Chapter 10

Social Studies in Action in the Neighborhood

Civic Engagement for Kinder through Senior Year

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching in these uncertain political and economic times is *hard*. It is critical that we find joy in our work and that we help our students experience joy and find meaning in their learning. Community engagement activities that are thoughtfully tied to curriculum, learning goals and even to external standards (whether from our state, our professional association, the Common Core, or some combination of these), can inspire and empower students and teachers at every grade level. Unless we work in a rare district whose standards include, for example, Teaching Tolerance's (2016) *Social Justice Standards*, we most often find ourselves trying to work against or around externally imposed standards and mandated curricular "interventions" that undermine what we *know* are better ways to teach. Service-learning work,[1] especially in social studies classrooms, is one important way we can transform K-12 curricula, to translate "generalized mandates in ways that support local communities, and honor and sustain local knowledges" (McGregor, Chappell Belcher, & Fitch, 2019, p. 267).

By taking students, and their civic learning, out of the classroom and into their own communities, we can avoid the questions teachers hate to hear: (in whiny voice) "*Is this going to be on the test?*" and (indignantly) "*What are we ever going to use this for?*" When fourth graders are writing to their city mayor about housing crises and income inequality in the local community, this *IS* the persuasive essay. When eighth graders are speaking to their neighborhood's representative in the City Council, educating them about

the concept of opportunity cost, and showing their photos and sharing their interviews with their unhoused neighbors, that *is* the test! When an elected official tries to talk down to twelfth graders about eviction laws in their state, and they interrupt to pointedly ask them to consider *their* draft bill, *that's* an A-plus!

In this chapter, I make the case and provide some "pro tips" for embedding community engagement work in your standards-based curriculum. I provide a sample outline of a curriculum transformation in a social studies unit in grade 4.[2] I taught in New York, but in every state, there are civics questions and economics concepts embedded in social studies standards. By applying these to real-world problems that are facing our own communities, *our students' communities*, we transform social studies from a dry (and very likely inaccurate) textbook-based experience to a lively and engrossing undertaking—a human encounter in which students are able to make a positive impact. After all, what are "the social studies" but human studies? We are trying to learn about ourselves in order to make better decisions for ourselves and each other.

The goal of transformative teachers in every subject is to provide access to the educational experiences that our students will remember into their adulthoods. That chart we might see in the textbook margin that illustrates *supply and demand* probably won't make a huge impact; the box containing definitions of *opportunity cost* and *market liquidity* is not that memorable. According to the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 2013), "Active and responsible citizens identify and analyze public problems; deliberate with other people about how to define and address issues; take constructive, collaborative action; reflect on their actions; create and sustain groups; and influence institutions both large and small" (p. 19). *There is no textbook for this.* Working outside the box, though, we can provide real-life educational moments that will provide the skills and knowledge that will allow and inspire our students to become active and responsible community members, and to stay active and responsible long after they leave our care.

SOCIAL STUDIES AND CIVIC EDUCATION LOST AND FOUND

For the past twenty years, The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) (2002) and its successors, the *Race to the Top Program* (U.S. Department of Education, 2009) and the *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* (2015), have emphasized testing mathematics, reading comprehension (of short out-of-context paragraphs), and technical writing (responses to uninspiring prompts) above all else. Social Studies and Civic Education have taken a back seat to the "three Rs." Sometimes social studies are absent from classrooms

completely, as students struggle under the pressure of these mandates. At the same time, though, we hear a common lament that young people don't vote, don't know what the three branches of the Federal Government are, can't name state capitals, and so on. Folks up and down the political spectrum seem to agree with Thomas Jefferson (n.d.) that we need social studies and civic lessons to preserve democracy.

Fleming (2011) cites lower rates in voting and volunteering as evidence of decreased civic participation and argues that the need for education and empowerment goes beyond a basic class that asks students to memorize the first five presidents and to know how many justices sit on the Supreme Court. Fleming (2011), along with Meier (2009), and Brownell & Swaner (2009) understands that democracy is work, and that it takes practice, from K-16 and across the lifespan. Social Studies content areas are living, breathing disciplines and students must be able to experience them as such. I will argue that students must have the opportunity to get excited about the possibility of participation—about joining the ranks of the influencers and changemakers of the world.

As social studies teachers, we can make this happen! I invite you to think of yourself, your colleagues, and other transformative teachers across the continent and around the world as ethical *coconspirators* in our students' learning. We are going to do everything we need to do, and at the same time, transform our classrooms into social studies/social justice workshops where we and our students can thrive!

SO MANY STANDARDS, SO LITTLE TIME! WHAT'S A TEACHER TO DO?

