the social studies disciplines, which will assist students to construct explanations that advance the inquiry" (C3 Teachers.org, 2014, p.1).

Additionally, students had to use the featured resources of the IDM (the US Constitution, websites, and news articles) to complete the formative tasks. These formative tasks included students writing a paragraph, developing a cause-and-effect diagram, and creating a digital poster. These tasks help students to develop their own social studies content knowledge as well as skills to produce clear, coherent, evidence-based arguments (Swan, Lee, & Grant, 2018). At the end of the learning segment, once all the supporting questions have been answered and the performance tasks have been completed, students are asked to complete a final summative performing task.

The summative performing task is an activity in which students construct an evidence based argument, while using previous sources, that addresses to the compelling question of the inquiry (C3 Teachers.org, 2014). For this IDM, students can create an interactive website that

details issues concerning the Electoral College, or develop an interactive timeline on the last six presidential elections and the impact of the Electoral College on the particular elections.

Lastly, concluding the IDM is the taking informed action section. This portion of the IDM allows students to make more relevant connections to the social studies curriculum. Students are asked to apply their knowledge into a larger and more relevant context, assess the impact and issues addressed, and finally, act in ways that demonstrate real world agency. Taking informed action grants students the opportunity to demonstrate the purpose of social studies education by informed citizens participating in civic engagement. This civic engagement can be conducted through local communities, state, or national governments. For example, in our IDM model provided below on the Electoral College, students will write their congressional representatives in support of or against the continuation of the Electoral College on presidential elections. Taking informed action is designed so that students make a rich civic connection from the social studies curriculum in the classroom to dynamic civic engagement outside of school (Grant, Swan, & Lee, 2017).

Recommendations

The national debate concerning the effectiveness of the Electoral College or it's abolishment regarding the presidential electoral process will continue in the realm of public discourse. The Electoral College's support from smaller states that desire a wide geographical republic versus the democratic doctrine of larger states that covet direct popular election remains a political struggle. The purpose of this article is to offer social studies educators a concise historical overview of the Electoral College, while implementing an inquiry based learning approach, the Inquiry Design Model. Hopefully, social studies teachers will potentially incorporate elements of this inquiry-based learning method while students practice active engagement in participatory citizenship. "Applying the skills of inquiry to contemporary issues both serves as an opportunity to practice inquiry as a habit of citizenship and also helps frame the utility of social studies education for civic life" (Cuenca, 2021, p. 307). Furthermore, social studies teachers might be able to utilize the news articles, websites, and primary sources as supplementary resources to facilitate an exploration of the Electoral College. By social studies teachers facilitating student led historical inquiry, students can be empowered to engage in academic exploration, thereby fostering their development as active and informed citizens. (Dewey, 1902).

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Appendix

The Electoral College IDM

Inquiry Design Model (IDM) Blueprint™	
Compelling Question	Should the United States continue to use the Electoral College to decide the Presidency?
Standards and Practices	NCSS National Standards: V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions VI. Power, Authority, and Governance College and Career Readiness Standards – History/Social Studies 11-12 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.3 Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
Staging the Question	What is the Electoral College? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9H3gvnN468

Supporting Question 1	Supporting Question 2	Supporting Question 3
What is the constitutional definition of the Electoral College?	How does the popular vote effect the results of the Electoral College?	How does the census effect the Electoral College?

Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task
Write a paragraph describing the constitutional process of presidential elections; specifically addressing the Electoral College.	Develop a cause-and-effect diagram detailing how the popular vote impacts the Electoral College.	Create a digital poster of the importance of the census and its' impact on the Electoral College. Students will submit and have the opportunity present their poster to the class. Pikochart Canva
Featured Sources	**Featured Sources**	**Featured Sources**
U.S. Constitution https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript	U.S. Constitution https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections https://uselectionatlas.org/ Articles https://www.cnn.com/2020/12/15/opinions/abolish-the-electoral-college-joseph/index.htm https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2016/11/15/in-defense-of-the-electoral-college/	U.S. Constitution https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections https://uselectionatlas.org/

Summative Performance Task		
	Argument	Students will develop an interactive website, detailing the history, purpose, and issues concerning the electoral college. This activity will create a deeper understanding of transferability by students constructing their websites, becoming content experts, and presenting those concepts to their peers.
	Extension	Students will construct a Presidential Election Interactive Timeline on the last six presidential elections; thus, providing information on the process and impact of the electoral college. Timeline using Sutori
Taking Informed Action	Write a letter to a congressional representative either in support of or against the continuation of the Electoral College in presidential elections.	

Using a Simple Conceptual Framework for Informing Thoughtful Student Engagement with Democracy in High School Civics Classes

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Abstract

The foundation of "good citizenship" in a democracy is a shared understanding and appreciation for engaging with others through a deliberative process to manage community conflicts. Based on our experience in teacher preparation training and university coursework, specifically in Political Science, we propose that social studies teachers utilize a model framework consisting of four successively related concepts (Human Nature, Collective Dilemma, Pluralism, and Pragmatic Idealism) to critically examine democratic governance with students. Our proposed framework is intended for use by high school civics teachers and college and university professors who are teaching social studies methods courses preparing their students for a deeper analysis of democracy including understanding the fundamental basis for our institutions and processes of democratic governance, appreciating the important role of citizenship, and having realistic expectations for outcomes based upon compromise. We believe this model can strengthen teachers' ability to more fully realize the purpose of a civics education: the training of good citizens who share the ideals of a pluralist society, believe in the democratic process, and have realistic expectations for the outcomes of those processes.

Keywords: social studies, civics, democracy, teacher education, citizenship

Over the past 40 years, there has been a growing consensus that Americans are losing faith in their democratic political system. From decreasing voter turnout to surveys indicating a diminishing trust in our institutions to solve continuing political challenges, Americans seem to be disengaging from civic politics. Today, our politics are often described as being wracked by conflict and controversy as a result of extreme partisanship and society being fragmented due to "tribalization." If we wish to be citizens of a cohesive democratic community, we must effectively teach civics so our citizens have sufficient skills and knowledge to engage with and evaluate our politics in respectful deliberation with others (McCarty et al., 2008; Bok, 2021).

Perhaps due to this environment, there has never been a more challenging time to educate secondary students about the benefits, processes, and realistic expectations of democracy as a political system. A system of government that students would ideally want to support, actively engage with, and ensure remains vital. "A twenty-first century civic education must meet challenges of polarization and growing diversity and inequality and equip people for forms of democratic participation necessary to the health of constitutional democracy" (McClain & Fleming, 2021, p.1771). While today may represent a difficult time to convince students to adopt an Aristotelian perspective of "the good

citizen," the foundation of good citizenship remains a shared understanding and realistic appreciation for engaging with others through a peaceful, deliberative process to solve community issues. Therefore, having students understand and value the processes of democratic politics and develop trust in its institutions should be the overall goal of civics education. The strength of a democracy relies upon a "faith from knowledge" about how the processes of governance operate and a belief that these processes represent, as much as possible, the ideal of a just community fairly balancing the values of individual freedom, community order, and equity among its citizens. If we agree that this is the basis for a healthy democracy, then we must carefully evaluate how we are teaching civics.

The purpose of this paper is to present a conceptual framework for teaching civics in high school which we believe will assist instructors in more easily explaining and critically examining democratic governance with students. Preparing students for a deeper analysis of democracy includes having them understand the fundamental basis for our institutions and processes of democratic governance, appreciate the important role of citizenship, and have realistic expectations for outcomes based upon compromise. This framework was developed from our experiences in teacher preparation training, undergraduate university instruction (specifically Political Science), participation in a university Quality Enhancement Program, and anecdotal evidence gleaned from interviews with high school teachers. Our audience for this discussion is both the high school civics teacher and college and university professors who are teaching social studies methods courses. The principal question we address is how we organize and teach content in a way that maximizes its impact upon students.

The framework we propose utilizes four integrated concepts representing the foundation of democratic politics and civic education: *human nature*, *collective dilemma*, *pluralism*, and *pragmatic idealism*. Using these four concepts has the potential to enable students to more easily make a personal connection with democracy as an organizational process for decision making and increase their democratic civic competence, the key in any effort to educate and engage "the good citizen."

Teaching Civic Competence Using the Four Thematic Elements of Democratic Governance

According to the Kentucky Department of Education, The National Council for the Social Studies (2019) contends that:

> The primary purpose of Social Studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world. Civic competence requires a commitment to democratic values and the ability to use knowledge about one's community, nation and world (p. 5).

If this purpose for civics education is accepted, the question we ask is by what means should we teach civic competence and respect for democratic politics? While there may be limitations as to the impact teachers can have on a student's political socialization, as Aristotle (2010) suggests, it is within the context of formal civics education where we have the best opportunity to develop a healthy understanding among students of their role as citizens and add to their political knowledge and appreciation of democracy.

A civics education, according to Gottlieb and Shuffleton (2020), enables teachers to nurture among students "identifications, attachments, and attunements across differences both historical and yet to come" (p. 751). Coming to understand and learning to appreciate the processes of democracy in

social studies classes permits students the opportunity to view issues using a multidisciplinary perspective. This approach for instilling democratic political culture will be more likely to achieve "the broader solidarity that democratic politics requires" (Gottlieb and Shuffleton, 2020, p. 754). Developing among students a sense of "political co-belonging" will result in the development of the idea of shared citizenship that transcends identity politics. This is essential if we want students to understand and appreciate the institutional processes of democracy that allow a diverse society to function sufficiently as its politics tolerate differences and enable conflicts to be settled peacefully through a political system that values equity. We must convince students of the benefits of a system that, while striving for ideal outcomes, accepts the reality that we find our truths and facts by deliberating with others about whose self-interests will guide societal decision making through "a process that values both the facts and the others involved" (Gottlieb and Shuffleton, 2020, p. 766). As citizens of a democracy, we must prioritize broader solidarity and pride in our political processes over individual interests.

Instead of focusing on an institutional approach to understanding our democratic political system by emphasizing concepts which may or may not be related, or sharing leadership stories which are not necessarily linked to appreciating democratic processes, we suggest that introducing students to democracy through a more targeted approach will provide students with an effective, overarching structure for understanding the complexities of democratic governance. If initial instruction is based upon a highly focused application of four major concepts to describe democratic politics (Human Character, Collective Dilemma, Pluralism, and Pragmatic Idealism), students are more likely to intellectually appreciate and effectively engage with complex civic issues while learning how a democracy accepts conflict as naturally inherent in human relations and settles disputes through constructive engagement. As Fantuzzo (2018) states, we need to develop a civics education that appreciates others' perspectives and cultivates "interpersonal solidarity" (p. 385). Because these four concepts are successively related (see Figure 1), understanding their relationship and application to managing conflict makes democratic politics more accessible and relevant, thus enhancing students' critical thinking skills and promoting culturally aware, socially responsible, civically knowledgeable, and engaged student citizens. Perhaps most importantly, using these four concepts as a foundation for a civics education may result in students gaining realistic expectations of the challenges and benefits of democratic political processes.

Figure 1

The Successive Relationship Among the Four Concepts of Democratic Governance

HUMAN NATURE
Unless we know otherwise, the assumption is that all people and groups are rational, pursuing what they believe to be in their best self-interest.

COLLECTIVE DILEMMA
As people and groups pursue their self-interests, they have differences with others pursuing their self-interests resulting in conflict, a shared dilemma.

PRAGMATIC IDEALISM
Although interests work for their ideal, they accept what they can achieve at a point in time given that they must compromise. However, they continue to pursue an ideal outcome and, in this way, conflict in a democratic society is pervasive and ongoing.

