

Fall 2018

How Teachers Can Integrate Absent Narratives Into Their Manifest Destiny Curriculum To Better Understand The Experiences Of People Of Color

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HOW TEACHERS CAN INTEGRATE ABSENT NARRATIVES INTO THEIR
MANIFEST DESTINY CURRICULUM TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE
EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE OF COLOR

By

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master
of Arts in Education

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December 2018

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To Anna, for her constant love and support.

To my students, who this work and research is for.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Background to the question

As our world, country, state, and local communities and classrooms become more diverse, our curriculum should reflect our students' culture and history, especially in the realm of social studies. I have taught United States History for five-plus years at both the middle and high school levels, in urban and suburban districts, with students of all different educational levels and experiences from various backgrounds. During this time, I have noticed how weak much of the curriculum is in teaching about non-White history within certain aspects of the course. This leads to my research question, *How can teachers integrate absent narratives into their Manifest Destiny curriculum to better understand the experiences of people of color?* I believe this is important because there is so much content to cover in a limited amount of time and I feel that both the short and long-term social and economic effects on people of color are left out of the story. These absent narratives, stories of peoples left out of mainstream curriculum, experiences, and stories, are important to better understanding events throughout history (Bart & McGhee, 2016, p. 8) I want students to learn what happens to the Mexican people who then become American. Students need to know the negative consequences of expansion on American Indian peoples. From my experience with both curriculum and textbooks, much of this history is either rushed through, or overlooked entirely. A concrete example of the lack of non-White history in my curriculum is related to the independence of Texas.

One example I noticed was the lack of stories on American Indians and Mexican people following the independence of Texas and ensuing cessation of land from Mexico to the United States after the Mexican-American War and Gadsden Purchase. What is mentioned in the textbooks and curriculum standards are heavily American, with almost no mention of the groups disenfranchised by those actions. The focuses in the textbook my school uses are on what led to American migration to Texas, issues regarding Texas independence, and then concluding with the causes of the Mexican-American War as well as the resulting land gains for the United States in its aftermath. In addition to the lack of non-White perspective in our textbook, the current state standards also are part of the problem.

The current state standards at the time of this writing related to Manifest Destiny state, “Economic expansion and the conquest of indigenous and Mexican territory spurred the agricultural and industrial growth of the United States; led to increasing regional, economic and ethnic divisions; and inspired multiple reform movements” (Minnesota Department of Education, 2013). The coinciding benchmark from the Minnesota State Social Studies Standards published by the Minnesota Department of Education in states, “Analyze how the expansion of United States territory and redefinition of borders affected the relationship of the United States with other nations, provided land for settlement, and resulted in political conflict” (2013). I feel this does a disservice to students of color who have ties to these areas and history because it focuses on United States relations with other nations, not those who lived in the same place but now reside in a new country.

The primary documents in our textbook focus on reactions to the Battle of the Alamo or why the U.S. entered the Mexican-American War, all from the American point of view. When I wanted to find primary documents from the Mexican perspective on these events I had to do outside research. I then had to figure out a way to include these into an already condensed and limited course and unit schedule. Our U.S. History curriculum typically covers Mexican and Texas relations and independence in one day, and then the causes, course, and result of the Mexican American War the next day. All this leads to my research question which will be introduced in the next section.

Fundamental Question

My research question is, *How can teachers integrate absent narratives into their Manifest Destiny curriculum to better understand the experiences of people of color?* By incorporating absent narratives through a variety of strategies in a social studies curriculum, including critical race theory, culturally relevant pedagogy, and understanding by design, teachers can increase student engagement and authentic learning.

My capstone project question is increasingly important as our schools become more diverse according to the National Center for Education Statistics. According to their research, the percentage of Latinx students in K-12 schools make up 25% of all students and has seen the largest increase in percentage since 2004. In the school I teach in, 40% of the students are non-White, and Latinx students make up 30% of the student-body. Beyond the goals mentioned in the research question, there are added benefits to the inclusion of primary and secondary sources from absent narratives. Primary sources are

from the time period being researched, such as diaries, original maps, speeches, letters, newspaper articles, photographs, and paintings, while secondary sources are commentaries and interpretations based on information from primary sources and are not from the time period (Indiana University Library, 2018).

For example, adding absent narratives give Latinx and American Indian students a voice, allowing them to bring in their cultures and histories into the classroom (Bazron, Fleischman, & Osher, 2005). This coincides with principles mentioned in culturally relevant pedagogy where students are given this chance to bring their needs and interests into the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

The end result of this research could result in three positive outcomes that may show a number of student gains and successes. One positive outcome can show an increase in students being able to construct a more complex and well-rounded view of Manifest Destiny, backing up their view with evidence related to those absent narratives. Another possible outcome could be students building cultural competency and respect for other points of view. The final success could be greater academic success in the classroom as a result of students being engaged in the absent narrative material. In the next section I will discuss how I discovered interest in the topic.

History and Context: Finding a topic

I came upon this research idea for this capstone project when I started driving home from a graduate course, listening to a replay-story on National Public Radio of historian Rachel St. John's "How the U.S.-Mexico border was created, changed, and enforced," from the "History Forum," presented by the Minnesota Historical Society and

Minnesota Public Radio in 2017. I instantly thought about how I overlook the issue of what life must have been like for people with Mexican heritage, living in Mexico one day, Texas the next day, and then the United States a few years later. What about American Indians living in the same lands? It was something I never thought or discussed much about other than mentioning to my students how it must feel to be an outsider in your own home.

Similar topics about feeling like an outsider in your home that my curriculum does cover include the Mexican Repatriation during the Great Depression and Japanese-American internment during World War II because many of these people were US citizens at the time. We seemingly overlook the American Indian groups that were experiencing loss of culture and being the dominant group around a hundred years before, who lived and owned the land prior to American expansionism.

The instant I heard the title of the program I knew that I wanted to know more. I listened to the entire show and one more time the next day online as thoughts for my own research and application to the classroom began to grow in my head. Because of this, I feel it would make perfect sense to bring the absent narratives of Latinx and American Indian people's into the curriculum that are often overlooked in various parts of the history. I knew that this could be an engaging topic, in particular for my Latinx students and help bring their voice into the classroom, especially since we talk about loss of land and culture, typically only referring to American Indians. This can also engage other students who do not often hear stories about disenfranchised groups during the 1800s beyond African Americans. The next section will include my personal history, why I

became a teacher, why sharing this information is important, and how these are tied to my topic.

My Personal History

Researching this topic with the intent in helping to create better understanding, deeper learning, and build cultural competency for students comes from my own personal history. From a young age I always wanted to be a teacher and said so during elementary school, but I could never fully figure out why. Both my parents were educators. My mother was an elementary school teacher at a private Jewish school for two years in the early 1970s. My father began as a special education teacher at the junior and Senior high school levels in a large urban school district and spent his last ten years in education as a dean of students before retiring. While they never encouraged or brought up the idea of me being a teacher, I guess their jobs and subsequent stories made think about being a teacher. I had amazing parents and wonderful, supportive teachers throughout much of my education.

After my second-grade teacher read us a fictional book about a family resisting the Nazis in Poland during World War II, I was hooked on history. I could not get enough information and by the end of middle school, beginning of high school I knew I wanted to teach social studies. I loved reading and learning about history, government, politics, and geography. I especially loved talking about it. My undergraduate education helped expand that focus to psychology and sociology as well, while honing my love of teaching and working with students to make the world better through education. My favorite topics to teach and work with students have been on Manifest Destiny and the Civil Rights Era

because of the connection that is there, but that is so often overlooked in our curriculum and textbooks. I made it my main goal to help my students be able to construct and defend arguments and answers through the use of evidence and resources, no matter the level, content, or class. All of these come together when discussing this research project.

Another reason that I am drawn to this topic and this career comes from my religious background. I was raised in a Jewish household and one of the main tenets of Judaism is the idea of Tikkun Olam. Tikkun Olam is where we are taught the world is an imperfect, broken place. That may sound quite discouraging but there is a positive, uplifting piece that concludes Tikkun Olam. While we live in a shattered world, we do not rely on G-d to fix it and make it all better. It is up to every individual to do their part to fix the world and make it as perfect as a place as possible. For me, teaching students how to construct and defend those arguments through critical reading and research with secondary and primary sources, always asking if something is true, and being culturally competent is my way of achieving Tikkun Olam. By understanding one another, our cultures and histories, we break down walls of mistrust and learn to listen to each other. We can agree that differences exist and respect them, while learning to coexist and work together. That is what I am hoping to achieve in both this research and my teaching career and will be expanded upon in the next section.