NCSS (2013) outlines four disciplinary[3] areas in its "inquiry arc" (pp. 17–21) while New York State (NYSED, 2017) uses the slightly more fine-grained six "social studies practices" that are "vertically articulated" across grades K-12 (pp. 4–11; 62–69). The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (NGA, 2010a, b) for social studies begin at grade 6 and are embedded in English Language Arts as "Literacy in History/Social Studies." Fortunately, these standards encompass similar learning goals for students. For example, for CCSS, students in grades 6–8 will "Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts)" (NGA, 2010b, para. 6), while those in grades 11 and 12 will learn to "Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information" (NGA, 2010a, para. 8). *New York State K-8 Social Studies Framework* (NYSED, 2017) asks fifth to eighth graders to "Distinguish between fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment

in a text" (p. 59). Finally, the *C3 Framework* (NCSS, 2013) tells us that by the end of grade 5, "Individually and with others, students: Use distinctions among fact and opinion to determine the credibility of multiple sources" (p. 54) and by the conclusion of their eighth grade year, students: "Evaluate the credibility of a source by determining its relevance and intended use" (p. 54).

As education professionals a big part of our work is to know what these standards are and to understand where they connect with our content. (For me, a color-coding system works. I use my special teacher felt tip markers to highlight the related standards on each document; we teachers all have our own ways to organize our knowledge and lay out our plans.) I include the *Social Justice Standards: The Teaching Tolerance Anti-Bias Framework* (Teaching Tolerance, 2016) in the mix as well. Then, I condense what I think it's all about under the NCSS four disciplinary areas (see below). Depending on your state the way you condense what you think it's all about might be different from me. Teaching is a creative and political project, which is why canned curricula do not serve us or our students well. Each of us will have our own classroom requirements, our own resources, and our own creative ideas. We all have our challenges and limits, too, but we do not have to "go it alone." As teachers, we can form our own learning communities and become "students of our own praxis" (Navarro, 2018, p. 346) while also supporting each other in curriculum design. Navarro (2018) reports that "members [of the Teacher Inquiry Group, or TIG] reported feeling safe to be vulnerable within the group while receiving tangible social justice teaching insight and resources" (p. 351).

My goal in this chapter is to offer my own work, not as a template, but as one example that might inspire readers and their own communities of learners and teachers to explore this way of working "outside the book but within the standards," what my colleagues and I have called "reclaiming our time: making general interventions local" (McGregor et al., 2019, p. 266). Below I summarize my thinking (based on the C3's Dimension 2: Disciplinary Tools and Concepts (NCSS, 2013, pp. 31–51)), as I consider my fourth graders living in New York City.

History

We want to encourage our students to think like historians, to ask questions of history that will help us understand our current situations and challenges—to provide context. "Expert historical investigators rely on residue from the past—both original accounts and testimonials and synthetic sources constructed by previous investigators" to answer their questions and to find new questions to ask (NCSS, 2013, p. 87). We do not need to limit our sources to textbooks, or even to books, or even to written documents—photographs,

political cartoons, maps, sketches, letters, audio and video recordings, music, art, all of these are "texts" and, I will argue, so are the life experiences of community elders, who we might interview, or even our students' own parents who may have lived in the community before they were born. Helping our students "think like historians" allows them to ask a different set of questions, rather than let the textbook frame both the questions *and* the answers.

Geography

When I think of my own geography learning I think of memorizing countries and coloring maps with colored pencils. "[S]tudents typically do not think much about who created the maps (i.e., cartographers), preferring instead to imagine that maps come ready-made and are thus always accurate. Yet, the sorts of political and socio-cultural distortions that may creep into such representations and into geographic narratives are crucial for students to understand" (NCSS, 2013, p. 87). Making maps of our own—which might contradict "expert" maps—can be important exercise in questioning power relations. Looking at maps in chronological order is powerful, especially thinking about settler colonialism and the geographical manipulation of the land, the land that is the traditional homelands of Lenni Lenape peoples, Mannahatta Island. This exercise also lent itself to a natural history and science exploration of the land precolonization: *what plants and animals are indigenous to the area?* We see huge chunks of Manhattan Schist (the island's signature black sparkly rock) in Morningside Park: *what other signs of the native flora and fauna can we find?*

Economics

In order to be full participants in civic problem-solving, citizens need to have an understanding of economic concepts. The youngest students may not understand the difference between owning and renting a house or apartment, but they can learn. And they certainly can understand and have discussions around concepts of "want v. need" and begin to debate how best to distribute limited resources—the fundamental question of economics. As they get older, students will add to their economics vocabulary and understanding: supply and demand, market forces, opportunity cost, consumption, and so on. "[Economic] literacy also entails the application of theories that describe the interconnections among concepts and how they play out within economic structures" (NCSS, 2013, p. 85).