PLURALISM
As arbiters of conflicts among interests, democracies look to maximize political stability by engaging interests in a process consisting of negotiating, bargaining, and compromise.
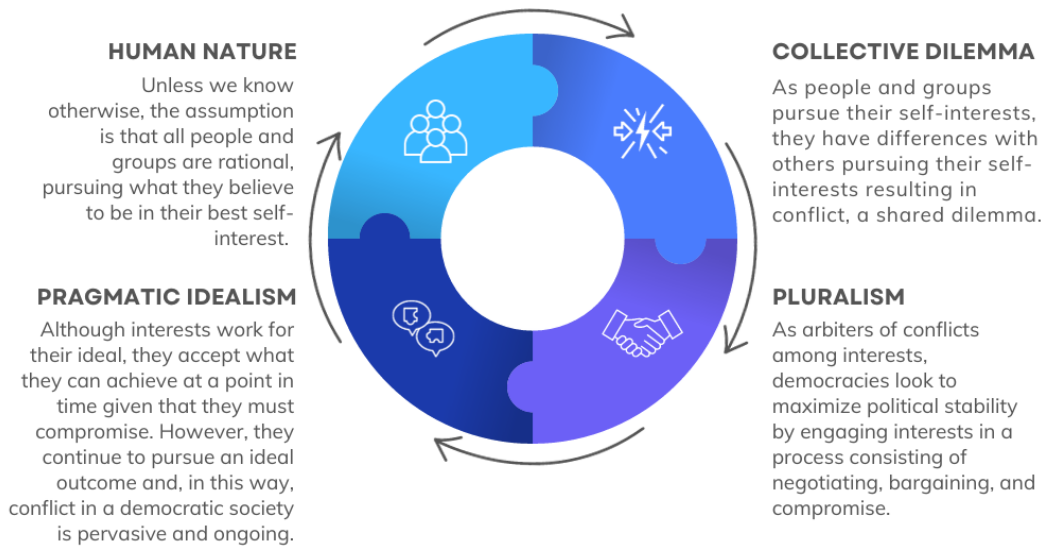
Figure 1 reflects a visual for understanding each of the four major concepts related to democratic governance and how they may be applied will help instructors recognize the power these concepts have to inform and educate students. The first concept is *Human Nature*. Before describing this concept, it is important to understand that the philosophical roots of government relate to ensuring individual and group security and a stable society that values a commitment to the good of the community (Aristotle, 2010). The assumption underlying the concept of human nature is that people and groups tend to be self-interested; unless it is otherwise known, we can assume that all people and groups are rational and pursue what they believe to be in their best interests even when it might not be in the best interests of the community (Locke, 2003). Examples can be easily constructed based upon students' own life experiences enabling students to see the basis for democratic governance in a very personal way. Connections with ideas such as "free ridership" or the "principal-agent dilemma" further strengthen students' deeper understanding of why we have government and how individual interests may conflict with community interests. Instructors may also include examples of how society naturally responds to the awareness of human character, for instance, by discussing why "one should not be a judge in one's own case," why we hold government accountable, or why we limit personal freedom.

The inherent tendency for people and groups to be self-interested naturally creates conflicts among them which results in a *Collective Dilemma*. Conflicts among interests can be predictable or unpredictable and can occur between individuals, groups, states, and/or nations. The basis for these conflicts can be differences of opinions and attitudes about life choices, policies and procedures, social expectations, or economic values and the distribution of resources, etc. The result of such conflicts can threaten social stability, and if the conflict is significant enough, call for government to be the arbiter between interests. As a community's continued viability is dependent upon finding common ground between competing interests, a democratic government's principal role is maintaining social stability (Aristotle, 2010 & Locke, 2003). With this context, classroom instruction may reference for students the means by which communities promulgate laws to guide behavior, adopt rules to manage social interchange, and develop institutions to address such conflicts at the local, state, and national levels.

Once a conflict between interests in a democracy reaches a certain degree of intensity, conflicts are generally moved to an institutional setting, ideally to achieve resolution. Competing interests then

engage in a process referred to as *Pluralism* (Dahl, 1989) which consists of interests negotiating, bargaining, and compromising; all activities that are only possible if no one interest group has the power to dominate the political process. Achieving any resolution to a conflict relies upon the support of others (see Madison's (2004) arguments in Federalist numbers 10 and 51 and the idea of "the fragmentation of power"). For democracies, finding an amenable solution to resolving conflict and maintaining social stability depends on achieving some degree of balance between competing interests. In legislative politics, a less than ideal compromise may be made in order to pass legislation. In judicial politics, a resolution may relate to protecting some element of a protected right or considering a punishment which reflects larger social justice issues, such as Civil Rights. In local politics, there are many examples of conflict resolution between neighbors over issues of aesthetics or building code violations. In the international arena, examples of pluralism can be found in trade agreements and diplomatic treaties. However, settling conflicts peacefully does not mean that the issue is permanently resolved, and it is important for students to understand that the outcome of pluralism is only a temporary solution to the question at hand.

Although each interest, through the pluralist process, works for its ideal outcome, the result of compromise means that each accepts what they can achieve at any one point in time depending upon their power to influence. However, interests are discerning and pragmatic, they understand that though they must accept less than the ideal outcome in the short term, they will continue to work toward their ultimate goal, a concept known as *Pragmatic Idealism*. Civics instructors may use a sports analogy as an example of this concept. Typically, players accept an official's call and continue play despite not necessarily agreeing with the decision. Also, what constitutes a 'good' or a 'bad' call can be subjective, and coaches may subtly (or not so subtly) nominally accept one decision to create opportunities for more favorable future decisions. Despite compromising, interests will continue to pursue their ideal, meaning students should understand that conflicts are a regular and expected part of democratic politics, a fact that may be difficult for students to appreciate. However, compromise between interests allows government to temporarily achieve social stability (the goal of democratic governance) and, if compromise is achieved through a democratic institution, it reaffirms pluralism as a valid process for addressing conflicts.

Perceived Advantage of Using the Concepts for Teaching Civics

How to best deliver an impactful, quality civic education in high school and college has stimulated much debate. As Gregory and Miyazaki (2018) note, despite the ongoing dialogue on this question, student test scores on civic literacy remain low. What is needed, they argue, is a new way to teach civics, particularly to those with lower socioeconomic status. Their research findings indicate that basic literacy is the most significant of several variables generally associated with higher student civic knowledge scores. Students who have a higher level of reading comprehension and whose parents have higher levels of education score higher on civic knowledge tests. While not surprising, it does underscore the question of how to address civics education for the rest of the population. What might we implement to make civics education accessible and sufficiently relevant to lift the scores of all students regardless of reading comprehension skills and parents' education? Optimistically, Gregory and Miyazaki (2018) suggest that it is possible to enhance literacy in the classroom particularly if every teacher is prepared to also be a reading teacher and to help their students achieve a

higher level of reading comprehension. What this discussion does not address, however, is the framework for delivering that civics education itself.

Cultivating inquiry in students is the key focus of the College, Career, and Civic Framework for State Social Studies Standards (C3 Framework). Avoiding prescriptions for teaching social studies, it instead challenges teachers to help students "develop the capacity to know, analyze, explain, and argue about interdisciplinary challenges in our social world" (Cuenca, 2021, p.298). The interdisciplinary nature of a civics education would seem to warrant this approach, sometimes referenced as teaching students "critical thinking" skills. Students should be able to identify (regardless of whether the question posed is economic, political, or social) the interests involved and the basis for their arguments, consider alternative perspectives, and reach a conclusion that they can rationally defend while remaining open to reassessing their position based on new information. The challenge to teaching students critical thinking skills is what Cuenca (2021) identifies as a framework for instruction or "core practices."

Cuenca (2021) describes these practices for teaching as an "organizational tool for the implementation of practice-based teacher education initiatives" and must be of necessity "small enough to be clearly visible in practice, but large enough to be analyzed, taught, and rehearsed within teacher education programs" (p. 304). Importantly, Cuenca (2021) emphasizes the need for teachers and students to communicate utilizing the same language, view questions through the lens of many different fields of study (recognizing the interdisciplinary nature of social studies), and use interpretive questions to explore issues. Teachers should also help students organize their inquiries to enable them to be more discerning regarding their sources and their approach to analyzing a question, make lessons relevant to students' life perspectives, and enable students to debate their perspectives with others in class, all of which Cuenca (2021) identifies as "a proxy for democratic participation" (p. 309). A critical aspect of teaching civics is "the ability for novices to recognize, appreciate, and reasonably learn how to enact certain practices in the social studies classroom" (p. 310). For both teacher and student, initiating learning on any issue using a simple frame of reference for understanding democratic politics, examining social issues, and posing critical thinking questions to enable a deeper understanding of civics would provide this opportunity.

If we are to develop a shared vision of democracy in our civics education, then the framework for teaching complicated and controversial topics is important. When students realize a personal connection with a topic and are able to express opinions in class, they are more likely to engage. To this point, Gargroetzi and Garcia (2022) remind us that the seminal purpose of an education is to "ensure that students understand their responsibilities as citizens" (p. 481). This entails helping students develop an informed voice and an appreciation for processes that work for consensus, value their responsibility to the community, and commit to participating in decision making toward a common good. For a student to work toward these goals requires open-mindedness and a willingness to challenge one's existing ways of thinking. Therefore, how we create an intellectual environment that allows for questioning paradigms is an important consideration for a vital civics education. In their examination of the impact of a "letter writing campaign" associated with the Letters to the Next President 2.0 project, where students choose a topic of personal interest as the basis for writing a letter to the president, Gargroetzi and Garcia (2022) stress the importance of sharing the letters in class as it allows students to "listen, hear, deliberate, and organize with each other for change…" (p. 491) thus

enhancing civic learning. Sharing our voices is important, but perhaps it is more important to have a shared vocabulary as it enhances our ability to cooperatively affect change. In this respect, a simple, unified framework for exploring the impact of our individual and collective voices on public policy is a critical element for a civics education that prioritizes the responsibilities of the "good citizen."

In respect to sharing a simple, unified framework for teaching and engaging in civics, it is instructive to consider an argument by Berger (2009) that "conceptual clarity and agreement affect our ability to diagnose problems and prescribe solutions cooperatively," a hallmark of democratic politics (p. 337). He notes that we need a more coherent conceptual thread that connects us to common definitions of civics and civic engagement. Before we explore and promote issues of political, social, and moral engagement with students, we need a shared reference for that conversation (p. 336). We agree that students are more likely to understand, appreciate, and engage with democratic politics if they have a shared vocabulary and a simple, easily understood frame of reference for engaging with the subject. We believe that the four principal concepts that undergird and describe democratic politics provide such a frame of reference for teaching students to be good citizens.

The Framework of the Four Principal Concepts of Democracy and Goodness of Fit

Additional advantages of using a unified framework for teaching civics can be found in its conceptual clarity. Therefore, it is useful to analyze our four concepts relative to Gerring's (1999) "Criteria of Conceptual Goodness." He asks, "What makes a concept good" and postulates that a concept that effectively defines a phenomenon, describes its attributes, and explains the relationship of the phenomenon to its attributes, is a "good concept" (Gerring, 1999). In Table 1, we present Gerring's (1999) eight criteria for evaluating the "goodness" of a concept and then discuss the strong compatibility of our four concepts with his criteria.

Table 1

Criteria of Conceptual Goodness

Familiarity	How familiar is the concept (to a lay or academic audience)?
Resonance	Does the chosen term ring (resonate with the student)?
Parsimony	How short is the term and its attributes (the intention)?
Coherence	How internally consistent (logically related) are the instances and attributes?
Differentiation	How differentiated are the instances and the attributes (from other most-similar concepts)? How bounded or operationalizable is the concept?
Depth	How many accompanying properties are shared by the instances?
Theoretical Utility	How useful is the concept in a wider field of inferences?
Field Utility	How useful is the concept within a field of wider instances and attributes?

Note. Taken from *What Makes a Concept Good? A Criterial Framework for Understanding Concept Formation in the Social Sciences*, (p.367) by Gerring, 1999.

First, utilizing a framework with our four principal concepts of democracy for teaching civics and for teaching those who will teach civics will be familiar to and resonate with students as they will

recognize that each concept has a high degree of familiarity in their everyday lives. We pursue our self-interests which are not necessarily the same as others', so conflicts arise that we tend to settle through negotiation, bargaining and compromise. We generally, if at least temporarily, accept that compromise.

Further, our framework makes sense in that it is not difficult to understand and has little definitional ambiguity in its application to democratic politics. The four concepts are very clear and are not in conflict with other descriptors or concepts related to democracy. The concepts are an abbreviation for the complexities of democracy and easily capture the essence of democratic governance processes. They have an internal coherence; they are connected and sequential in a replicable pattern regardless of the social or political question being examined. Despite being related, each concept is well bounded from the others and is distinctive enough to stand alone. In addition, each concept in the framework provides a powerful short-hand for a deeper exploration of "democracy." Finally, these concepts provide both theoretical and field utility. They theoretically represent the ideals of democratic politics, and they very practically express the reality of our democratic processes as well. While we acknowledge that our conceptual framework is not a perfect match with Gerring's criteria for a good concept, we believe that it fits well within his construct, making it a "good" conceptual framework for teaching democratic politics in civics classes. As Gerring (1999) states, "[T]he better we can "cover" a given phenomenal and terminological terrain, the better are the individual concepts that inhabit that terrain" (p. 383).