Potential Significance of Capstone Project for Social Studies

I believe that this project has lots of potential uses and can help change the way educators teach not only Manifest Destiny, but all historical subjects by looking for the stories and experiences of those not mentioned and help students see other perspectives

and better understand historical contexts of events. From this project teachers can feel inspired to research stories not in their textbooks and know that there are numerous ways to incorporate them into the curriculum to develop deeper student knowledge and engagement. I believe that teachers can learn how to create opportunities for students to get involved in their own research and demonstration of learning by encouraging the exploration of stories outside a curriculum outline, textbook, and standards. The ultimate potential is that this can help reshape social studies curriculum from just a history of major people, topics, and perspectives, typically told from the winners and white, Indo-European viewpoints, to one that includes as many relevant voices as possible to the content. This can start with Manifest Destiny curriculum redesigns, expand throughout United States History curriculum, to all history curriculum, classes, and lessons.

Chapter One Summary

This chapter introduced the purpose of my research, to use primary sources of groups that were affected and often overlooked when covering the Manifest Destiny unit. The goal of using these resources is to increase student engagement and voice from my increasingly diverse student population and build cultural competency amongst them. I selected this topic because I believe in helping students construct knowledge. By focusing on this topic with a diverse range of sources and perspectives, it will increase student understanding of the themes and events. As a result this project will enrich the conversation and complexity of issues around nationality, citizenship, and immigration. Much of this comes from my love of historical research and love of education, but mainly out of feeling that this will help students and teachers now and in the future. By giving

students context of events and use of these materials will help them build respect and understanding for each others cultures. My project can also help teachers look for resources in what may be a straightforward curriculum, seeing stories that can show what happens to people impacted by U.S. expansion, and perhaps encourage them to add absent narratives into other parts of the curriculum All of this ties into the Jewish tenet of Tikkun Olam and helping people to fix the world through understanding each other.

Introduction to Chapter Two

Chapter Two will present a review of current literature related to Manifest Destiny curriculum of both secondary and primary sources, cultural competency, and conversations related to instruction of nationality and citizenship. The review will include definitions of academic vocabulary mentioned in the research question. Cultural competency and culturally relevant pedagogy will be defined and their importance and implementation will be reviewed and discussed. Also included will be how to best introduce and implement the use of primary sources into the class.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to investigate related research and topics related to my research question. *How can teachers integrate absent narratives into their Manifest Destiny curriculum to better understand the experiences of people of color?* The purpose of this project is to provide information, research, and modified lessons and assessments on where stories and experiences of people of color fit in Manifest Destiny curriculum. This literature review includes the subtopics within my research question. First, I will explore the idea of Manifest Destiny and how it is currently presented in certain regular-level and Advanced-Placement level textbooks and curriculum. This is done to show how textbooks and curriculum include or leave out certain non-American points of view and experiences. Through revealing this information, it helps to establish a baseline of what absent narratives should be included in certain sections of the curriculum.

Next, I will examine absent narratives and the various pedagogies and strategies that educators can use to integrate absent narratives into their social studies curriculum. This is important because it provides a number of practices that teachers can use, with rationale, to best implement absent narratives. It will explain why absent narratives should be used to increase student's understanding of complex events and issues during the era of Manifest Destiny, giving voices to peoples whose stories are overlooked or

forgotten in curriculum and textbooks. This summarizes the intention of the following literature review, which begins with the concept of Manifest Destiny.

Manifest Destiny

This section will provide a basis for how Manifest Destiny is covered in curriculum outlines, unit plans, and in 6-12 social studies textbooks, with an emphasis on why it is covered in this manner. It is important to see what information is given in these resources and how that shapes the way curriculum is designed.

Manifest Destiny is typically a unit covered in U.S. History curriculum referring to the expansion of the United States from between 1803-1898, though typically thought of between 1820-1853 as American populations migrated westward, developing new lands acquired by treaties and warfare (Edwards, Henretta, Hinderaker, & Self, 2014). The term Manifest Destiny was coined by newspaperman John Louis O'Sullivan in 1845 in article his article *Annexation*. The belief, as stated by O'Sullivan, was that it was the United States' destiny to spread across North America and settle the land, destined by God because of events that had led to U.S. expansion, thus showing God's favor, (as cited in The American YAWP, 2019). This is typically taught to students under the idea that the United States was destined by G-d to claim the continent from the Atlantic to Pacific Oceans, with generally American-centric viewpoints and perspectives for positive reasons related to said expansion and migration. The claim made by O'Sullivan and presented in curriculum and textbooks is key to understanding why the United States expanded and treated the populations they then ruled over in the ways they did. It

connects to the importance of absent narratives as a counter for the reasons the United States expanded and the consequences of that expansion on those populations.

The four United History textbooks included in this literature review are three high school based texts published in the last five years, with one being focused for Advanced Placement United States History curriculum, and one middle school level textbook from 1991. The middle school text is *American Adventures: People Making History* by Peck with Deyle. The first mainstream high school text is *United States History* (8th ed), by Deverell and Gray White, supported by the History Channel and published in 2012. The second mainstream high school text is the one used by my school in our curriculum, *United States History & Geography*, was published in 2016 by McGraw Hill and written by Appleby, Brinkley, Broussard, McPherson, and Ritchie. The Advanced Placement text was published in 2014, authored by Edwards, Henretta, Hinderaker, and Self, titled *America's History*.

All four textbooks have sections on American Indian history and culture, with all but Edwards et al. (2014), having it as one of the first two chapters of the book. Edwards et al. (2014) intersperses those sections when certain American Indian tribes come into contact with European people's or become the focus of the section, such as during Manifest Destiny when the authors mention the lifestyles of and American interactions with the Comanches for the first time. All the texts are similar in regards to how they cover some of the reasons for American expansions, including farming, access to resources such as gold, slavery, religion, and the feeling of American entitlement under the premise of Manifest Destiny. All the textbooks also agree that the United States is to

blame for causing the Mexican-American War, with the U.S. making expansionist claims in order to reach the Pacific Ocean.

Despite their similarities, the textbooks do not always present the same information or present them in the same order. An example is when they present the issue of migration to Texas and its eventual independence. All of the mainstream textbooks connect it under their expansionism/Manifest Destiny chapters and sections, while Edwards et al. (2014) put it in a chapter related to just the expansion of Southern society, with a strong emphasis on slavery. This is a key difference because of the placement into a section that emphasizes the expansion of slavery into Texas within the context of both the Missouri Compromise denying any new lands in the U.S. south of Missouri to have slaves, and Americans migrating to Mexican-run Texas to expand slavery. All the textbooks mention that the issue of slavery was one reason that led to Texas declaring independence, but Edwards et al. (2014) is the only one who openly combines the two ideas. This is not surprising because it is an Advanced Placement textbook and that synthesizing ideas is a skill students must learn and master in order to pass the exam.

Within the section on the Mexican-American War, Appleby et al. (2016), provided two primary sources that discuss the American interests in going to war with Mexico on page 223. One of the sources, from President Polk discussed how American blood has been shed by Mexico after the Mexican government refused to work with the U.S. envoy on negotiations, and that war was necessary for the United States to protect Texas and American sovereignty. The other is from former slave Frederick Douglass who decries the causes of war and the initial independence of Texas as illegal and under the

guise of expanding slavery. While these two sources offer good contrasting reasons for war that can be used to build students analytical skills and build deeper conversations and understandings, there is a missed opportunity to present how the Mexican government and people felt about it.

When it comes to discussing the lifestyles and cultures of Mexicans who inhabited the land prior to American migrations the newer books, Edwards et al. (2014), Deverell et al. (2012), and Appleby et al. (2016), each devoted a section in their chapters related to U.S. expansion. The locations the books focus on are mainly California and Texas, primarily describing the Mexicans as ranchers and cowboys, discussing Mexican relations with American Indian tribes, and mentions of religious life and the role of women.

After the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo ended the Mexican-American War and Mexico sold much of their northern territory above the Rio Grande River to the United States, only two of the textbooks, Edwards et al. (2014) and Deverell et al. (2012), included information on the Mexicans and American Indians who chose to stay in these lands now belonging to the United States. Both textbooks mention that these peoples were promised citizenship and equal treatment under the law, including property rights, but that they were often disregarded in favor of White Americans.