Civics

When some people get down on young people for not voting and say "bring back civics classes" I'm sure they mostly mean a class that encourages you to

vote, that wants you to know the correct words to the Anthem and to always stand for the Pledge; to do patriotic things. But it's not as easy as memorizing the names of the Supreme Court Justices or knowing how the Electoral College works. It is harder to help our students understand and have an opinion on what's going on around them, to have an informed opinion on critical issues, such as whether our community is doing a good enough job taking care of vulnerable people, including children like them. I want them to "learn civic practices such as voting, volunteering, jury service, and *joining with others to improve society*. Civics enables students not only to study how others participate, but also to *practice participating and taking informed action* themselves" (NCSS, 2013, p. 31, emphasis added).

Concrete Example

I want to share an example of the multicultural curriculum transformation work that I did at the fourth-grade level at my K-8 school in New York City. This example is part of a K-4-8-12 outline of a plan that I developed in part as an exercise in planning *scope and sequence* for a course in my master's program. Represented here is just the fourth-grade portion, which came to life at my K-8 school.

Brainstorming

After we've reviewed the content standards and the skills standards from our various sources, and consulted the social justice standards (Teaching Tolerance, 2016) and the service-learning indicators for quality practice (National Youth Leadership Council, 2008), we are ready to roll. A fun and extremely productive way to get the ideas flowing is to bring in colleagues—whether they are in your grade level or adjacent ones, or colleagues from a different school. Invite the art teacher and Title I folks too. You can invite nonteachers to the brainstorm, and of course your students should be involved in the planning. Our unit on hunger and homelessness sprang from the desire of students to address a problem that they saw in their neighborhood and surrounding areas.[4] At my school in NYC, a group of us would gather in a classroom with a big white board, break out our multicolored Expo dry erase collection, and just let things fly! (See Figure 10.1 for my attempt at a reproduction of the web we sketched out during our brainstorming. Of course, the original was much more messy, colorful, and crowded.)

We were so incredibly privileged in New York City to have access to an amazing number of resources and potential community partners—from the Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (along with a legit public transportation system that could get us to all our field trip locations for free). We were able to work with a local ceramics

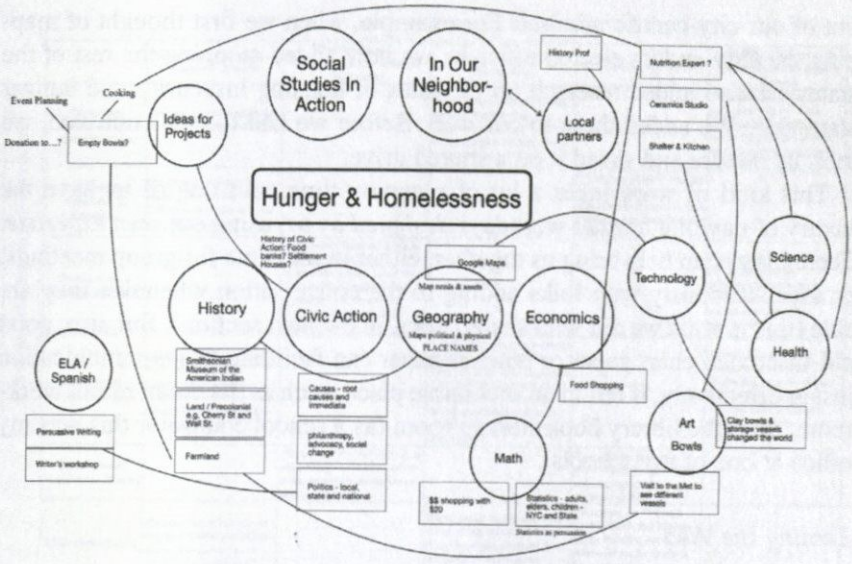

Figure 10.1 Collaboratively Developed Web.

studio where one of our teachers had a relationship, as well as a soup kitchen, a small shelter, and a church with a business "clothes closet" for job interviews, all just a few blocks away. These resources made community connections relatively easy; it may not be so straightforward where you live. Since I have been in Oregon I have come to understand, in a whole new way, the fact that all communities have different needs and their own resources. Doing this kind of exploratory work with colleagues will help reveal those in your neighborhood or town, as will a neighborhood mapping walk with students. If you do not live in the neighborhood with your school, bring in parents and local elders who want to assist. We must continually remind ourselves: none of us needs to do this alone.