Aligning of Concepts with Kentucky Academic Standards

In order to illustrate how high school teachers, and university professors who train teachers, can utilize the four major concepts of democracy to teach civics, it may be helpful to see how they relate to *Kentucky's Academic Standards (KAS) for Teaching Civics* (2019). We selected this model because it is the state where we educate future teachers, but we believe our proposed framework of democratic concepts can be used in any civics classroom setting. Kentucky's standards are meant to provide guidance for actively engaging students with "social studies concepts, ideas and practices needed to participate in and navigate the community, state, nation and world in which they live" (p. 10). The report published by the Kentucky Department of Education, states that "students must be life-long critical thinkers and questioners who can undertake multidimensional, complex reasoning." Additionally, the standards "are designed to include a breadth of knowledge, not as isolated facts to be simply memorized, but as useable knowledge to be integrated into an understanding of the world" (p. 5). In this respect, illustrating how the concepts we propose are compatible with this goal is beneficial.

The chart below presents a crosswalk between the *KAS for Civics Education* and our proposed conceptual framework for teaching civics. We specifically reference the section of the publication that focuses on standards for civics education (p. 173). In Table 2, we present the outlined goals for achievement associated with a civics education for high school (pages 141-142) and how the four principal concepts we propose for teaching civic democracy are associated, supporting the idea that "civic competence requires a commitment to democratic values and the ability to use knowledge about one's community, nation and world" (*KAS for Social Studies*, 2019, p. 5).

Table 2 provides an overarching description of how these four concepts of democratic governance can frame any discussion of politics in the classroom. If students understand the processes of democratic governance first and use the same vocabulary to build a clear understanding of which

questions to ask about any political issue, then any example of politics can be introduced. Once students grasp the interests involved and the basis for any resulting conflict, they then can engage in an analysis of how pluralism will affect decision-making and understand potential outcomes. Approaching an examination of case studies of civil rights or economic policy decisions, whether at the national, state, or local level, allows students to build a shared vocabulary and framework for discussion. By using these concepts, teachers can offer students a clear path to gaining a broader and deeper perspective not only on specific issues, but democratic politics in general.

Table 2

Concepts for Learning Democracy/KAS for Civics Education Alignment

Roles and Responsibilities of a Citizen

Kentucky Academic Standards for Civics Education	Exemplifying the characteristics of productive citizenship includes adherence to and understanding of the social contract, consent of the governed, limited government, legitimate authority, federalism and separation of powers. It also includes civic dispositions – such as honesty, mutual respect, cooperation and attentiveness to multiple perspectives – citizens should use when they interact with each other on public matters. It means understanding the diverse arguments made about the underlying principles and founding documents and their meanings.			
	Human Character	**Collective Dilemma**	**Pluralism**	**Pragmatic Idealism**
Evaluate the civic responsibilities of individuals within a society. HS.C.RR.1	We know that people pursue their own self-interests, sometimes to the detriment of the community.	We know that people have conflicts with others as they pursue their self-interests and this causes the community a dilemma. One such conflict is determining our individual responsibilities to the community.	Using the institutions that the community has created to peacefully address dilemma, we seek to protect and preserve the community and continue to have people affirm their commitment to the community.	We negotiate the roles and responsibilities of individual citizens to the community and develop rules, laws, and policies to describe these responsibilities. However, we are constantly re-evaluating these citizenship requirements.
Explain how active citizens can affect the lawmaking process locally, nationally and internationally. HS.C.RR.2	As people pursue their self-interests they have conflicts with others, this motivates them to solve that conflict and engage with other citizens to do so.	The investment people have in achieving their self-interests motivates them to actively engage with others in order to realize some aspect of their interests.	People pursue their self-interests through the institutions the community has organized to peacefully settle conflict. They expend effort to develop law that supports their interests.	In order to settle disputes between self-interests, individuals and groups compromise and accept something less than the ideal in order to reduce conflict and enable some return on investment.

Civic Virtues and Democratic Principles

Kentucky Academic Standards for Civics Education	Understanding principles such as equality, freedom, liberty and respect for individual rights and how they apply to both official institutions and informal interactions among citizens is a fundamental concept of being a citizen in a democratic republic. Learning these virtues and principles requires obtaining factual knowledge of written provisions found in important texts, such as the founding documents of the United States.			
	Human Character	**Collective Dilemma**	**Pluralism**	**Pragmatic Idealism**
Explain how classical republicanism, natural rights philosophy and English common law influenced the thinking and actions of the American Founders. HS.C.CV.1	Constitutions and laws originate from practical experience based upon an understanding of human nature. Madison's Federalist 51 is an excellent source document in this respect.	Forms of government, such as republicanism, are based upon an understanding that conflicts between interests are inevitable. Laws enable peaceful processes for settling these conflicts.	In democratic governance, institutions are developed, guided by the pluralist process enabling temporary solutions to the clash of self-interests through compromise.	Divergent interests are satisfied for some period of time as a result of compromise, accepting temporary solutions while reimagining how to further express their interests.
Assess how the expansion of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights and human rights influence the thoughts and actions of individuals and groups. HS.C.CV.2	As societies adopt the ideal principles of democratic governance, such as inalienable rights, self-interests are more able to define and defend their interests as rights.	The expression of self-interests creates conflicts with other interests which puts pressure on democratic societies to find a peaceful solution to the conflict.	What constitutes a right is derived from a process of negotiation between competing interests in an effort to find a suitable compromise. As rights expand, prior compromises form the basis for revisions of what is a right.	While compromise results in a temporary solution to defining rights, revisions result in pragmatic consequences that raise further questions or illuminate challenges to adoption of an overarching societal understanding.
Analyze the impact of the efforts of individuals and reform movements on the expansion of civil rights and liberties locally, nationally and internationally. HS.C.CV.3	Examples of efforts to expand rights are ubiquitous in American history, beginning with the 'right to vote'. The impact of interests to strategically expand rights becomes a model for other interests.	The effort to expand rights results in conflicts between interests, even when that conflict doesn't appear rationale, for example, Women's voting rights.	Interests are generally guided by laws and processes to settle conflicts within democratic institutions, often however the ability to access these institutions requires a struggle to raise the consciousness of public opinion to the issue.	While compromise results in societal movement in respect to adopting law that expands rights an ideal solution is rarely achieved. The resultant laws are often challenged. American voting rights continue to be an example.

Processes, Rules, and Laws

Kentucky Academic Standards for Civics Education	Determining how groups of people make decisions, govern themselves and address public problems is a key component of functioning in a democratic republic. People address problems at all scales, from a classroom to the agreements among nations. Public policies are among the tools that governments use to address public problems.			
	Human Character	**Collective Dilemma**	**Pluralism**	**Pragmatic Idealism**
Analyze the role of the three branches of government in the lawmaking process. HS.C.PR.1	Institutions of governance are developed to guide human interaction, particularly self-interests. Madison's Federalist Papers # 10 and #51 describing the fragmentation of power is a good source.	Having only one powerful interest in society ensures it will dominate governance, excluding other interests. Fragmenting power among branches increases the probability that other interests will have a voice in governance.	The fragmentation of power typically creates the need for interests to negotiate, bargain, and compromise on issues as a result of the need to cobble together sufficient support for policy adoption or the passage of laws.	When interests are forced to negotiate policies tend to be more moderate as a result of similar interests' willingness to compromise. No one interest group will dominate the political environment, allowing more voices in society to have an impact.
Analyze the role of elections, bureaucracy, political parties, interest groups and media in shaping public policy. HS.C.PR.2	All self-interests have an ideal perspective as to what constitutes the appropriate public policy on an issue that affects them.	Various affected self-interests' ideal perspectives are in conflict. Depending upon the issue this can result in large-scale societal conflict.	The institutions of American democracy are designed to not only provide the perspectives of competing interests, but also provide the means to peacefully settle conflicts.	Citizens have the ability to become educated about issues and affect which policies are adopted through engagement with these institutions even if only at the aggregate level.
Evaluate intended and unintended consequences of public policies locally, nationally and internationally. HS.C.PR.3	Individuals and groups pursue their self-interests despite the potential for conflict in society with others.	The pursuit of self-interest causes conflict between competing interests, none of which generally have sufficient power to obtain their ideal interest.	The need to develop alliances with others creates the impetus for arriving at compromise with others, but the nature of that comprise is unknown, as are its consequences.	The point at which compromise is able to be achieved to create public policy and its impact is generally unknown. The consequences of compromise are not known until policy has an impact upon society.

Kentucky Government

Kentucky's government influenced the history and culture of the citizens of Kentucky. These standards promote understanding of the functions of local government where applicable.

Kentucky Academic Standards for Civics Education	Human Character	Collective Dilemma	Pluralism	Pragmatic Idealism
Explain how the Kentucky Constitution embodies the principles of rule of law, popular sovereignty, separation of powers and checks and balances.HS.C.KGO.1	The Kentucky Constitution embodies the ideas of the framers of the U. S. Constitution in terms of recognizing the potential threat to the state of self-interests and consolidated power.	The Kentucky Constitution assumes that conflicts will occur between interests. As a result laws, elections, and the fragmentation of power are designed to protect the state from control by any one interest.	The Kentucky Constitution recognizes that settling conflicts between interests requires, for the good of the state, a process that emphasizes negotiation, bargaining and compromise between interests.	The result of pluralism is a temporary solution to conflicts between interests as no one interests dominates all others.
Compare Kentucky's government to other states and to the federal government. HS.C.KOG.2	The structures and Constitutions of state governments are based upon ideals espoused in the national Constitution. Some variations in laws exist between states based on their historical political culture.	Some of the variations in state law results in conflicts between states which are resolved at the national level either through legislation or rulings of law in federal courts.	Conflicts between states are addressed through a process of pluralism that allows for each state to speak to its interests, thus affecting the federal decision-making process.	Rarely is any one outcome an ideal settling of a conflict and typically conflicts between states again arise as a consequence of compromise.
Describe how active citizens can affect change in their communities and Kentucky. HS.C.KOG.3	As people pursue their self-interests they have conflicts with others, this motivates them to solve that conflict and engage with other citizens to do so whether it is at the federal, state, or local level of governance.	The investment people have in achieving their self-interests motivates them to actively engage with others in order to realize through law and public policy some aspect of their interests.	People pursue their self-interests through the institutions the community has organized to peacefully settle conflict. They expend effort to develop law and policy that supports their interests.	In order to settle disputes between self-interests, individuals and groups compromise and accept something less than the ideal law or policy in order to reduce conflict and enable some return on investment.

Measuring the Potential for Usage in High School Civics Classes

To gain further understanding of the potential for utilizing our four major concepts as a "gateway" for students learning to appreciate democratic governance, we presented our framework to a focus group of four secondary education Social Studies teachers for their comments. The purpose of this qualitative discussion was to introduce our framework to teachers engaged in teaching social studies, learn about their current approach to teaching social studies, and discover if they would consider adapting their approach to include our conceptual framework. Three of the teachers with whom we spoke teach at public schools, the fourth teaches at a private school. Participants reported teaching World Civilization and American Government for a range of grade levels and stated that they adhered to state mandated curriculum standards (namely, National Social Studies Standards and Kentucky Academic Social Studies Standards). Participants were asked, "*Based on your current social studies curriculum, what does thoughtful student engagement with democracy look like in your high school Social Studies classroom?*" Respondents said they employed problem solving strategies, open discussions, and debates to analyze various aspects of the government and how it works. One teacher described using the absence of democracy when studying world history through the lens of the American Revolution. Another teacher responded,

My class touches on if true democracy exists in the United States. Students participate in various simulations, case studies and video comparisons to delve into these topics. The main

issue I encounter in my classroom is to dispel the stereotypes and misconceptions associated with various forms of government and political parties.

We also asked, "*Would you consider framing your current curriculum around the four concepts of Human Character, Collective Dilemma, Pluralism, and Pragmatic Idealism?*" Participants indicated interest in implementing the framework, but also described potential barriers to usage of the concepts. Table 3 summarizes teacher responses.

Table 3

Teacher Responses to Using the Four Concepts Framework in Classroom

Question: Would you consider framing your current curriculum around the four concepts of Human Character, Collective Dilemma, Pluralism, and Pragmatic Idealism?