None of the textbooks mention the loss of culture, religion, or language outside of the assimilation of American Indians. Appleby et al. (2016) does not mention how either group is treated until much later in book. Treatment of Mexicans is not mentioned again until the Latinx Civil Rights Movement, but even then only recognizing discrimination

starting in the 1920s and 1930s, leading to the deportation of millions of Mexicans during the Great Depression (Appleby et al., 2016, p. 738). Appleby et al. (2016) only mentions treatment of American Indians later in the textbook in the Civil Rights chapter with the American Indian Movement, and earlier in the chapter, “Settling the West”, devoting Section 3 to American Indians with the title, “Native Americans” (pp. 315-319).

There is no mention of how the Mexican-American War affected those groups living in the now southwestern United States, instead focusing on the tribes living on the plains, from Minnesota to Oregon and south to Colorado, and their relations with trader and U.S. government officials over treaties, as well as settlers encroaching on their lands. The only mention of these tribes is a map on page 317 that said “Skeleton Canyon, 1886: Apache leader Geronimo surrendered (Appleby et al., 2016)”. The section continued with American attempts at assimilating American Indians with boarding schools and allotments on pages 318-319.

None of the textbooks provide much in the way for primary sources that present the Mexican perspective related to American expansion in Texas. In fact, the only book that provides any primary documents on the issue is a map based on properties owned by American immigrants, called *American Settle of Texas 1820s*, provided by Appleby et al. (2016) on page 217. To find more information related to the Texas independence movement, there is a lesson plan with primary sources, provided by The Star of the Republic Museum online called, *The Convention of 1836: Grievances to Independence*. The lesson plan, which can be retrieved from

<http://www.txindependence.org/pdfs/Convention%20of%201836-Grievances%20LESSO>

[N.pdf](#), goes over the issue of addressing the grievances Texans had against the Mexican government and their arguments for wanting independence.

The lesson plan provides fifteen grievances laid out in the Texas Declaration of Independence in both the original language and more modern language, with students determining which are the three most important ones. Unfortunately, neither the lesson plan nor the museum offer a counter-narrative as to why the Texans should not have attempted independence. The key understanding listed in the beginning of the lesson plan outline is, “People rebel when they feel they have been treated unjustly” (Star of the Republic Museum, 2012). This is important for students to understand, but the lesson misses out on the chance to expand the story and deepen conversations such as asking, “Were Texans justified in declaring independence?”, if they could provide another side of the story. In order to go further on this conversation, a teacher has to dig deeper to find other sources.

Some of the viewpoints that are often given one small section in each textbook include the removal of the Cherokee and lifestyle of Mexican populations prior to the Texas War for Independence. An example of one absence from these curriculums and textbooks are reasons for and experiences of American Indian groups that are pushed westward as a result of Manifest Destiny, including their changes in lifestyle as a result. Another is how Mexican populations in areas acquired by the U.S. from either the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo or Gadsden Purchase lives changed, which are only mentioned in Deverell et al. (2012) , and Edwards et al. (2014).

The careful analyses of these textbooks for this review of the research literature provides evidence that certain narratives are often absent from the curriculum and text. The next section will go into what absent narratives are, why they are left out, and how it affects those populations not represented.

Absent Narratives

Absent Narratives are the stories, art, music, and histories that are often left out of mainstream narratives. Absent narratives are not absent from the communities they are a part of, but are often left out or overwritten by a dominant story. (Bart & McGhee, 2016, p. 8)

According to a Pew Research Center (2016), the United States is becoming more ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse. As this diversity increases, it is important that as teachers, we intentionally make the effort to include stories and narratives from groups that have been marginalized and left out of the mainstream, dominant story. There are many different approaches that educators can take to ensure that absent narratives are a part of their curriculum. This section will cover how the viewpoints of indigenous groups that have been left out of the Manifest Destiny conversation can be appropriately and respectfully brought into the curriculum through different instructional methods and behaviors. These include critical race theory, culturally relevant pedagogy, and constructivist pedagogy.

When thinking about absent narratives during the time of Manifest Destiny, there may be a connection to its closeness to the Civil War. All four textbooks discuss how the Mexican-American War helped lead to the Civil War over the issue of slavery. With the

addition of new territory, the discussion of allowing slavery in these areas arises. In his article, *Many Truths Constitute the Past: The Legacy of the U.S.-Mexican War*, found on PBS.org and retrieved at https://www.pbs.org/kera/usmexicanwar/aftermath/many_truths.html, David J. Weber of Southern Methodist University went further and suggested that we often overlook the Mexican-American War and the aftermath on the areas affected in textbooks, curriculum, and history because of the Civil War. With “the ‘great victory’ (of the Mexican American War) began to crumble in the midst of sectional conflict, then Americans killing Americans, which became the great story if one wanted to think about conflict in the middle of the century” (Weber, 2006). Weber (2006) further suggested that we may not talk about those who were negatively affected because the success obtained during the Mexican-American War came from American aggression.

According to Horsman in his book *Race and Manifest Destiny* (1981), a main idea behind Manifest Destiny was that Anglo-Americans, those of western European descent and immigration, were to dominate the continent and reshape the landscape both physically and culturally under the auspices of their superiority to the indigenous peoples.

Underlying the rhetoric of Manifest Destiny was a sense of Anglo-American cultural and racial superiority: the “inferior” peoples who lived in the Far West - Native Americans and Mexicans - would be subjected to American dominion, taught republicanism, and converted to Protestantism. (Edwards et al., 2014, p. 412)

This quote from Edwards et al, combined with ideas laid out by Horseman demonstrate the beliefs and intentions of the United States as they expanded across the continent at the expense of the indigenous populations. That is why I feel it is important for students to learn about the stories of those indigenous people negatively impacted by Manifest Destiny as it is essential to better understanding the narrative.

This section discussed what Absent Narratives are, why they are needed in curriculum, and possible reasons for why they have been left out of current curriculums. The next section on Critical Race Theory will go more in depth on the benefits of implementing absent narratives through its pedagogy.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory and its role in education focus on how race may be a socially constructed element, but the historical and present implications of race are real and downplayed as incremental changes to make both whites and non-whites satisfied for a time (Dixson, 2017).

The notion of that intellectual ability was distributed differently among so-called races was developed by white scientists through the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries to explain and justify a system of economic, social, and political inequality organized along racial lines. (Pollock, 2008, p. 10)

This is done at the expense of true change for minorities that would provide better equitable educational opportunities and is important to understanding what is taught and how in Manifest Destiny units. Included in this section is how a multicultural curriculum can be seen as ineffective, giving into the mainstream as part of the assimilationist view

that asks for incremental changes to school curriculum when done incorrectly. Also included are ideas of how the curriculum can be viewed as property, which gives whites power and privilege in education and curriculum design, and how to oppose it through appropriate use of critical race theory in Education to benefit not only minority students, but all students.

A core tenet of critical race theory, defined by Delgado and Stefancic (2017), is that racism benefits the dominant group in society. Delgado and Stefancic (2017) claim that the dominant group remains in power by giving incremental benefits to minority peoples, allowing them to feel that they have gained some power or increased status for their actions, while in reality they did not achieve much and the status quo of power remains relatively the same (p. 8). In education this can mean one of several things.

One example, according to Dixson (2017), is that students are taught that they live in a colorblind society where racism may have once existed, but no longer exists as society evolved. Another example mentioned by both Dixson (2017) and Delgado et al. (2017), is to make minorities feel better through inclusion of culture and history by having sections in textbooks devoted to them, a lesson or two devoted to discussing their people in class, or having single or multi-cultural or ethnic awareness days, nights, or months. These can be good starting points for conversations and awareness because they often serve to make minorities feel represented and empowered, the dominant race or culture feels good about having allowed it or taken part in it, but it does not actually change social status' or improve educational situations and conditions (Dixson, 2017).

According to Dixson (2017), critical race theory does offer ways to enact real change within classroom and curriculum settings. Dixson (2017) claimed that these changes can benefit students and give the families of non-majority students a stronger say in the curriculum, increasing the chances for larger, positive changes for parable equity. One way is to go beyond those awareness events and lessons mentioned previously. When teachers and communities address why those were first created, it helps open the door for conversations about what acceptance, equity, and empathy are when discussing race-relations and minority status (Dixson, 2017).