Response #1	"I have used some of these ideas in class. Pragmatic Idealism is one that I use the most. Pluralism is also used in my American government class as well. Both ideas were taught to me by my Political Science Professor at Thomas More University. The other two would require more understanding before using them."
Response #2	"If it was something that would help my students increase their understanding of democracy and the role they play, I would absolutely consider it."
Response #3	"I am not sure. If I had more freedom and control over the content [taught in school] these concepts would be very beneficial for students. Time constraints and other materials required by Kentucky to be covered make it difficult."
Response #4	"These concepts would be fabulous for high school sophomores to truly understand. I also believe that these concepts would greatly help with educating the general populace and would increase our civic engagement in the country. However, I do not believe that the overall current student clientele in our rural, conservative community would be able to grasp and fully understand these concepts. Sadly, I do not see it being something that would be easily grasped or accepted by our students."

Although a very small sample, the four responses suggest that teachers are open to integrating new ideas in their teaching and are willing to be experiential. The first respondent had been introduced to our concepts in college while studying political science during his preservice teaching preparation under the author's guidance. However, he initiated the application from his preservice content training in his classroom, and while not using the entire framework, he appears interested in integrating the framework with Kentucky's mandated curriculum expectations. The third respondent indicated hesitation on integrating the concepts based on perceived curriculum limitations. While this hesitation may be warranted, the KAS (2019) outlines the minimum standards Kentucky students should learn in each grade level kindergarten through eighth grade or high school grade-span. The standards provide foundational guidance for what is to be taught, but do not address how learning experiences are to be designed or what resources should be used (p 12). We take this to mean that if properly introduced to preservice social studies teachers during their training, the four concepts for democracy could provide them with a simple, coherent framework for teaching according to the Kentucky standards.

The fourth respondent offered an interesting perspective on teaching in a rural school district, suggesting that students may be challenged to understand and utilize the concepts. This may be a reference to the very different role politics is perceived to play in rural versus urban environments. However, this response aligns with Levinson and Solomon (2021) who assert, "students are taught about how others do civics and politics…but they rarely learn how (or why) to do it themselves" (p. 517).

We recognize that additional field input is needed and plan to host future focus groups representing a larger sample of social studies teachers. In addition, in the fall 2022 semester, we began conducting surveys to obtain data from university students in introductory political science classes. Using a pre- and post-test methodology, the survey questions are focused on gaining insights into how first year students perceive their role as citizens engaged in democratic politics and particularly how broadly they conceive of politics as playing a role in their everyday lives. By using this methodology, we can measure their perceptions at the beginning of the semester compared with the end, after which they have been introduced to politics using our four concepts of democracy. We intend to analyze and present these data after we obtain a sufficiently large sample size to enable us to appropriately test for statistical significance and draw conclusions from our findings.

Conclusion and Future Research

In the formative years of America's public education movement, Horace Mann argued: "One of the highest and most valuable objects to which the influence of school can be made conducive consists of training our children for self-government." (cited in Bok, 2021) If we believe all citizens, regardless of occupation or socio-economic status, should understand how democracy functions, then it is critical that our society prioritize civic literacy. The conceptual model we are proposing for high school social studies teachers to utilize in teaching civics and for instructors in social studies methods courses at the university level, has several advantages for organizing lesson content to achieve this goal. Each concept in the framework is simple to understand, allowing students to approach complex issues by easily organizing them in regard to identifying competing interests, understanding the goals of these interests, and analyzing the arguments for the position each interest takes on issues. The framework supports a case study approach of any related subject matter, both current and historical. It provides an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the basis for political conflict whether that conflict is based upon economics, geography, or culture. It can also increase student engagement in the classroom as it places students in a position to recommend realistic solutions to social challenges based upon their understanding of competing interests, political power, and the application of pluralism (negotiation, bargaining, and compromise).

While we have confidence in the benefits of using the framework of the four concepts for teaching democratic politics, we plan to continue to test our assumptions through pre and post-test surveys in the classroom and expand the collection of input through dialogue with high school teachers and university instructors teaching social studies methods courses. We appreciate that there are challenges for integrating our framework in high school classrooms. In particular, we understand that teachers must know how to apply these concepts in a way that both enables them to meet state guidelines and provides an intellectual foundation upon which their students can base their understanding of the reasons undergirding democratic processes and institutions. Most importantly, it

is critical that students have pragmatic, as opposed to ideal, expectations for outcomes resulting from these democratic processes.

Our review of the literature and limited qualitative data from high school social studies teachers indicates that what is lacking in teaching civics is an overarching framework for students to gain an appreciation for collaborative decision making processes and outcomes which are the essential core elements of democratic politics. Learning about current issues alone does not result in students' valuing the basis for, or benefits of, democratic processes and the need to work with others to find common sense solutions to societal challenges. Nor does simply learning about current political issues illustrate to students the importance of democratic institutions for balancing interests and maintaining democratic social stability. We agree with the contention that students "at the high school level have a level of cognitive maturity to understand issues facing society…" and that "providing focused opportunities for students to acquire the knowledge and skills associated with effective engagement in our democratic society would be a prudent option for helping society address the current social, political, and economic conflicts." (Evans, p.62, 2022) Our model framework enables teachers to help students understand democracy using a shared vocabulary, compatible with the interdisciplinary approach common to social studies classrooms, utilizing a simple set of concepts that foster students' ability to develop a deeper understanding of, and appreciation for, democratic processes. In this way, we believe this model can strengthen civics education and enable teachers to more fully realize the purpose of a civics education: the training of good citizens who share the ideals of a pluralist society and believe in the democratic "rules of the game."

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A Tale of Three Histories: Picturebooks that Represent Differing Views of America

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Abstract

Current debates in the United States around book accessibility and school curriculum regulation reflect differing understandings of the essence of American history and identity. These understandings can be exemplified in elementary school instructional materials, including picturebooks. In this study, I examined three popular history-themed picturebooks that could be used in elementary classroom instruction. While I selected the texts based on immediately recognizable differences, I used qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2012) to conduct a systematic investigation of the messages of each. While all analyzed books were structured in ways that would make them conducive to classroom instruction, I identified distinct approaches to United States history based on my observations. Framing the discussion in previous scholarship related to approaches to history instruction, master narrative, and patriotism as a theme driving elementary social studies education, my interpretation of the data yielded three categories of perspective: glorious past, inclusive patriotic, and transformative. Examples from each analyzed book illustrate fundamental distinctions of these approaches. Yet, I note, the categories are not entirely mutually exclusive. Discussion following the analysis results suggests implications for elementary school instruction. I also offer insights on how the study might contribute to the larger approach to reconciling narratives that divide the nation.

Keywords: American history, elementary education, master narrative, picturebooks, qualitative content analysis

A 2023 story of books challenged in a Miami-Dade County, Florida K-8 school appeared in news sources across the United States. Amanda Gorman's (2021) poem "The Hill We Climb" was among four challenged texts that were promptly removed from the elementary school library to a middle school resource center (Rose & Levenson, 2023). Interestingly, another removed book titled *The ABCs of Black History* (Cortez, 2020) appeared to belong a genre common to books designed particularly for elementary school students. I was curious to learn more about this book and why it had been called into question.

Based on the information available, it seems that the *ABCs of Black History* (Cortez, 2020) was challenged due to the complainant's perspective that it promoted "CRT" (anacronym for Critical Race Theory) and "Gender Ideology" (Feinstein, 2023). Use of the term *CRT,* a framework through which systemic racism can be understood, has also surfaced in other challenges and debates related to history curriculum (Russell, 2023; The Editorial Board, 2023).
While this was a localized challenge, picturebooks are among resources being challenged and

removed from school library shelves and classrooms across the country (Pendharkar, 2023). According to Pen America (Meehan & Friedman, 2023), book bans in schools, which have increased by 33% in the past year, most frequently target books with themes related to race or racism and books that include LGBTQ+ characters. Cortez' book fits into both categories, though race is clearly the more prominent theme.

Teachers who incorporate picturebooks in history instruction have a vested interest in moving beyond the culture war rhetoric where labels are quickly assigned to explore the prominent and latent messages conveyed in books that they adopt for classroom use. Books that present aspects of American history carry particular views of national identity and convey messages to students about who is included in and excluded from significant historical narratives. I suggest that conflicts over history-themed picturebooks, as well as other resources that might be used in history instruction, are grounded in differing historical narratives and perspectives of national identity. Gaining insights on American history and identity from contemporary history-themed picturebooks may give insights into some of these differences. In this article, I explore three picturebooks through the lens of an educator, identifying attributes of these books that reveal perspectives on what it means to be American and how the stories they tell (and do not tell) and the people they represent contribute to this sense of identity.

Literature Review

Approaches to History in Education

There is a wealth of thought about the aims of and approaches to history instruction schools. Endacott et al. (2020) expanding on Seixas' (2000) discussion of orientations from which history is taught, considered the approaches of collective memory, disciplinary history, sociocultural history, and added the fourth possibility of postmodern/critical history. Two of these are particularly important in this study. The common collective memory approach suggests that there is a body of knowledge that informs an understanding of a collective *we* (for example, referencing identity as Americans). A critical history orientation delves into historiography, questioning ways that historical accounts have been generated with a specific concern about power dynamics (Endacott et al., 2020).

Stuteville and Johnson (2016), analyzing the social studies standards of five states, note how specific standards reflect perspectives on what it means to be a good citizen. An assimilation perspective, more represented in the social studies standards of some states than others, coincides with a collective memory approach that promotes national unity. Master narratives are central to history instruction that is oriented toward assimilation. Master narratives are stories that have power to shape and sustain collective national identity (van Alphen & Carretero, 2015; Heller, 2005). Van Alphen and Carretero suggest three ways master narratives are constructed: identification of past with present (for example, perceiving an essential sameness between American revolutionaries and present selves as Americans), idealization of the past wherein mythologized historical figures possess archetypal qualities, and teleological construction that uses later outcomes to make sense of historical events. For some scholars, the term *master narrative* implies national mythology used to mischaracterize acts of resistance so that

stories of events and people that could run counter to national myths are rather used to reinforce them. An example would be the inclusion of Martain Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks among heroic patriots, ignoring their messages and actions that challenged American master narratives (Frost, 2012; Woodson, 2017).

The Use of Picturebooks in Teaching History

Picturebooks offer powerful options for elementary history instruction. While definitions of picturebooks vary, the picturebook is distinct from other books in that it is a form of art where words and images are integrated (Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2017; Oberman, 2023). Use of the one-word label *picturebook* is based on a growing body of scholarship that highlights unique characteristics of the genre (Pantaleo, 2008). Von Merveldt (2017) discusses ways that picturebooks can blur lines between formats and genres. For example, a book may combine elements of fiction and non-fiction or may convey factual information in poetic form. As such, analyses of picturebooks must be attentive to text, image, and their interaction (Wee et al., 2015).

According to Forsyth (2023) picturebooks can be particularly effective in helping students gain historical perspective as the multi-modal nature of the books can make historical contexts more accessible to students than can text alone. Visual features that are useful in history instruction such as maps and diagrams can enhance the educational possibilities that picturebooks offer (von Merveldt, 2017). Picturebooks can also help students build empathy because they allow readers to enter the worlds of others, seeing situations from the viewpoints of less familiar people groups (Forsyth, 2023). Presenting a meta-synthesis of studies, Oberman (2023) found that picturebooks were used educationally to activate student thinking, serve as mentor reference points in ongoing inquiry, and supply information. Researchers perceive picturebooks to be useful in educational settings because they are sophisticated forms of communication that are simultaneously navigable by students (Oberman, 2023).

The Power of Books in Classroom Libraries in History Instruction

State standards for social studies education and elementary textbooks tend to reinforce a master narrative centered in the traditional demographics of power (Busey & Walker, 2017; King & Swartz, 2014). However, classroom libraries ideally offer educators opportunities to avail students of counter narratives and texts that reflect human diversity (Howlett & Young, 2019). One benefit of a quality classroom library is that, when undergirded by student interest, voluntary reading yields several benefits for academic achievement (Bishop, 2011). In addition to facilitating independent student exploration, a classroom library provides rich resources for shared literacy experiences including book clubs, read alouds, and guided reading—any of which can be a context for critical conversation (Wood & Jocius, 2013). I suggest that there can be a reciprocal relationship between the classroom library and whole-class or small group instruction, as students can help select materials for shared literacy experiences and those experiences may catalyze student interest for further exploration in the library.

The discussion about classroom libraries is pertinent to this study because well-curated libraries expand options for exploration of history while offering creative ways to tie learning

beyond the traditional curriculum to state social studies standards. For example, the Kentucky Academic Standards for Social Studies for grades two through five calls for achievement in asking compelling questions as well as identifying supporting questions, identifying cause and effect relationships, effectively working with primary and secondary sources, and constructing explanations (Kentucky Department of Education, 2019). Features in history themed picturebooks such as timelines, excerpts from primary sources, author notes that explain research methods, and backmatter that provides additional historical information would be very useful in constructing lessons that address these standards.

Theoretical Framework

History is central to present identity formation including national identity. History education is, therefore, often considered by political leaders to be instrumental in forming patriotism in students (Nash et al., 2000). This study is grounded in the theory that presentations of American history are as much about the meaning of present national culture, along with prospects and fears for the future, as about past events that inform these presentations (Apple, 2001). As demonstrated by previous studies, inductive research in children's picturebooks can reveal understandings about cultural perspectives as well as offer insights to practitioners, such as teachers, for whom the research is most pertinent (Torres, 2016; Wee et al., 2015).

Significance of the Study

As opposed to using a top-down approach that categorizes material based on assumptions about perspectives of American history, I wanted to interpret these perspectives based on evidence found in authentic examples. My primary research question was: Considering themes of demographic representation, contextual selection of material, and statements and symbols pertaining to national identity, what does each book convey about the story and identity of America?

Methods

I conducted this study using qualitative content analysis to examine selected history-themed picturebooks (Schreier, 2012, 2014). The qualitative content analysis approach has been used with other studies examining children's literature (Darragh & Kelley, 2022; Hayden & Prince, 2023). I used a hierarchical coding frame with each category and subcategory designed to help create a robust response to the research question. Qualitative content analysis allows for flexibility in revising subcategories to accommodate observations and for reconsideration of interpretations based on discovery during the process (Krippendorff, 2019; Schreier, 2012). This must be the case since data (in this case, what is found in each picturebook) is used to construct understandings.

Selection of Books

In addition to *The ABCs of Black History* (Cortez, 2020), mentioned in the introduction, I located two picturebooks that, based on online reviews and recommendations, seemed popular with

educators: *Separate is Never Equal: Sylvia Méndez & Her Family's Fight for Desegregation* (Tonatiuh, 2014) and *Revolutionary Friends: General George Washington and the Marquis de Lafayette* (Castrovilla, 2013). My basic criteria for selection included confirming that each text: a) was non-fiction and directly addressed historical topics related to America, b) evidenced historical scholarship in its creation, and c) contained features that would make it conducive to exploration of history in an elementary classroom (e.g., timeline or primary source material). All selected books were published in the past ten years (2013-2023). I looked at book descriptions and located online videos featuring readings of each book to ensure that the selections would give rich exploration opportunities. I then obtained copies—two by purchase and one by library loan.

Description of Revolutionary Friends: General George Washington and the Marquis de Lafayette

Castrovilla's (2013) book, illustrated by D. Kozjan, was listed among examples of complex texts for third graders in *Florida's B.E.S.T. Standards English Language Arts* and again in the same document on a "Civic Literacy Reading List" (Florida Department of Education, 2020; pp. 155, 168). Among other recognitions, this book appears on the Reading Rockets (2023) themed booklist titled, "From the American Revolution to a New Nation." The picturebook focuses on the relationship between mentor President George Washington and the young Lafayette who has made his way from France to the American colonies to assist with the Revolution. Though the story leaves off in a hospital room after Lafayette is wounded in a battle that the colonists lost, the triumph seems to be Lafayette's survival after an act of bravery and the opportunity for his friendship with Washington to continue (Castrovilla, 2013).

The picturebook's backmatter contains additional historical information, timelines of the lives of Washington and Lafayette, a bibliography with primary and secondary sources, and a list of translated French phrases used in the text (Castrovilla, 2013). In addition to the main narrative and full-page color illustrations, excerpts from the writings of Lafayette are scattered throughout the book. The book contains some challenging vocabulary. The word *ravenous,* for example, is used to described Washington's officers at one point in the narrative (Castrovilla, 2013, p. 26). The surrounding text, in a manner common to educational materials prepared for elementary students, provides a direct context clue to the word's meaning. The term *despotism* is used in the history presented in the book's backmatter—students would likely need an outside resource to find the meaning (Castrovilla, 2013, p. 29). Upper elementary students could engage with this book independently.

Description of Separate is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation

Separate is Never Equal…, written and illustrated by Tonatiuh (2014), tied for fifth place among the most banned picturebooks in the US for the 2021-2022 school year according to PEN America (Tolin, 2023). It was the top book on this list that met the criteria for the present study. Conversely, among other accolades, the picturebook was a 2015 Américas Book Award winner (Dillon, 2015). It depicts the challenges that Sylvia Méndez and her siblings faced after their family attempted to enroll them in school in Westminster, California in 1944 (Tonatiuh, 2014).[1]

Sylvia's father, Gonzalo, was a United States citizen who was born in Mexico. Her mother, Felícita, was born in Puerto Rico (Tonatiuh, 2014). Sylvia's family was told by the principal of Westminster School, the Superintendent of Schools, and the local school board that the children would need to attend what they called the "Mexican school" (Tonatiuh, 2014, p. 9). The book follows the history of Gonzalo Méndez' attempts at grassroots organization and eventual court cases that resulted in a victory for school desegregation in California in 1947— seven years before the *Brown vs. the Board of Education* (1954) Supreme Court decision.

Tonatiuh (2014) has a unique style of character depiction—cut-out like figures are situated in front of spacious shaded backgrounds. The back matter of the book includes an author's note that provides additional historical context to the case and the highlights information about the lives of central characters. It also includes a glossary, bibliography, index, and information about how the author conducted research. Tonatiuh drew his information from personal conversations with Sylvia Méndez and he also directly used material from court transcripts. This information might all be helpful in classroom instruction as an educator could use it in a lesson on methods of historical research. The glossed vocabulary includes several words that relate to legal proceedings such as *court of appeals* and *ruling*, terms related to education systems such as *school board*, and the cultural word *trenza* (hair braid; Tonatiuh, 2014, p. 38). Second grade students may be able to read this book independently.

Description of The ABCs of Black History

Cortez' book (2020), illustrated by L. Semmer, takes a poetic approach to presenting several historical figures who are Black. It is on the 2021 Skipping Stones Honor Awards List. The picturebook presents a broad but interconnected approach to African American history. As indicated by the title, the presentation follows letters of the alphabet, sharing concepts, places, holidays, and items of material culture that begin with each alphabetic letter—in some cases only one term is explored while several are presented in others. The backmatter of this book, titled

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[1] I have included the acute accent mark where appropriate when referencing family names though these are not used in the picturebook.

"Terms and Figures" (Cortez, 2020, pp. 52-63), contains additional information for the items presented with each letter. The level of knowledge shared far exceeds what one might expect from a picturebook. While some of the illustrations depict people or creatively convey a concept, a few could be used as helpful educational features. For example, the term *diaspora* is accompanied by a map that could be used to illustrate the contextual meaning of the term and the historical process it denotes (Cortez, 2020, pp. 8-9). Cortez uses a pictorial timeline is used to present the life of Malcolm X (pp. 48-49). While the format of this book is like other picturebooks that are commonly used in lower grades, upper elementary students would find this book both engaging and challenging.

Coding the Texts and Presenting the Findings

All material in each selected book was included in the coding process. To address the research question, I developed the categories and subcategories displayed in Table 1. In some

cases, decisions had to be made about how to code particular findings (specific rules are discussed in the following category descriptions). For ease of access and comparison between books, I presented the quantitative demographic data in chart format (Figures 1-4). Findings related to symbols and statements about America were subject to interpretation. Based on accepted methods for qualitative content analysis, I summarized these findings and presented relevant quotes and examples in continuous text format (Schreier, 2012). The latter findings are presented by case (picturebook) because the categorized units of each book are interrelated and must be used cohesively to interpret perspective.

As an example of subcategory revision, I ultimately combined the subcategories of *Asian* and *other/unclear* under one label (*other/unclear*) because of the low number of representations of people of Asian heritage and the fact that these characters, only present as illustrations, played minor roles in one text. The texts did not mention people of races or ethnicities not addressed in Table 1, though an additional illustration in Tonatiuh's (2014) picturebook was coded in the other/unclear category.

Rules for Coding Gender Representations

In the texts, the gender presentations of characters were mostly easy to interpret. In cases where an easy inference could not be made, I coded the representation as an unclear representation. I only included male and female gender categories because there were no non- binary characters identified or depicted in the selected books. Text references and pictorial representations were counted differently. Only one entry was coded for each character that was mentioned multiple times in the text. Two of the books focused on a few specific historical figures. The Cortez (2020) text, on the other hand, mentioned multiple historical figures. I followed the same rule for coding text references in this picturebook, but additionally compared interesting differences in frequency for figures who appeared multiple times. These comparisons can be found in the written summaries of coding for this book.

Because it was at points difficult to determine which pictorial representations were intended to depict specific named characters, it seemed more helpful to simply count all relevant illustrations with no regard to repeated character representation. I counted each illustration of a person who presented as female then each illustration of a person who presented as male. The goal in coding the gender demographics represented in text and by graphic illustration was the same—I wanted to determine the relative balance of gender representation within each picturebook. All mentions and representations on the cover page and in the body of the text as well as those in the backmatter of each picturebook were counted and coded.

Table 1

Coding Categories and Subcategories

Categories	Subcategories	
	Text	Graphic
Demographics Represented	Gender: Male/Female	Male/Female/ Unclear Representation
	Race: African American (Black)/ Asian/Hispanic/White (non-Hispanic)/Other/Unclear	African American (Black)/ Asian/Hispanic/White (non-Hispanic)/Other/Unclear Representation
Statements about America	Text	
	Positive/Negative/Neutral	
Symbols of America	Text	Graphic
	Positive/Negative/Neutral	Positive/Negative/Neutral
Contextual Inclusion in Narrative	Text	Graphic
	Inaccurate Not Included	Inaccurate

Rules for Coding Race Representation

The context of the narratives included information to identify the race of most characters mentioned. As the three books were nonfiction historical text, I was able to easily research named characters whose race was not clarified in the text or by observing connected pictorial representations of these characters. The illustrations in each book included characters who were described in the narratives as well as unnamed images. Several depictions of characters that made up crowds were not apparently intended to represent known historical figures. In some cases, people were not represented with whole images, or they were faintly colored to create the effect of distance. I counted these representations as unclear.

I used the context of each book to determine terminology. For example, Cortez (2020) included Queens from African nations in an illustration (pp. 34-35). It was clear that the author and illustrator intended to show continuity between these figures and more recent people in African American history. Following the author's terminology, I included the term *Black* in my coding, though for the purpose of discussion comparing picturebooks, I included this term under the same subheading as African American representations. Also based on the clear intents of Cortez, I considered people in her book known to have multiracial heritage as Black for coding purposes.

Many of the characters that Tonatiuh (2014) presented had roots in Mexico. However, a prominent character was from Puerto Rico. As segregation of people with Spanish-speaking heritage is a theme in the book, I distinguished Hispanic characters from non-Hispanic White characters.

Rules for Coding Statements about America and Written Symbolic References

I noted each statement that either directly referenced America as a nation or in which an evaluation of America (its history, character, cause, etc.) could be clearly inferred. I also noted named symbols—these are items or ideas known to stand for America. Examples might include an iconic American document or a character trait that an author clearly implied was exemplary of the American spirit. Because subjective contextual judgements were necessary for coding these references, I described each unit in my findings. I also included rationale for considering positive, negative, or simply informative (neutral) uses of the symbols and statements.

Rules for Coding Graphic Symbols of America

I considered American flags and any clearly depicted elements of the flag (for example stars used as emblems or in decorative ways where the intention was obviously patriotic) to be symbols of America. I looked for other known symbols, making judgements as necessary based on unique contextual circumstances. I described these cases in the summary sections of the findings with justification for each inclusion.

Rules for Coding Contextually Inaccurate Excluded History

Judging inaccuracies and missing histories involved the most subjective aspect of coding because I used external research to fill in what was omitted from the picturebooks' narratives, making decisions on what the authors might have done differently. While this is novel to content analysis, my theory is that the authors made conscious choices about what aspects of each narrative to include. For two picturebooks, I only coded negative examples (inaccurate and excluded). Cortez' (2020) picturebook required an additional approach because it presented multiple historical figures and narratives. In this case, there were interesting comparisons between histories that received robust coverage and those that, surprisingly, did not.