Critical Race Theory asserts that the perspectives and experiences of non-Whites in America, especially in the classroom, need to be included and viewed appropriately with authenticity when confronting racial inequality (Lee, 2008). Dixson (2017) said that teachers must take care to ensure that they do not downplay the experiences that their students and families bring to the classroom community. Dixson (2017) continues that the same goes when people look at historical experiences that have been left out of mainstream history. Teachers need to ensure that they and their students do not delegitimize the histories of those brought into the classroom from outside sources. By analyzing these sources, Dixson (2017) stated students must trust that they are valid and should be treated as valid as any other source or perspective. This will go far in challenging the histories that often leave out the narratives of non-White population by legitimizing their voice (Dixson, 2017).

Through analyzing the different perspectives in both historical and contemporary contexts, school communities can begin to deconstruct the limited perspectives that are

often presented in textbooks. One outcome could be for students to present multifaceted perspectives for increased student understanding of historical and contemporary issues (Lee, 2008). Appleby et al. (2016) presented primary documents arguing why the United States should or should not go to war with Mexico from views of President Polk and Frederick Douglass. When discussing the annexation of Texas by the United States and then offers to buy California and other lands, the authors mention how the Mexican government would not meet with the U.S. envoy.

Polk ordered troops led by General Zachary Taylor to cross the Nueces River - in Mexico's view, an invasion of its territory. Polk hoped that Mexico would fire the first shot so he could win popular support for a war. (Appleby et al., 2016, p. 223)

Critical race theory would want to add the Mexican government's perspective as a primary source to add to the discussion and legitimacy of why Mexico reacted the way it did.

Educators play a significant role in critical race theory. While standards and educational goals are often set by state or national associations, and Hamann (2008) noted how textbooks as previously noted carry their own biases, strengths, and weaknesses, teachers often have the most control on what is covered in their classroom and how it is presented. Given the control that teachers have over the classroom environment Chadwick (2006) stated that teachers have to ensure they build safe environments to have these discussions when presenting information that is racially-sensitive and may cause students to feel uncomfortable. Chadwick (2006) continued that it is the teacher's responsibility to best prepare for and act accordingly to

the ways student respond to this type of information, as some may find it close their own experiences, while others may try to regard it as false and offensive. For this to be appropriate and helpful for all students, students of all backgrounds must be included in these discussions and individuals or certain groups should not be ignored or made the sole focus.

Chadwick (2006) believed that teachers can best prepare to handle these conversations and lessons by having students do research before, during, and after to help frame and contextualize the information, while the teacher monitors student approaches and responses. For students to put these ideas into a historical or present context, Chadwick (2006) noted that teachers can provide the background information that may be eye-opening and allow for realization and growth, because as students find more scholarly sources of information that support what they read, they will also be more willing to consider and perhaps validate that different perspective.

In her 2004 article, *Confronting the Racism of Low Expectations*, Landsman (2004) argued that teachers must redefine their ideas of gifted and intelligent students, as they are often defined by white terms or set up by white standards. This limiting criteria also limits the pool of students to choose from, especially if they do not fit into “normalized standards” of gifted or intelligent. Landsman (2004) went on to state that she believes there is a hidden whiteness standard used as a basis for establishing who should be accepted into these programs.

Entrance into many top-tracked programs in schools is subtly based on acquaintance with certain authors, certain ways of reasoning, and certain ways of

behaving. To be eligible for the best education in this country, you often have to have money, books in the home, the desire and training to sit in one place all day, and an acquaintance with white middle-class and upper-class cultural icons. (p. 31)

As many students of color do not have these backgrounds or associations, they are often left out of these “gifted” programs. They are viewed as not having the desired skills or behaviors that would allow them to be successful within these programs.

As a result, even in schools where students of color are the majority, honors-level and gifted programs become “white ghettos”, places where the white-minority population in a school are the majority. Earlier in the article, Landsman (2004) recalled talking to students at an urban high school in Minnesota who were part of the National Honor Society and noted, “Of the 80 youth being admitted to this privileged leadership group, I counted five of color. Yet approximately 60 percent of the students at the school were not white” (p. 29).

Tyson (2008) believed that there is major detriment to having these disproportionate statistics going beyond access to higher-level, rigorous courses. “Black students are more likely to perceive achievement as a domain of whites and to accuse peers enrolled in accelerated courses of ‘acting white’ ” (Tyson, 2008, p 127). Tyson (2008) went on to say that these students use this as a guard against the assumption that there are fewer students of color in gifted programs because they believe they are not as intellectually capable as their white counterparts.

To combat the disparities of disproportionate students of color in gifted programs, Tyson (2008) offered a number of strategies. Tyson, like Landsman (2004), claimed that schools should reassess what giftedness looks like and take into account different learning styles and cultural backgrounds when judging if a student is capable of being in a certain program. Another strategy offered by Tyson (2008) is to simply treat every child as if they were your own flesh and blood because teachers would be more likely to advocate for students of color be placed in gifted programs to gain access to higher levels of rigor. Another may be to simply do away gifted programs altogether and replace it with an education where all students have access to the highest standards of rigor, adjusted, and differentiated based on student abilities (Tyson, 2008). Much of this comes back to the classroom teacher who does not teach honors. How do they differentiate and include levels of rigor that challenge students from diverse backgrounds with diverse abilities? Teachers need to account for these, while keeping standards and expectations high for all students.

Teachers can challenge these low expectations of students of color and help them achieve high standards and success in education. First, teachers must have high standards and expectations for all students. Teachers can then accomplish the successfulness in numerous ways as suggested by Ferguson (2008). One is to explain material in multiple ways, taking into account multiple learning styles and experiences that account for cultural relativity. Allow for all students to ask guiding or clarifying questions and ask all students those same types of questions, making sure that students of all abilities are called

on relatively the same amount and provide enough for students to answer those questions, even if it slows down the class.

Beyond the question and answer piece, Ferguson (2008) claimed that teachers need to ensure that their classroom emphasizes skill and understanding over specific answers, while providing prompt, appropriate, and supportive feedback that guides their students. Ferguson (2008) believed this can be done by establishing a culture built around the joy and process of learning, where it is acceptable and expected of all students to make mistakes and then learn from them to achieve high standards of success. In these classrooms critical-thinking and reasoning, with the ability to successfully apply what they have learned to new situations is the main goal (Ferguson, 2008).

Most importantly for teachers to combat anti-racist practices and beliefs, is to believe that all students can be successful and that they as teachers can successfully teach all students. As stated by Ferguson (2008)

Every teacher should seek ways to communicate, “I truly love to answer your questions, but I also insist that you concentrate in order to complete your work accurately.” A consistent and compassionate effort to transmit this message, especially to students of color, is antiracist strategy for improving behavior, increasing persistence, raising performance levels, and narrowing advancement gaps within and among elementary school classrooms. (p. 7)

Students of color may distrust feedback given by teachers due to racial or cultural differences, believing that they have different standards because of different expectations for certain groups (Cohen, 2008).

In his 2008 article, *Providing Supportive Feedback*, Cohen suggested that for students to see this support and trust in performance or summative assessments, teachers have to ensure that feedback is more than just critical. Cohen (2008) said that feedback must come with an explicit, two-step message, “A reference to high performance standards and a personal assurance of students’ capacity to reach those standards” (p. 83). Teachers have to include what the standards they are measuring the student’s performance on, while mentioning that they believe the student can reach those standards, reminding them that they would only give this feedback because they believe in them. This motivates all students to be more successful because this feedback demonstrates to them that their teachers believe they can achieve at high levels, regardless of race or culture.

Dixson (2017) believed that students are the forefront of critical race theory in education, as it comes down to them to make the biggest leaps and bounds in confronting and overcoming entrenched racial disparities. Elena Torre and Fine (2004) explained that in order to confront and overcome stereotypes, students practice action inquiry in the classroom in order to reach social justice by discussing and confronting those in their own environments. The cross-generational communities of inquiry in the classroom based around research, critique, and action around race and cultural stereotypes can reduce prejudice between and within groups (Dixson, 2017). “Engaging and investigating difference and justice together with youth, in settings that promote critical inquiry and courageous conversations, is crucial to the collective struggle against racism and all other forms of oppression” (Elena Torre et al., 2004, p. 165). Elena Torre et al. (2004) went on

to say that students learn through this collaboration that everyone brings experience and knowledge to the table and that all people have complex identities that overlap. No one person represents an entire culture or race, as there are lots of diversity within homogeneous groups. When students learn that everyone has their own complex, multi-layered identities, they are able and willing to take risks and ask tough questions related to racism, oppression, and injustice that they witness and experience (Elena Torre et al., 2004).