Findings

Demographic Representations

The demographic representations in each book are compared in the charts that follow (see Figures 1-4). The comparisons are presented in percentages because I wanted to capture the way proportional representations varied between texts. Figure 1 compares pictorial representations of characters in each book by gender. Figure 2 compares the numbers of individual male and female characters referenced in each text. Figure 3 compares the pictorial representations of people different races that were depicted in each picturebook. Figure 4 compares the racial demographics of individuals mentioned in the text of each picturebook.

Findings in *Revolutionary Friends: General George Washington and the Marquis de Lafayette*

Additional Demographic Observations

In every illustration but one, the men in Castrovilla's (2013) book are dressed well. Their roles appear to be important and honorable (for example, members of Congress and officers accompanying Washington, and soldiers). There are five pictures of White women. One of these women is pictured in the City Tavern carrying a what appears to be a roast turkey. Others are cheering male soldiers marching in a parade past them. The parade picture additionally includes what appears to be an African American woman waving out of a window. The illustrations clearly show women in roles that are subservient to the men. Castrovilla only named two characters individually—Washington and Lafayette. Correlating with the pictures, general groups such as the British (soldiers) are named and a doctor is mentioned by profession but is not personally named (Castrovilla, 2013, pp. 14, 29). All named groups were historically limited to men.

Symbols and Statements Related to America

The title page features a symbol of America—an illustration of a bald eagle perched just below portraits of George Washington and Marquis de Lafayette—that seems to announce the patriotic vision of the book. When Lafayette had arrived in America, in the text, he thought, "What a thrill to dine at City Tavern, among American patriots he so admired" (Castrovilla, 2013, p. 3). This positive theme of admiration continues throughout the book. As Lafayette is the central protagonist, his views of America seem to be very influential. Lafayette's thoughts are described like this: "He had always felt a call to glory. His heart enlisted when he learned of America's struggle" (Castrovilla, 2013, p. 4).

Though Lafayette was certain, in the text, of his desire to lead American troops, Congress is depicted as being uncertain of Lafayette. Castrovilla (2013) reported, however, that "Still, it was in America's best interest to invite Lafayette into Washington's military family" (p. 9).
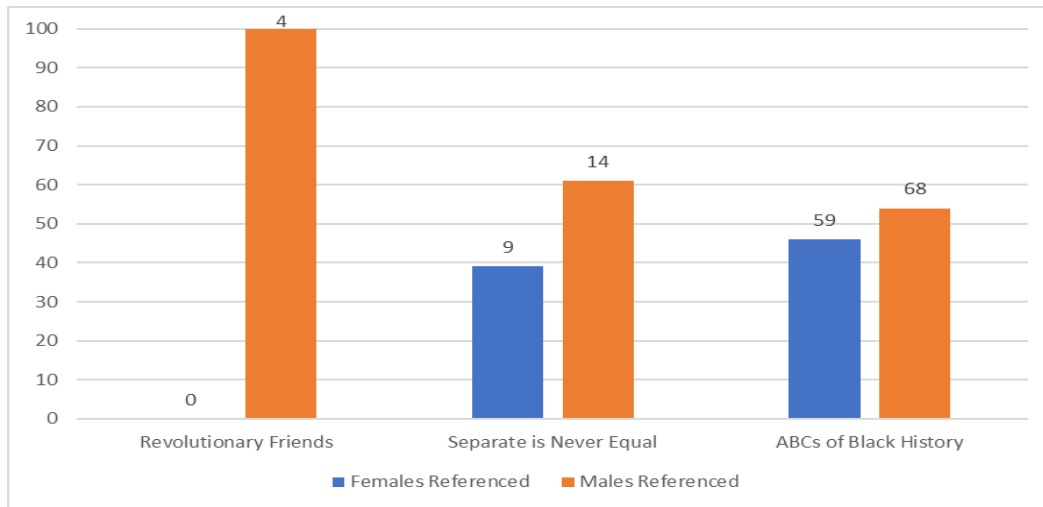
Figure 1

Comparison of Pictorial Depictions by Gender in Each Analyzed Text
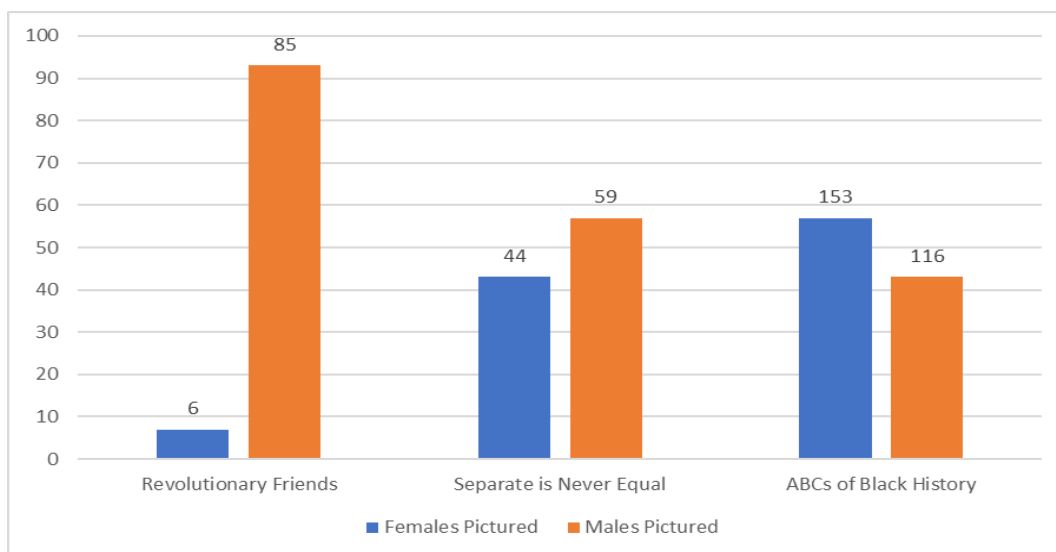
Note. The number of occurrences for each category is displayed as the data label above the corresponding bar.
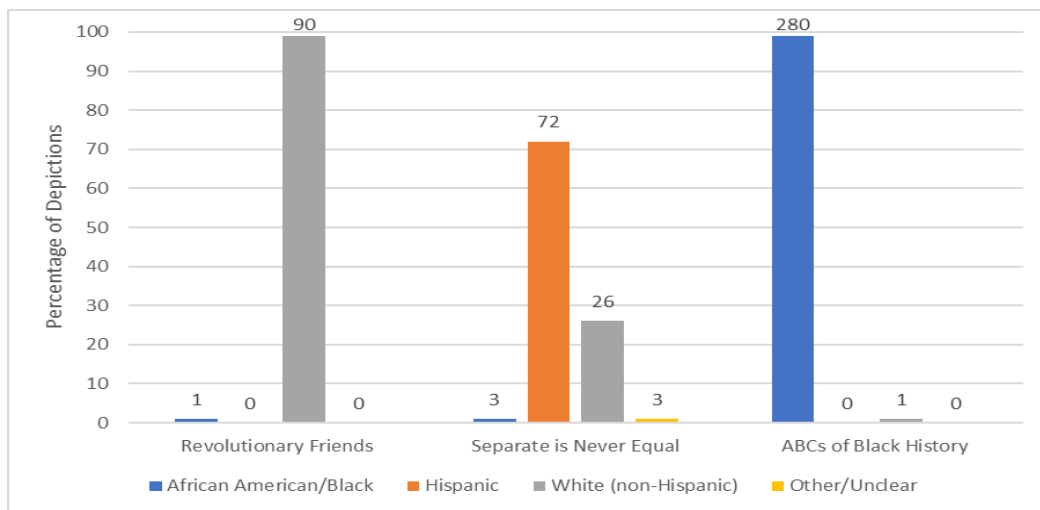
Figure 2

Comparison of Text References by Gender in Each Analyzed Text

Note. The number of occurrences for each category is displayed as the data label above the corresponding bar.
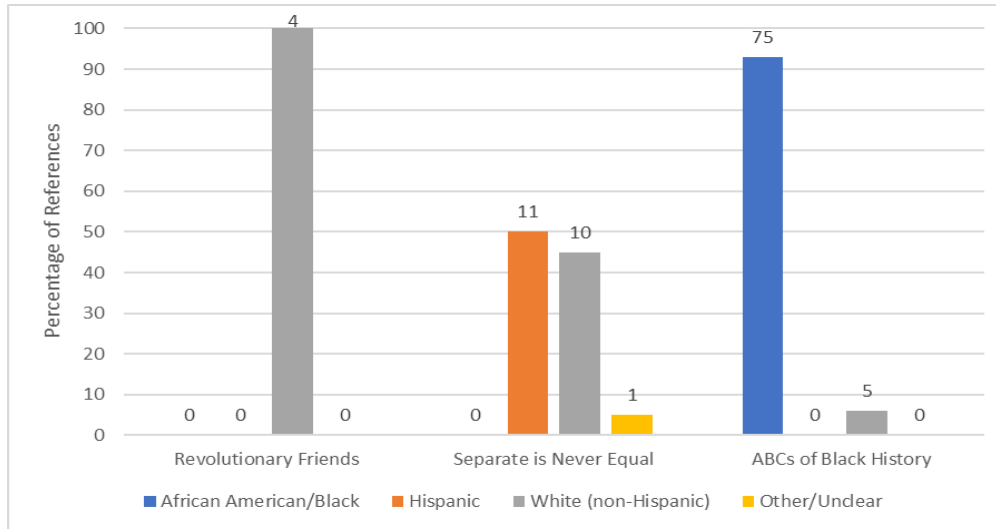
Figure 3

Comparison of Pictorial Depictions by Race in Each Analyzed Text

Note. The number of occurrences for each category is displayed as the data label above the corresponding bar.

Figure 4

Comparison of Text References by Race in Each Analyzed Text

Note. The number of occurrences for each category is displayed as the data label above the corresponding bar.

From this point in the book forward, a subplot centers on Lafayette's efforts to prove himself. This theme can be observed as Castrovilla states that Lafayette "…studied English while on the rough sea. He adored America" (p.10). The statements are not only intended to be positive toward the idea of America, but they also begin to paint a picture of expected American characteristics—here, speaking English is uplifted.

One problem is encountered when Lafayette accompanies Washington on a review of the troops. The mood shared in this context seems negative. According to Castrovilla (2013), the sight was, "An embarrassment! Eleven thousand ill-armed, barely clothed men who did not look ready to fight" (p. 12). While this passage could be viewed as merely informative, I believe that the passage functions in a way that makes a mythologized American character—the soldiers were an embarrassment specifically because they were not well dressed, well-armed, or prepared to fight. Two flags are depicted in the picture accompanying this text. One is an American (Betsy Ross) flag and the other is the Gadsen—*don't tread on me*—flag (Castrovilla, 2013, p. 13). These flags seem to function as positive symbols of a truer character of America amid a bleak historical moment.

As the text presents the story, Washington easily saves the day. With British troops on the way, Washington proposes a "parade through the streets" of Philadelphia in order to "raise spirits" (Castrovilla, 2013, p. 17). The accompanying illustrations feature an American flag waving high in front of a line of now well-clad instrument and weapon-bearing soldiers. Excited onlookers wave joyfully (Castrovilla, 2013, p. 17). The triumphal patriotic display is clearly intended to be positive.

Though Lafayette, toward the conclusion of the book, has not been given the opportunity to command forces, a situation with distressed American troops at Brandywine causes Washington to

personally authorize Lafayette to proceed. The following seems to be a statement about America because it reinforces the theme of character: "The marquis could get himself killed! But he looked so excited to prove himself" (Castrovilla, 2013, p. 20). On the pages that follow, the American flag is again in the foreground, this time as the soldiers return to battle "Sparked by Lafayette's courage" (Castrovilla, 2013, pp. 21-22).