An example of this was highlighted in 2003 when Elena Torre et al. reported on students who produced their own artistic performance in *Echoes of Brown*, a student research project highlighting the results of student research on educational opportunities and gaps almost fifty years after the decision of *Brown v Board of Education*. It included a group of diverse high school aged students from metropolitan New York City. “The more participants witnessed each others’ layers of complexity, the more it became difficult to look across the circle at ‘the rich girl’ or ‘the boy in special ed’” (Elena Torre et al., 2004, p. 168).

Elena Torre et al described their findings of what students learned from the program.

The poetry read-arounds, group feedback sessions, discussions of survey findings afforded everyone...the opportunity to debate, comment, and contribute ideas.

The pedagogy fostered cross-generational inquiry through deep participation and critical research that opened up ideas about unjust educational practices such as tracking that have been normalized. Youth could develop their own ideas

individually and collectively and rethink their own roles in the struggle against racism without feeling pigeon-holed in a particular position. (Elena Torre et al., 2004, p. 168)

This section covered the main ideas of critical race theory, its necessity to education, the benefits that exist when it is implemented correctly, how it can break down cultural barriers and empower minority groups to share their experiences in both historical and modern contexts. I believe this connects to absent narratives because Critical Race Theory includes strategies on how to the narratives and the numerous benefits. The next section will go over the role of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and how in a way similar to that of Critical Race Theory, helps build arguments for why absent narratives should be included in curriculum, along with strategies, and benefits.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

As stated by Ladson-Billings in her book *The Dreamkeepers* (2009), Culturally relevant teaching is a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These cultural referents are not merely vehicles for bridging or explaining the dominant culture; they are aspects of the curriculum in their own right. (p. 20)

Culturally relevant pedagogy, as defined by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) in 2010, is an educational paradigm that focuses on how to view students culture as an asset and strength. Teachers bring students culture into the classroom and curriculum because it helps shape how students view and understand the world.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy is important for students to share their backgrounds and perspectives because it is often overlooked or misunderstood in school by staff and students alike, and helps bridge the gap between the different cultures (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2010). The SPLC (2010) continued to say that Culturally Relevant Pedagogy builds student confidence in the classroom and about their own culture because it is encouraged and respected. Students learn to understand cultural similarities and differences, gaining critical awareness on stereotypes, while building respect and understanding for different cultures. This section will provide an overview of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, ways to implement it in the classroom, and how it can lead to better student engagement and academic success.

According to Delpit (2006), culturally relevant teachers view students differences as strengths within the classroom, not as deficits that limit student success. Teachers must use culturally relevant strategies to engage and assess their diverse body of students, knowing that different cultures value different skills in terms of relevance to the community, school, and success. In order to achieve this goal, teachers have to make connections with their students and learn what their strengths and values are, but also create a growth-mindset that all students can learn, especially from each other, just in different ways at different paces (Delpit, 2006). This is supported by Elena Torre et al. (2004) in their previously mentioned *Echoes of Brown* project, as students learned from each other.

The combination of diverse types of activities, from writing to movement and from research to performance, provided participants with the opportunities to

highlight their various identities. By placing equal value on different types of knowledge and ways of participating, the atmosphere encouraged youth to take risks, such as trying out an unpolished idea about racism, or sharing secrets about their fears and dreams. (Elena Torre et al., 2004, pp. 167-168)

According to Ladson-Billings (2009), teachers are responsible not only for making these connections with students, but helping establish a collaborative community where cultural differences are valued.

For Ladson-Billings (2009), knowledge is also socially constructed and culturally relevant teachers use student culture and knowledge to challenge maintain their culture, while challenging and overcoming the negatives of the dominant culture. Culturally relevant teachers create an environment that imparts knowledge, skills, and attitudes that empower students to understand other viewpoints and still identify with their own culture (Ladson-Billings, 2009). This connects to Absent Narratives because it allows teachers to teach multiple-perspectives, while valuing those whose culture has been ignored, giving them a chance to include their experiences in the curriculum, giving students the chance to be the teachers and teachers as students.

Teachers who practice culturally relevant methods...see themselves as part of the community. They help students make connections between their local, national, racial, and cultural, and global identities . . . Their relationships with students are fluid and equitable and extend beyond the classroom. They demonstrate a connectedness with all of their students and encourage that same connectedness between the students. They encourage a community of learners; they encourage

their students to learn collaboratively. Finally such teachers are identified by their notions of knowledge: They believe that knowledge is continuously re-created, recycled, and shared by teachers and students alike. (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 28)

The more valid points of view that are brought into the conversation the better because it can help students see and understand the bigger picture more than if they just know one side of the story (Weber, 2006). In this way, both teachers and students learn from each other through the inclusion of different perspectives, being able to see beyond their own cultural lens and comprehend other viewpoints.

Through Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, students can connect their culture to the classroom because it is valued and encouraged, not just for use as a comparison tool. Instruction through the use of culturally relevant metaphors and representations help bridge the gap between school and home, using the student's culture as starting point for inquiry in the curriculum (Banks et al., 2001; Delpit, 2006).

Ladson-Billings (2009) described the major outcomes of teachers using culturally relevant pedagogy. These outcomes of culturally relevant pedagogy included encouraging students to bring in their cultural stories and backgrounds to class and honor their histories and viewpoints on topics that may have been previously overlooked so that their narratives are no longer absent, but present in the content (Ladson-Billings, 2009). This empowers students to unleash their voice in the areas where they are the experts, with teachers acting less as instructors and more as guides and coaches, helping students find that power within themselves (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 57). Building on the premise of Ladson-Billings (2009) is Banks et al. (2001) who stated that another outcome of

culturally relevant pedagogy is that students learn that all knowledge is socially constructed from their cultural backgrounds, giving them different strengths and values. Understanding that knowledge is socially constructed will encourage teachers to learn about and implement multiple methods to engage students, while creating different types and levels assessments the variety of complex cognitive and social skills because of different cultural expectations and experiences (Banks et al., 2001).

Ladson-Billings (1995) said culturally relevant pedagogy helps students learn how to use their voice through challenging the status-quo narrative. Every student comes with a different set of tools and experiences that should be honored, often learned outside of school and that, “Teachers should use a students culture as a vehicle for learning” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 161). Because of this, it can help teachers and students challenge the curriculum that is often covered in class and determined by others, including the teacher, district, or state standards or textbook (Delpit, 2006).

Culturally relevant pedagogy helps students challenge the status quo, learn to favor cooperation and learning from one another over competition, and use education to improve the community (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Ladson-Billings (2009) provided another benefit when educators implement culturally relevant pedagogy, students begin to look for more than just themselves, their feelings, and their viewpoints. This multicultural understanding helps create a classroom community focused on learning from one another and building respect for other perspectives, while breaking the idea that students need to compete with one another for higher grades or who can get done with their work faster. This collaboration builds strong intergroup relations, with students

learning about values that all groups share and break down cultural stereotypes (Banks et al., 2001). They learn that different cultures may have numerous shared values, such as justice and charity, and that they can work together to achieve these for all people, creating a sense of community in and out of the classroom (Banks et al., 2001; Delpit, 2006).

This section covered the main ideas behind culturally relevant pedagogy, ways to implement it, and the benefits that occur as a result of successful implementation. It connected to the ideas of absent narratives as it allows students bring their voices into the curriculum, giving them the chance to challenge the status-quo narratives, and build collaborative learning environments. The next section will go over Constructivist Pedagogy, its uses, and how it can fit into building a successful absent narrative curriculum.

Chapter Two Summary

This chapter reviewed research literature pertaining to Manifest Destiny curriculum in textbooks and other sources, Critical Race Theory, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, and Constructivist Pedagogy to establish the need for why absent narratives need to be included Manifest Destiny Curriculum. In the Manifest Destiny section, I looked at four different textbooks to demonstrate what absent narratives are included or left out in curriculum related to United States expansion. Looking at Critical Race Theory and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy shed light on why certain voices are intentionally left out or given scant mention in certain curriculum, while providing strategies and benefits to challenge the status-quo with absent narratives. Finally, I looked at how Constructivist

pedagogy connects these ideas to successfully implement absent narratives to build strong classroom environments, increased student engagement and learning, and provide a multicultural look at United States Expansionism.

In chapter three, I introduce the research paradigm and methodologies that I will be conducting, as well as the context and rationale for said research. Also, I provide an overview of the setting that the research will be conducted and the layout for how the research project will be created and implemented.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Introduction and Project Overview

The objective of this curriculum project is to redesign and modify my school's Manifest Destiny (Pre-Civil War Expansion & Division as we call it) curriculum to increase absent narratives into a particular unit. The intended goal is to allow students to see multiple perspectives on a given subject or event. As previously stated in chapters one and two, my research question is *How can teachers integrate absent narratives into their Manifest Destiny curriculum to better understand the experiences of people of color?*

In Chapter One I wrote about how I decided on this topic and in Chapter Two I laid out literature that supports the rationale for, and ways to best incorporate absent narratives into the curriculum. I chose this curriculum revision because I felt that the curriculum and textbook do not do justice in covering what happens to groups negatively affected by Manifest Destiny. The inclusion of absent narratives presented in this unit is designed to provide a more complete understanding of history. This chapter will consist of several items. First, it will demonstrate the theories and research that support this curriculum redesign with supporting rationales as to why they were chosen. The chapter will then present the classroom setting for the project and the intended audience. Next I will delve into a description of the project, along with a given timeframe for its intended implementation. Lastly, I will summarize chapter three and introduce chapter four.

Project Design Rationale

The methodologies for this curriculum unit redesign, Brooks et al. (1999), Delgado et al. (2017), Delpit (2006), Dixson (2017), Ladson-Billings (2009), and Wiggins et al. (2011), were chosen because they align perfectly with qualitative research. These methodologies follow the Transformative Worldview and Narrative Design as they “examine an issue related to oppression of individuals. To this study this, stories are collected of individual oppression using a narrative approach” (Creswell, 2014, p. 19).

This research is done to challenge and confront oppression in order to reform people’s lives, oppression, and institutions (Creswell, 2014). As stated in Chapter Two, Critical Race Theory (Delgado et al., 2017; Dixson, 2017) and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2009) are about challenging oppression and giving students a voice in their curriculum, allowing them to construct knowledge. According to Crotty (1998), culturally relevant pedagogy brings in student perspectives, empowering and engaging students and can help reshape students own opinions and that of their peers, through discussion and interacting with each other and primary sources. Doing culturally relevant pedagogy allows students to gain a stronger understanding of their world and how the events and aftermaths of Manifest Destiny have shaped their modern experiences. This section went over the research methods used in this project and why they were chosen, including their connection to qualitative research. The next section will delve into the understanding by design model by Wiggins and McTighe, which was used for the layout and design of the project.

Understanding by Design

The redesigned Manifest Destiny curriculum infused with absent narratives to deepen student understanding of content and different perspectives fits in perfectly with the understanding by design curriculum design. “UbD (understanding by design) is predicated on the idea that long-term achievement gains are more likely when teachers teach for understanding of transferable concepts and processes while giving learners multiple opportunities to apply their learning in meaningful contexts” (Wiggins, McTighe, 2011, p. 4). Too many learning opportunities in classrooms are not authentic as teachers try to cover all the standards and benchmarks, testing on information that is only needed for one unit and students soon forget. To enhance student learning, teachers need to go deeper into content and establish short term goals and opportunities that will connect to learning later on (Wiggins, McTighe, 2011). This aligns perfectly with the redesigned curriculum because students apply what they learn from throughout the unit, not in a test, but through a project they research along with the content learned in each lesson. The researching of reliable sources is a skill they will use throughout their lifetime and because it is self-selected topics and how they want to present what they learn gives them more meaning.

The layout of the understanding by design model has teachers begin by writing out what the essential information they want to students know, understand, or what skill they should learn at the end of the unit and connect it to either previous learning or how it will be used later on (Wiggins, McTighe, 2011). The intent is to go beyond one unit and look long term so that information connects further down road by determining the major learning goals first, then create assessments for students to demonstrate their

understanding of the content, and lastly create the day to day lessons and activities that should build student learning, understanding, and skills that lead them to successfully demonstrate the established learning goal (Wiggins, McTighe, 2011). That is why it is called understanding by design is sometimes referred to as backwards design. The “backward-design process (is) used to plan curriculum units that include desired understandings and performance tasks that require transfer (of knowledge). Specific lessons are then developed in the context of a more comprehensive unit design” (Wiggins, McTighe, 2011, p. 7).

This connects to how I developed my curriculum. I knew I wanted my students to learn that Manifest Destiny had negative effects on numerous groups and that I wanted students to research absent narratives on their own to create their own context. I then built the project assessment and research around that goal, with specific lessons created last to support students and help them achieve this goal.

This section discussed what the understanding by design curriculum model looks like, the rationale for why it was chosen for this project, and how I redesigned the curriculum along the guidelines laid out by Wiggins and McTighe. The next section will go over the setting and participants for the curriculum project.

Setting and Participants

The setting for this project was one of 10th Grade United State History during the first trimester of the 2018-2019 school year in a suburban district. This is the mainstream United States History course at our school, as we also offer sections of the Advanced Placement option for United State History. The demographics of the school and most

mainstream classrooms consist of forty percent non-Caucasian students, with thirty percent of the students being of Latinx background. The other ten percent are a combination of African American, Asian American, and American Indian students. Forty percent of the student body is eligible for free and reduced meal options and about fifteen percent of the student body receive some sort of special education accommodations, modifications, or services. The size of the school is between 1000-1100 in any given year.

The average class size in mainstream United States History and throughout the school is between thirty to thirty-four students. There are around one hundred staff members, with about sixty-five being full or part-time teachers. The intended audience will be the students who are taking this course with me as their instructor in the first trimester of the 2018-2019 from September to beginning of December. The demographics of the students in the course I am teaching include twenty-nine students, with twelve identified as male and seventeen identified as female. The class includes fifteen students of color and two students receive Special Education services.

This section laid out the demographics for the school I work at. It contained information the general student body and school, as well as the actual demographics of the class that I had when conducting this project. The next section will explain the project and the reasons why this project format was chosen.

Project Description

This project is designed to infuse absent narratives to an already developed Manifest Destiny unit with the previously mentioned understanding by design template.

The curriculum will include supplemental, contrasting sources and information within the Manifest Destiny unit. The need is that voices from American Indians, Latinx, and African American students are underrepresented in classroom materials and narratives within the unit. The design will be to cover the intention, beliefs, and actions of the U.S. government, Texans, and other groups who benefited from Manifest Destiny and contrast those experiences and stories with those who were negatively affected. This will be implemented every day in the unit, so students get a minimum of two different perspectives for each event or theme. Students will be evaluated and assessed through a mixture of quick-write reflections, classroom discussions on certain readings and materials, homework, and a final product where students combine at least two different experiences or perspectives from Manifest Destiny in an artistic representation of their choice. My recommendation is to include more perspectives and help students learn how to analyze them, ensuring they know that history is richer and complex than what it is in their textbook readings.

In the next section I will lay out my timeline for the design and implementation of this readjusted Manifest Destiny curriculum.

Project Timeline

The redesign of the project took several months of planning, on and off, between the fall of 2017 to the fall of 2018. The intended timeframe for this project to be implemented will be eleven school days, with fifty minute class periods taking place during the first trimester of the 2018-2019 school year in the month of October. I worked with my Professional Learning Community during the summer of 2018 to modify my

Manifest Destiny timeline. They followed a similar curriculum timeline and structure that we have used in years past, while I took a different approach with my section. Their Manifest Destiny curriculum will have a larger focus on slavery, issues, and events leading up to the Civil War and be shorter in time. My curriculum will emphasize more on the issues leading up to and following the Mexican American War. This section will go through how I intend to develop my unit and chronologically implement the various parts of the unit.

Creating the unit. I began by modifying our U.S. Expansion and Pre-Civil War Unit, the third in our course curriculum. I needed to adjust the areas near the end that focus on the divisions between the diverging sections of the United States leading to the Civil War, while leaving in important events and details that help explain both United States growth and division. The areas relating mainly to slavery and pre-Civil War division will be added to the fourth unit on the Civil War.