Inaccuracies and Excluded History

One notable inaccuracy in *Revolutionary Friends…* concerns prominent illustrations of what is known as the Betsy Ross flag (Castrovilla, 2013, pp. 11, 15, 21). While some have argued that this flag was first carried at Brandywine, recent scholarship would indicate that this was unlikely (Harris, 2014). Even if American flags were available to the infantries at this time, displaying one in the manner depicted in the battle scene would have drawn unwanted attention to soldiers. There is no primary source documentation of the American flag's presence at this battle nor in the march through Philadelphia. According to Harris, infantries did possess flags,

but these came in a variety of designs and colors. The flag we recognize as the first American flag was first used on naval vessels (Harris, 2014). This inaccuracy is interesting because the use of a patriotic symbol that readers recognize (much like the eagle on the title page) connects the book's historical figures and military images with a sentimental patriotism.

The frequent display of Lafayette's memoirs (e.g. Castrovilla, 2013, p. 3) is complicated by the fact that many of his writings from the time of Revolution were destroyed—he later rewrote them (Bowers, 2019). According to Bowers, the later edits were made to suit the sensitivities of some readers and his family. Since the excerpts were likely included to give elementary students experience with primary sources, a deeper dive would have made for interesting discussion on authenticity of sources and the work of historians.

If Lafayette's relationship with Washington, and other American founders, over a longer period of time were discussed, Lafayette's abolitionist beliefs surely would have surfaced. Lafayette campaigned for a gradualist approach—strangely at one point by owning a plantation with enslaved people in what is now French Guiana (Trull, 2023). Lafayette apparently had the goal of modeling humane treatment of enslaved people with eventual liberation (Trull, 2023). But in the Castrovilla (2013) text, the horrible reality of American slavery is hidden. In the first memoir excerpt in the book, Lafayette attributes his journey to America as his own flight of what he labeled *slavery*—the conditions in France at the time (Castrovilla, 2013, p. 3). In the back matter, Lafayette is quoted as calling the French Bastille, that he had demolished, as a "fortress of despotism" (Castrovilla, 2013, p. 28). It seems odd to promote Lafayette's vision of freedom from tyranny in France while completely omitting the more terrifying tyranny of slavery that Lafayette would have seen all around him as he formed close connections with slave holders in America.

Perspective on American History

Castrovilla's (2013) book holds to a very traditional form of the American master narrative in representation and in retelling a piece of the nation's origin myth. Some might find value in the intercultural exchange between the colonists and a Frenchman. In the contemporary American

classroom, though, it is most likely that French heritage would be a form of symbolic ethnicity. The idea of European privilege, in any case, is clear—Lafayette's background afforded the opportunity to begin his American experience among the elite. Inclusion of Black patriotism would have been a historically authentic option for this book, minimally finding representation in illustrations of soldiers or parade watchers (Gilbert, 2012). The near absence of women (of any ethnicity and race that would have been historically present) and of Native American groups and individuals is also telling. In a sense, though, there is something very accurate about Castrovilla's (2013) representation of Revolutionary America. There is no pretense, for the sake of contemporary readers, that the people not represented were considered important in places of power.

Revolutionary Friends (Castrovilla, 2013) contains messages about prized American characteristics. Wealth is compared to poverty with contrasted scenes of poorly clothed men in despair and well-dressed men and women on a glorious occasion. Bravery and friendship are the values exalted throughout the text. Though the book introduces several French phrases, learning English seems to be an admirable quality.

The picturebook contains no criticism of Washington, Lafayette, American society of the period, nor the Revolutionary War (Castrovilla, 2013). This is a hero tale—the cause is assumed just and the actions noble. This exemplifies what Waters (2005) refers to as the *glorious past*—a history that justifies the present through a telling that glosses over extreme contradictions. Attention cannot be given to flaws of the heroes who are meant to serve as near-perfected models that are always beyond reach (van Alphen & Carretero, 2015).

Findings in *Separate is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation*

Additional Demographic Observations

The issue of terminology for racial demographic representation is complicated in Tonatiuh's (2014) text because, while racial perceptions by non-Hispanic Whites was a major factor in segregating California schools, people with Hispanic heritage were legally deemed White and identified as such. The book deals with the fact that among the people with Hispanic heritage there were different skin complexions. I chose to use the term *Hispanic* as a demographic category because of the common thread among the Méndez family's community was descent from Spanish-speaking countries (e.g., Mexico and Puerto Rico).

Symbols and Statements Related to America

A drawing of Sylvia Méndez on the title page depicts her with stars above and stripes below—a clear indication of the book's patriotic flavor (Tonatiuh, 2014, p. 1). American flags are included in illustrations on two other pages. One of these is outside of the courthouse where lawyer David Marcus is headed to file a lawsuit on behalf of the Méndez family and other families who have joined the case against segregated schools (Tonatiuh, 2014, p. 23). The other is inside of a court room (Tonatiuh, 2014, p. 25). Aside from the fact that flags are typically displayed in government buildings, the function of the symbol seems to be to convey the idea that justice in America can be achieved through the legal system. The book's title serves in a similar function, alluding, in the American psyche, to the landmark *Brown v. the Board of Education* (1954)

Supreme Court case that was influenced by the Méndez case.

In *Separate is Never Equal…,* Tonatiuh (2014) seems to associate the idea of America with traditional middle-class norms. Though the first statement regarding Sylvia's identity as an American is about legal citizenship: "She was not Mexican—she was American," it was followed by the statement, "She spoke perfect English" (Tonatiuh, 2014, p. 9). The idea of belonging at (what was considered) the White public school based on language and attire were reiterated throughout the book. In another example of an ideal of American character, Mr. Estrada, a man whose family joins the legal case, had returned from service in World War II. Though now a veteran, he is depicted in the book in military uniform. The connected text states that "He had risked his life next to Americans of all races and backgrounds" (Tonatiuh, 2014, p. 22). The implication is that Mr. Estrada's service certifies his family's belonging as Americans, but also that the ideals he fought for were contradicted by the discrimination that the families were facing.

Inaccuracies and Excluded History

One aspect of the history of Méndez *v. Westminster* is omitted from the book's main narrative and backmatter (Tonatiuh, 2014). The Méndez' lawyer, David Marcus, argued that those with Hispanic heritage were White, exempting them from the types of legal discrimination that African American and Asian American residents faced in California—an argument that the court accepted (Sadlier, 2014; Strum, 2014). The case was not truly about racial segregation. It is however accurate, as the picturebook claims, that the Méndez case laid groundwork that would be used in *Brown v. the Board of Education* (1954), particularly in the use of psychological and sociological arguments about the harmful nature of segregation (Sadlier, 2014).

There is a statement regarding the aftermath of the case that seems misleading: "That June, Governor Earl Warren signed the law that said that all children in California were allowed to go to school together, regardless of race, ethnicity, or language" (Tonatiuh, 2014, p. 33). Segregation in California did not end at this time. The California legislature repealed an earlier code that allowed the state to create segregated schools based on particular racial and ethnic descent including Indian (Native American), Chinese, and Japanese (California Act to Repeal Sections 8003 and 8004 of the Education Code, 1947; McCormick & Ayala, 2007).

Tonatiuh (2014) gives Felícita Méndez credit for managing the farm while Gonzalo, her husband, traveled to meet with people regarding action to desegregate (pp. 21-22). The text does not mention that Felícita also acted as a community organizer during this time (Strum, 2014). It is possible that this information, along with several other aspects of the story, was omitted for the sake of brevity. However, there are ways that it seems this text attempts to portray a story that is far from radical. Rather, Tonatiuh seems to use the ways that characters of Hispanic descent living in California conformed to accepted patriotic American standards and societal norms.

Perspective on American History

Callan (2002) suggests cultivating a multicultural democratic patriotism through history education. Such a call requires the formation or recognition of the collective *we*. Grounded in the collective memory tradition (Endacott et al., 2022), Tonatiuh (2014) attempts to explain how *we* have

come to the present reality of desegregated schools. Tonatiuh's text seems to fit an inclusive patriotic model. It does not appear that the Méndez family has been co-opted into a master narrative they would have opposed, as has been the case with some Civil Rights movement leaders. Yet, this story could fit into the construction of master narrative that incorporated what van Alphen and Carretero (2015) called a teleological approach, as it seems Tonatiuh explains how we have arrived at a present reality with no apparent need of future action. Beyond this, the picturebook has similarities to Castrovilla's (2013) book in uplifting as American traits good attire, the English language, and military service.

Findings for *The ABCs of Black History Additional*

Demographic Observations

As *The ABCs of Black History* (Cortez, 2020) picturebook is filled with busy illustrations, it is difficult to get exact counts of people representing various demographics. It is interesting to note that this is the only book of the three analyzed that included more depictions of females than males and it was the only book to name a transgender person—Marsha P. Johnson (Cortez, 2020, p. 24). Among four White men that Cortez mentions in the book's backmatter is Mildred Loving's husband (Richard)—his name is not given in the text. He is also depicted in the body of the book in an image of a family photograph (Cortez, 2020, p. 25). Virginia law forbade interracial marriage, but this couple took the case to the Supreme Court and won (Cortez, 2020, p. 57). I am mentioning this in relation to demographics as I find it interesting that the only person pictured in the book who is White seems to be included because of his relationship with an African American woman.

Symbols and Statements Related to America

Most of the symbols of America in Cortez' (2020) book are connected with people and are associated with what those individuals are known for. Explorer Mathew Henson is pictured next to a flag and a rocket illustrated next to astronaut Mae Jemison is decorated with a small flag emblem (Cortez, 2020, p. 10). Four Olympians are drawn with "USA" on their attire—three of their outfits also have decorative stars (Cortez, 2020, pp. 36-37). American colors and stars also decorate airplanes representing the Tuskegee Airmen (Cortez, 2020, pp. 40-41). In all cases, it seems that the symbols say more about what the individuals in the illustrations have done for the nation than about the idea or ideals of America.

A protester is pictured holding a small American flag along with a pride flag (Cortez, 2020, p.27). This perhaps makes the positive statement that protest is part of national citizenship. Or it may be interpreted to reflect the contribution African Americans demonstrating for justice have made to the country. A checkmark in a box symbolizing voting might be interpreted as a positive symbol of America—accompanying text reads, "V is for vote—do you know what that means? The freedom to pick and choose as you please" (Cortez, 2020, p. 44). This symbol of democracy is portrayed as a positive aspect of America, though it may be intended to say more about the importance of Black voter participation—there are no people of other races represented in the voting cue.

The most telling reference to America of *The ABCs of Black History* (Cortez, 2020) is a

strong statement that is placed in front of a flag that is explained in the backmatter to be an image inspired by the *African-American Flag* created by artist David Hammons (Cortez, 2020, p. 49). Cortez states: "U is for United States—this story is tough. The birth of a nation was deadly for us. We the people? In the land of the free? No one who was enslaved would agree" (p. 42). These words seem to be tied to a line on the following page: "So U is for unfinished, this American tale. With courage and strength, we will prevail" (Cortez, 2020, p. 43).

Included and Excluded History

Because Cortez' (2020) book is not one narrative, but the weaving together of many stories, it is difficult to pinpoint pieces missing. The research behind the history that is shared seems quite solid. What is interesting, though, is a careful examination of the parts of African American history get much attention as compared to other parts that are barely mentioned or omitted. Black Power plays a major role in this text. A large picture of a panther serves as a backdrop for the following text: "P is for power, It's part of our core. Sometimes it is quiet, sometimes it must ROAR like a Panther—isn't that right Huey P.?" (Cortez, 2020, p. 40). In addition to Huey P. Newton, Fred Hampton is named in the text (Cortez, 2020, p. 38). The narrative that accompanies the letter *X* is entirely devoted to Malcom X and an illustrated timeline with stages of his life includes a picture representing his imprisonment in 1946 and another his journey to Mecca in 1964 (Cortez, 2020, pp. 46-47). Stokely Carmichael and Bobby Seale are other known figures in the Black Power Movement that Cortez listed in the book's backmatter (Cortez, 2020, p. 49).

In addition to the emphasis on Black Power, it is interesting that Cortez (2020) never mentions the nonviolent direct action that was prominent in the Civil Rights Movement. The closest representation is a picture of a demonstration in front of a diner that has the following text connected: "O is for organize, for getting together to sit-in and boycott…"—Diane Nash is mentioned and presumably pictured on the page (Cortez, 2020, pp. 30-31). Martin Luther King Jr. is pictured and mentioned twice. The words near a picture of him read: "Did you hear Reverend Kind preach his dream of civil rights, human rights, a powerful theme?" (Cortez, 2020, p. 6). Rosa Parks, James Farmer, and James Lawson, among other activists involved with non- violent direct action, do not appear in the book at all. Cortez included telling a picture of people marching to demonstrate over time—marches from Selma to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement are portrayed in the same panorama. While some of marchers in these events would have included people of different races, only Black demonstrators can be seen (Cortez, 2020, pp. 26-27).