I worked with my Professional Learning Community and content advisor to find secondary and primary absent narrative sources, discussing how to best integrate them into the curriculum and using the Understanding by Design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011) template. This template will be used because it fits in with the methodologies mentioned previously in the chapter as it focused on the main skills and themes first, then design the lessons later. The hope is, as explained in the previous paragraph, to develop this in the summer of 2018.

Introducing the unit. Students will begin the unit by looking at *American Progress* (1872) by John Gast and interpret what images and symbols they see in the

painting, making predictions what we will learn in this unit. This will lay the foundation for the unit as students will learn that as Americans moved west and benefitted from expansion, technology advanced along with them, under the pretext of religion, pushing away those who occupied the land before them.

In lessons one, students will revisit the reasons why people migrate (done initially during Colonial/American Revolution Unit) but now discuss how that affects the areas they are entering. These discussions relate to the first absent narrative that is fairly well covered in textbooks and curriculum, the Cherokee Removal. What will be different is comparing a diary reflection of a soldier versus experiences of the Cherokee, and what life was like in the aftermath, which is not covered in the textbooks. The diary is from Private John Burnett, as listed in the appendix.

Lesson two focuses on the connection between the increase in the production of cotton and growth of slavery, with students looking at various documents to help them see the connection. Students will be introduced to the cotton gin and will understand how technology can have good intentions, but can lead to unintended negative consequences. The lesson is essential to seeing how and why slavery begins to expand, and why that was important to southern economics.

Absent narratives and the Mexican cession. In lessons three and four students will read about life for Mexicans above the Rio Grande, before and after independence from Spain for background information in their textbook for homework. In class we will go over why Texans moved to Mexico (tying into the Missouri Compromise) and the resulting movement for independence, comparing the reasons for independence for Texas

and the colonies. Students will learn about the Texas war for independence and their ultimate victory.

Next we will move onto the Mexican-American war and provide background for the border issues leading to the conflict and present the fact that Mexican soldiers fire first. Students will take out their homework from the previous day, which is on three primary documents related to causes of the war. The first is from the Mexican government, saying that while they shot first, they were defending their territory and would not submit to threats from the U.S. The second is President James Polk blaming Mexico and saying the U.S. was defending their people. The last is Frederick Douglass, blaming the U.S., stating the main issue is around slavery. We will briefly go over this in class as an introduction to the Mexican-American War, which I lecture that the U.S. wins and buys the desired land from Mexico, achieving the goal of Manifest Destiny.

I then introduce issues and events resulting from the success of the expansion, including the Gold Rush, Oregon Trail, cheap land needing to be settled with Homestead Act, and Mormon migration to Utah. This hopefully provides ideas for students to research for the project, which will be introduced at this point.

Student research. Starting on midway on day four and continuing in class through day 8, students will begin to research more primary and secondary sources on absent narratives that they would want to put into their summative assessment and future inclusion in the Manifest Destiny curriculum. This can be brand new information on issues such as settler conflicts with American Indians in a variety of states, treatment of Mexicans in certain states, or going into more depth on a topic that we have already

covered. The last three days of the unit focus on issues building up to the Civil War, including the Compromise of 1850, Kansas-Nebraska Act, Dred Scott, and John Brown's Raid.

Summative assessments. There will be two summative assessments conducted in this unit. The first will be conducted on day eleven with a quiz on the causes and aftermaths of events that occurred as a result of Manifest Destiny, with some multiple-choice questions, short answer questions, and one or two document-based questions. The second is a project students create as an artistic representation of the causes and effects of Manifest Destiny, demonstrating their knowledge on at least one event and at least two different perspectives. The students choose the event and the perspectives from a list of artistic representations, such as poems, narrative stories, paintings, story videos, songs or raps, or plays. From these interactions with the primary and secondary sources, students will have constructed their own understandings and meanings on the goals, successes, and failures of Manifest Destiny. They will connect these to the many different perspectives of and since that era, using personal, cultural, and historical experiences to create their interpretations, while confronting inequality and oppression to acknowledge the absent narratives from and a result of Manifest Destiny (Creswell, 2014).

Chapter Three Summary

In this chapter I outlined my research plan and implementation. I discussed the why of my research and how I intend to carry it out during the 2018-2019 school year, laying out the step-by-step process of what needs to occur and who I need to collaborate

with to ensure this is done properly, connecting the main research with the qualitative methods. I lay out how research supports the constructivist approach, mixed with Critical Race Theory (Delgado et al., 2017) (Dixson, 2017) and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Delpit, 2006) Ladson-Billings (2009) when advancing absent narratives. I include the background of the students I will be working with and how I intend to create and implement the project within the next school year.

In Chapter Four I will go over the curriculum produced for this project and the analysis of that development.

CHAPTER FOUR

Research & Project Reflection

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to serve as a reflection of my learning experience from the research I conducted while also examining the limitations of my project and research; further possibilities for applying my project, ideas, and research in the future, and how it can benefit social studies curriculum, and lastly how I intend share my project and research with others. All this is done with my research question, *How can teachers integrate absent narratives into their Manifest Destiny curriculum to better understand the experiences of people of color?*, in mind. The overall purpose of this project is to use absent narratives to enhance Manifest Destiny curriculum with stories, information, and perspectives that are often overlooked or left out of the curriculum. This is done in order to provide students a deeper understanding of how Manifest Destiny provided many positives for the United States, but for all the positives, there were just as many negatives with marginalized peoples who lost as America expanded.

The next section will include a reflection of what I learned going through this capstone process.

Major Learnings

From doing this project to answer my research question, *How can teachers integrate absent narratives into their Manifest Destiny curriculum to better understand the experiences of people of color?*, I learned a great deal about myself as a researcher, writer, and learner. As a historian by nature and training from my undergraduate years,

doing the research for the project reminded me that I love to investigate and find out new information, sources, and relationships and connections between ideas and events. It allowed me to find new sources that I can include into my curriculum, beyond Manifest Destiny, and into different academic realms such as Human Geography, Sociology, and AVID that can be used in the future.

As a writer I discovered that I can synthesize many ideas into a cohesive thought process, connect with people on a personal level, but that I still have one major flaw with my writing. From peer and content edits and reviews, I was thrilled to hear that my ideas made sense and were relatable to colleagues. A major concern I have always had as a writer in research papers and projects was that the main goals and understandings were confusing and had no sequence for the reader to understand them. Writing this has validated that my words make sense, are easy to follow, but that my writing is not perfect. I do need to work on shorter statements and how I phrase certain ideas for better understanding. I have a tendency to write many run-on sentences and sometimes awkwardly phrase sentences and ideas that make sense to me as the writer but confuse others. Overall, it was a great learning process to write the paper as it evaluated my current skills and where I need improvement.

My biggest takeaway from the research and project was that there is still so much to learn. I gained a lot of insights into perspectives and stories related to Manifest Destiny that I was unaware of, how they are presented in textbooks and other sources, and why I should present absent narratives at all. The research validated that I am always learning new information, seeing connections and relationships I was previously unaware of, and

why looking and learning for new information from often forgotten sources is necessary for myself and my students. The biggest unexpected learning was how the Mormons helped settle lands in Utah that heavily benefited the United States in future expansion and settlement efforts, while also dealing poorly with American Indians and Latinx peoples in the area. It was not a story I was expecting to learn, based on what I know of Mormon culture and interactions with others. There is so much information out there, but I was limited in the primary absent narratives that I could find, relying heavily on secondary sources for information. Overall, the biggest takeaways is that teachers should always do research to learn new information and better ways to engage students, and that one never stops learning. In the next section I will revisit and reflect on the Literature Review in Chapter Two.

Reflection of the Literature Review

This section is a reflection of my biggest takeaways from the Chapter Two Literature Review, including what parts of the research and what literature were the most valuable in this process, including new connections and understandings I have about the content as a result.

The most valuable pieces of literature included the four textbooks listed in chapter two, the book *Our America* (2014) by Fernandez-Armesto, and the article *Engaging Youth in Participatory Inquiry for Social Justice* by Elena Torre and Fine (2004).

The textbooks were essential in the research as it gave me a basis for what was presented in different textbooks about Manifest Destiny. They revealed that many of the peoples who came into contact as a result of American expansion, including American

Indians and Mexicans, are hardly given any voice in the textbook, and what happens to them after the United States after they are conquered is largely ignored. This lack of information gave me a baseline of what information I should be trying to find as well as when and where to include it.