Perspective on American History

It is important to note that Cortez (2020) was not primarily concerned with American history in a traditional sense. The opening of the book proclaims, "A is for anthem, a banner of song, that wraps us in hope, lets us know we belong" (Cortez, 2020, p. 2). The reference to the Black National Anthem, the discussion of the African diaspora, and the prominence of the Black Power Movement in the text suggest an affinity to Black nationalism. Yet, the statement "…this story is tough…" (Cortez, 2020, p. 42) indicates a view of American history, and a future a prospect for America can be seen in the statement "…unfinished, this American tale. With courage and

strength, we will prevail" (Cortez, 2020, p. 43). *The ABCs of Black History* can be categorized as transformative, based on how the picturebook relates to American history, for a couple important reasons. It disrupts the master narrative, challenging core concepts, while offering an alternative that creates a space of belonging for African American students (Miller et al., 2020). The book, additionally, is not centered in a completed past, but uses history to promote future action (Busey & Walker, 2017; Galloway & Meston, 2022).

There is also a sense in which *The ABCs of Black History* (Cortez, 2020) reflects the glorious past motif, though not at all in the sense of traditional American history. All featured characters are portrayed as heroes. Where the book portrays the historical debate between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois, the historic gulf between them is minimized: "They had different ideas, but here is what's true: In their own way, they were thinking of you" (Cortez, 2020, pp. 40-41). The glorious past in this picturebook reminisces about Black history while the counter narrative challenges the White-centered master narrative of American history. While the characters represented in the book are models to be emulated, following the example of many of them would involve working for change.

Discussion

How Demographic Representations Relate to Perspectives on American Identity

The comparisons between demographic representation in the texts are stark. Castrovilla's (2013) traditional telling of history focuses entirely on White men. It is interesting that the glorious past motif, in this case, is coupled with little concern for inclusion. The idea conveyed is that whiteness and masculinity are central to the American identity. While other picturebooks depicting US history between colonial times and the Civil War have uplifted the strength of women (Anderson, 2002; Schwartz, 2022), *Revolutionary Friends…* reinforces the concept of women in traditional, background roles. Another popular picturebook presents the American Revolution from the perspectives of the colonists and the English monarch (Schanzer, 2004).
The justness of the revolutionary cause is assumed by Castrovilla. As such, the book does not invite critical thought or analyses that would help students make sense of the complexities of the world.

Of the analyzed picturebooks, Tonatiuh's (2014) *Separate is Never Equal…* displays the greatest racial and ethnic diversity. It seems that the goal of inclusive patriotism is to reframe American history in a way that presents a vision of America as a nation for all people. While the Méndez family is successful in challenging unjust rules based on prejudice, their story as rendered in Tonatiuh's writing, can fit into a larger American master narrative that is constructed with a teleological approach (van Alphen & Carretero, 2015). Though discrimination is the conflict in the picturebook that must be resolved, the story ends with the beginning of a harmony that seems to set the stage for a happy ever after.

This narrative reflects a belief apparently held by many college students studying history. While they acknowledge very troubling chapters in America's past, they believe that, thanks to heroes who stood up for justice, these problems have been solved. Though this understanding is certainly not universal, I have observed it in verbal comments and written reflections by students

from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Educators may reinforce this belief. Thinking back to my previous role as an elementary school teacher, I admit that inclusive patriotism was quite attractive. It was convenient to present a history that few would object to and that everyone could feel part of. This fuels my curiosity as to why this picturebook, of the three, has faced the most challenges and book bans.

The ABCs of Black History (Cortez, 2020) is the most gender-inclusive of the three picturebooks. Cortez is also the only author represented in this study to scratch the surface of including people with LGBTQ+ identities. The content analysis highlighted the rather surprising fact that the racial diversity represented in this picturebook was proportionally like that of *Revolutionary Friends* (Castrovilla, 2013)—the difference being that the characters in Cortez's book were almost exclusively Black. This can be understood in light of the context of underrepresentation and marginalization of people of color in traditional American history. The need for books that specifically address Black history (or the history of any minoritized group) in American classrooms is due, largely, to the fact that the narratives these books tell have been excluded from or sanitized for White histories that are meant to undergird a national collective memory. This condition warrants the creation of resources that demonstrate pride in the strength of people who have historically been marginalized.

Thinking about my experience as elementary teacher, however, I find myself wishing that the pictures of groups of protesters would have depicted some level of racial diversity or that, along with the *unfinished* American story, Cortez (2020) would have included a depiction of Dr. King's (1963) dream in which "little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers" (para. 17). Part of this desire is grounded in my constant effort to help students see the ongoing quest for Civil Rights as a struggle for the soul of the nation instead of simply the fight for the rights of African Americans and other minoritized people. Would diverse representations in a few appropriate places not make the call to action implied by the text more accessible to all the students who might be in my classroom? I recognize, however, that this picturebook is grounded in the soil of Black Power. The purpose of the picturebook, it seems, is more to inspire students who are Black, strengthening knowledge of cultural and political heritage, than to educate all students about history (though the latter may be a secondary effect). One value that I have adopted as an educator is the recognition that I, as a White male, need to intentionally avoid dominating the
narratives presented in the classroom. Making room for a diversity of voices affirms the agency of others and fosters democratic education.

The categories that emerge from this study—glorious past, inclusive patriotism, and transformative—are neither fixed nor discrete. Pointing out that Tonatiuh (2014), in a similar vein as Castrovilla (2013), misses a good opportunity for gender inclusion or recognizing that the works of Castrovilla (2013) and Cortez (2020) both present all included characters as a cast from the heroic past suggests that the picturebooks have more complexity than can be addressed by labels. There are potentially other perspectives of America that would be teased out of different picturebooks. Conducting the present study requires valuing process over product and the acceptance of partial answers to complex questions.

A Word on Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is commonly brought into national debates about history curriculum and even challenges to picturebooks (as referenced in the introduction to this study). While some would deny the relevance of CRT to elementary education, pointing to the pejorative use of the term (Wallace-Wells, 2021), the concept speaks to contemporary questions about history instruction as well as the present picturebook analyses. Beginning as a legal theory, CRT has attracted the interest of researchers in education since the mid-1990s (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate, 1997). In the field of education, the specific concerns raised by CRT include systematic application of a theory for understanding inequalities in educational systems (Ladson- Billings & Tate, 1995). With concerns about systemic racism in school curriculum, CRT advocates have looked to school and classroom libraries to offer counter narratives in which picturebooks that provide master narrative alternatives are used in lessons that foster critical literacy (Demoiny & Ferraras-Stone, 2018). The picturebook, *The ABCs of Black History,* serves as an example of such a counter narrative text as it offers a different perspective on history than one that relegates African American people to subservient roles as they await White rescuers.

Interestingly, CRT scholars have pointed to the failure *Brown vs. The Board of Education* (1953) to increase educational opportunities for African American students (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). As exemplified in the connection between the landmark Supreme Court decision and the Méndez case highlighted in *Separate is Never Equal* (Tonatiuh, 2014), *Brown vs. the Board of Education* is important to the inclusive patriotic narrative. The Court's decision is, in our national collective memory, the critical action that paved the way for racially diverse classrooms today. Findings in a fairly recent study by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (2016) may raise questions about this national myth. According to the study, more than one third of US students in K-12 education were enrolled in schools in which at least 75% of students were of the same race or ethnicity. The CRT challenges to *Brown vs. the Board of Education* are, I believe, too nuanced to make for a helpful conversation in the elementary classroom. Tonatiuh's picturebook, however, helps to reinforce the idea, burned into our collective psyche, that questioning the significance of the case would be unfathomable.

Toward a More Inclusive and Transformative History

King and Swartz (2014) offer a vision for inclusive history with the idea of re-membering (putting together in a new way). An aspect of successfully holding diverse histories together, according to these authors, is changing the power dynamics that centralize European/White histories and ideals while moving others to the margin. It is critical, in this shift, that people who have been previously seen as subjects of the actions of others in history are understood as actors. As an example of viewing people who have been marginalized as actors in history, Anderson (2013) points out that historical action in the Civil Rights history must be taught more collectively and as an ongoing movement as opposed to selecting a few past messianic figures to investigate. In this regard, the Tonatiuh (2014) and Cortez (2020) picturebooks can be valued as resources that address lesser-known individuals and events of the Civil Rights movement.

Cortez's view of the unfinished nature of the American story creates space for helping students understand their roles as actors. History, then, might be viewed as a story we are creating as opposed

to a past that is merely studied. Through reflection, writing, and discussion, students can work toward identity formation in response to encounters with narratives and characters in picturebooks.

While I have engaged in critical analysis, I have not suggested a ban on some books. Upper elementary students would benefit from critical discussions on representation in picturebooks as well as activities designed to identify messages that books convey. Demoiny & Ferraras-Stone (2018), for example, suggest an activity wherein books emphasizing master narratives are paired with books that present counter narratives for critical discussion. As students are often not independently aware of the hidden curriculum in picturebooks, it might be better to judge the classroom library by the communities represented and messages conveyed across the many books that it holds than to be overly concerned with the historical perspective of an individual book. This must be qualified, of course, by the realization that there are a few books that are deeply problematic.

The Essential Questions We Must Ask

Backing up a bit, educators might ask questions about the degree to which national identity is a useful goal of school instruction. Myers et al. (2015) discuss the idea that multiple layers of citizenship, including national and global identities, can be explored through history education. These layers of citizenship need not be seen as mutually exclusive. Similarly, approaches to history in the classroom will not be monolithic—the approaches discussed by Endacott et al. (2020) including collective memory, disciplinary history, sociocultural history, and postmodern/critical history may all influence the curriculum. In as much as history instruction is driven by a collective memory approach, the critical question to ask is: Who is (fully) included in the national *we*? In my view, differing versions of national collective memory carry a lot of political and social weight. Democracy may only be preserved through much effort to reform and unify national narratives. But, even in moving away from this approach, issues of

inclusion and participation affect students, and all people, at the local community levels. In education, the concern includes inclusion and participation in the school and classroom communities.

The questions addressed here are pertinent beyond the classroom. The tensions in the US that lead to fights over curricula and books in schools are based in the deeper narratives that tell us who we are. The differences are not over mere accuracy of information and, therefore, cannot be resolved through logical argument over content. Much of the information presented in the picturebooks in this study is factually accurate. Yet, individuals reading the three books may have different prerational responses based on the narratives they already embrace. It is difficult to come to terms with a retelling of our collective story that seems unfamiliar and, at times, unsettling. This is especially true for those whose familial and cultural identities are deeply entwined in master narratives that they embrace.

To address this, I suggest making counter narratives accessible. The same principles that undergird building an effective classroom library can be applied to facilitating platforms for public history education such as museums, public historical markers, art displays, and books. The definition of public history, in this case, can be expanded to include theater, Web presentations,

movies, and television series (etc.). Interaction with counter narratives, particularly those presented in a spirit of hospitality, may foster understanding at levels that arguments fail. As a powerful model for this work, I lift the Legacy Sites—The Legacy Museum, The National Memorial for Peace and Justice, and the soon-to-open Freedom Monument Sculpture Park in Montgomery, Alabama—sponsored by the Equal Justice Initiative (2023). As

with the use of picturebooks in history education, transformational learning must include ways of engaging people in critical conversations. Technologies for interactive online engagement provide a host of possibilities for public education. The immensity of the need calls not only for the recognition of the importance of educators but a robust definition of education, inclusive of the role of popular education, that leads to cooperative efforts for reframing national discourse.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Educators

Books available to children should reflect human diversity and resource dynamic instruction. Classroom libraries can hold a plentiful array of interesting and engaging books, including picturebooks, that collectively meet these objectives. I believe that the role of classroom library curation should be fully returned to educators, perhaps in partnership with students. Teachers, to make informed decisions about text selection, need opportunities to deeply engage with the materials that they are using. The content analysis in this study has provided a model for the work that I am calling for. Professional learning communities may provide environments for corporate engagement and beneficial discussion about materials, including picturebooks, that will be used in history instruction. That educators are engaging in the process of analysis and critical reflection is of greater importance than specific conclusions drawn from the process. As we *read* a picturebook in this deeper fashion, I suggest that we do so with an

openness to having our own presumptions and identities *read*. This, alone, will be a catalyst for change in our instructional spaces.

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