The best resource I had was *Our America* (Fernandez-Armesto, 2014). This book presents primarily Latinx perspectives into United States history, showing what happens to them and other groups, including American Indians, as they come into contact with various European groups and later on the United States. The book sequences and contextualizes events to create a flowing narrative of how the treatment of Latinx people and others changes based on circumstances of the time. Included in the text were who the Latinx people come into contact with, including the when and why, and how it affects everyone involved. Fernandez-Armesto (2014) uses primary and secondary sources through historical research to grab the reader's attention and opened my eyes to so much information and connections that I have put into this curriculum and project. Almost every other historical source that I found on Manifest Destiny for this project has something in common with this book, supporting the validity and importance of it in my research and literature review. I even found a website about Mormons and their interactions with American Indians that I put into the project sources for my students in their research. I would not have thought about the Mormons for this project until I noticed the book had a whole chapter on that and so I had to add into my literature review. I am exceedingly grateful a colleague suggested and subsequently loaned that book during this process.

The article, *Engaging Youth in Participatory Inquiry for Social Justice* by Elena Torre and Fine (2004), was thoroughly helpful as it gave me the idea for the student's summative project. The article discusses how students go about creating stories and accepting each others truths to build understanding, breaking down barriers, as a learning experience and reflection after the Civil Rights movement. The students researched primary and secondary sources related to the Civil Rights movement and then created poems, songs, dances, and stories about themselves and the movement, and how far society has become. From this reading I got the idea for and then created my summative assessment, where students use stories and information from Manifest Destiny to create an artistic representation of a part of the era, how it positively and negatively affected certain people's or the country as a whole.

These sources gave me ideas as to how to best add the multitude of absent narratives into the curriculum, filling in the gaps from the textbook. While they are not lesson plans, the information provided was very helpful and sparked ideas on what sources and areas should be included in this project and why, as well as why they should artistic representations of what occurred during this time.

This section was a reflection of the literature review and what I learned in the process. The next sections will cover possible uses of and future possible research coming from my project.

Possible Uses

This section will cover the possible uses, limitations, and potential future research related to my research question, *How can teachers integrate absent narratives into their*

Manifest Destiny curriculum to better understand the experiences of people of color? As part of my reflection of this process, I know that there a lot of potential uses, numerous limitations, and possible opportunities to continue research to improve educational equity in not only Manifest Destiny curriculum, but many other areas of history.

I believe that this curriculum, including the lesson plans, readings, activities, and final project can be modified to a number of different educational grade levels to fit in within classroom needs. Teachers should feel free to add, edit, and remove parts that fit into their curriculum plans, as every classroom has different requirements for standards and length of time for lessons and units. A major piece of educational equity is to give students the tools they need to be successful, and so what works well in one classroom may not work in another and that is why teachers should feel free to change the curriculum as needed.

I feel the guidelines for this curriculum can be replicated to almost any unit within United States or World History, as there is so much information out there and a limitation on what can be covered, that this could work with the Civil Rights Movement, the 1920s, Great Depression, European Imperialism in the late 1800's, and beyond. There just has to be intent by the teacher to bring in voices that are overlooked in curriculum and the means to find and use sources that provide quality information.

Limitations

Unfortunately through my research I learned of certain limitations that restrict the effectiveness of this project. The biggest one is time. Time to research, create, and implement a truly absent narrative curriculum with primary sources. Most of the

information that I found on my own were from secondary sources, which are very good and helpful, but primary sources I feel convey a unique understanding of stories. The primary sources I found came from the secondary sources, which was helpful but I was limited in the actual primary sources I could get as many of those are in museums or libraries where I did not have access to.

I am limited in the time I had for this curriculum and project. While the students have access to many great resources for their research, there are many areas I want to touch on but I only have so much time because our curriculum outline goes from Pre-Colonial America to the 2012 Presidential election, and by the end of the first trimester we are at the end of Reconstruction. My school also has a system where students shift between teachers due to schedule availability, so many of my students are new each trimester and so it is imperative for each educator teaching U.S. History to be on the same page at the end of each trimester. These limitations may also affect other teachers who may wish to use this curriculum if they similar educational issues.

Future Potential Research

I believe there is a lot of potential for future research by myself or others related to this project. This can include finding more primary sources, ways to connect it to modern day issues, finding uses in other realms of history curriculum, or other ways to engage students with the content through activities or other information. I know that I will continue to research and work on better this curriculum and project for future use and student success, and I hope others will find it useful and use it in whatever works best for them.

This section was a reflection on how this curriculum can be used in the future by others, the potential and realistic limitations, and future possibilities for research or similar curriculum. The next section will cover the sharing of my project.

Sharing the Project

I created with this revamped Manifest Destiny curriculum with absent narratives to benefit not only the students but the profession as a whole. For that to happen I need to share what I have researched and created for others try and experiment with in their own ways, in the hope that absent narratives are continually used and added to social studies curriculum.

I intend to share my findings and resources with my social studies department in the upcoming trimester after this project is completed in December of 2018. The findings, lessons, activities, and assessments will be shared in a google folder that they will all have access to and discuss during PLC and department meetings. I would also like to share it with our middle school social studies teachers, as well as all the English/Language Arts teachers in the district so they become aware of the importance of adding absent narratives into their own curriculum, once I have approval of my high school colleagues and administration.

To extend this beyond my district, I will contact the Minnesota Center for Social Studies Education, The Minnesota Council for the Social Studies, and Minnesota Alliance for Geographic Education and inquire about sharing my project with them. All of these organizations favor collaboration and sharing of resources between teachers, allowing teachers to gain access to lessons and activities to enhance their teaching. The

ultimate hope is push for increased awareness and use of absent narratives across curriculums throughout the state.

This section covered how I intend to share my project and learnings. The next section will discuss how my project benefits the profession.

Benefiting the Profession

This project, which answers the question, *How can teachers integrate absent narratives into their Manifest Destiny curriculum to better understand the experiences of people of color?*, benefits the educational profession in a number of ways. The benefits include equity in content, both in demonstration of knowledge and allowing students of color to be represented in the curriculum. The curriculum is designed with student equity in mind. The final project allows students to choose the best way to demonstrate what they researched and learned about the positives and negatives of Manifest Destiny. By giving students a choice in their topic and what the end result looks like, and a not-one-size-fits-all model, gives students more control of their learning and can allow them to be more invested.

The project is also equitable and benefits the profession because it represents multiple perspectives that are often left out of the curriculum, as mentioned in previous chapters. This can engage students of color who wonder where they fit into the story of the United States during Manifest Destiny, where they are often left out or unaware people like them played a role. By openly looking for absent narratives, teachers give students a voice by acknowledging that learning does not stop with the textbook and that through research, learners are empowered because they can find another piece to the

puzzle and discover on their own that there is always more to the story. As stated in a previous section, this curriculum can be modified for other programs and can be used in other areas of history, so that students know there are always more absent narratives and perspectives to be discovered and added to the story.

This section explained how this modified Manifest Destiny curriculum benefits the profession as it is designed with equity for the students in mind. The next section will summarize the emphasis of my learning as a result of this project.

Conclusion

From this process I learned that while textbooks and curriculums have limitations and shortcomings when presenting minority perspectives early in United States history, there is hope to infuse absent narratives in the Manifest Destiny curriculum and beyond. I know that I can answer and help others answer the question, *How can teachers integrate absent narratives into their Manifest Destiny curriculum to better understand the experiences of people of color?* There are lots of secondary sources that pull from primary sources available from online articles, museums, and specific historical books. Many educators and programs already work to bring the voices of absent narratives into the mainstream and enhance student engagement and understanding in social studies. By learning of the shortcomings and possibilities I was encouraged to create this Manifest Destiny curriculum redesign with absent narratives. I was grateful to learn that when students see themselves in the curriculum, hear a voice they can relate to, they are more willing to be engaged with classroom content as they see how it relates to them. This curriculum redesign is just the beginning for me and I hope for others to bring the voices

of those left behind in the content forward, to benefit our current and future students. I believe this recurring closing quote from Al Letson, host of *Reveal on National Public Radio*, sums up the purpose, hope, limitations, and potential use for absent narratives being added to Manifest Destiny curriculum. “Remember, there is always more to the story.”

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