Referring Back to Standards

From our web we went back to the NYS standards, this time with a focus on our grade's content areas. "Grade 4 Social Studies is focused on New York State and local communities and their change over time, incorporating the study of geography, history, economics, and government. Teachers are encouraged to make and teach local connections throughout the course" (NYSED, p. 52). Looking at "the what" that we're supposed to teach helped us brainstorm specific activities and questions we might want to pose to our students. We also were reminded that we were expected to incorporate the whole State of New York in our work, not just the City. We needed to get

out of our city-centric mindset! For example, when we first thought of mapping the City and its elected officials, we now added mapping the rest of the state; we also added research on the rates of housing insecurity and hunger statewide. We added these to our web. Before we had to erase our web, we took its picture and saved it on a shared drive.

This kind of work takes a lot of planning time, and few of us have the luxury of daylong teacher workdays *designed by us*, using our *own expertise*. Technology can help bring us together, either in real time for group meetings, or asynchronously with folks adding to the conversation whenever they are able (this is what we did with shared docs, in the next section). But also, good old-fashioned chart paper or butcher paper can facilitate this communication just as effectively, if left in an accessible place, such as the break room, workroom, even the library book storage room (as a school counselor this was my office at one of my schools).

Taming the Web

After the intense and exciting brainstorming, we had a very messy and very exciting web, full of possibilities! We needed to get organized.[5] At our next meeting, we developed a table, using a shared document that we projected onto a big screen for us all to share. Referring to our state standards again (NYSED, 2017), we put across the top, the "Unifying Themes" (p. 51) and for the rows, "Practices for Grade 4" (p. 49); (see Figure 10.2 for an approximation of what we developed).

Each square in the chart presents an intersection between "the what of the large umbrella of content" and "he what of skills." This helped us break up our work into smaller chunks of projects and lessons within the unit, in terms of specific each discipline (with its disciplinary way of thinking), *and* the activities we wanted to do with our students. Of course, this is not meant to be directly replicated; that would be impossible and not desirable. Each of us has different needs and different resources.

Each of our communities has different needs and different resources. Same goes for our kids! This example I hope will spark ideas and add fuel to your creative teacher-fire. I hope everyone will find at least couple of ideas here that will ignite some new addition to your social studies teaching life. For example, you might:

1) Start with a brainstorming web: *Don't have a big white board? How about index cards spread all over the table?*
2) Make your own chart using your own state standards.
3) Make a chart with your district standards on one axis and the *Social Justice Standards* (Teaching Tolerance, 2016) on the other!

NYS Social Studies Practices for Grade 4 (p. 49)	NYS Unifying Themes (p. 51)				
	Geography, Humans, & the Environment	**Development & Transformation of Social Structures**	**Power, Authority & Governance**	**Civic Ideals & Practices**	**Creation, Expansion & Interaction of Economic Systems**
Gathering, Interpreting & Using Evidence	*Activity*: Take a walk in the community; map needs and assets.		*Small group research*: Divide up the branches of local government and find out how they are organized and who is in the various positions.		*History lesson* on the economic history of our community, including when it was founded and how it was taken from Indigenous peoples.
Chronological Reasoning & Causation	*Group discussion*: Why might someone be poor? Can someone who was not poor *become* poor?			**Integrate Math** Explore statistics over time that demonstrate changes in rates of hunger and homelessness over time.	
Comparison & Contextualization		*Assessment*: Students work in groups to present to community groups about the historical/geographical and economic conditions that contribute to current local situations.			*Small group work*: Research and understand the relationship between the local community and the state and/or federal government.
Geographic Reasoning	*Whole group discussion*: How does geography impact scarcity that necessitates decision-making by individuals and families.		*Activity*: Map the city's elected representatives. Different maps can show who represents us in the U.S. Congress, at the state level, local city council, county commission, even the school board. Leave no stone unturned!		*Individual assignment*: Compare the size and geographic location of your local community with at least one other larger and smaller community in your region.
Economics & Economics System		*Whole class project*: Divide up and develop a visual timeline of the economic development of the community.		*Big question*: How can participating in community make an impact on economic system?	
Civic Participation	*Big question*: What are our responsibilities to members of our community? Our school? Our classroom?		*Whole group discussion*: How is individual power exercised in our local government? Can we think of new ways to exercise our power?	**Integrate Art** Create ceramic bowls and host an Empty Bowls event to raise awareness and/or funds in the community (also a summative assessment).	

Figure 10.2 Collaboratively Developed Table.

4) Make some other kind of chart to help your thinking. *Not sure where to start?* Get together with your grade level team (or other group of colleagues) to decide together what kind of chart is needed.
5) *Not enough time to meet?* Put a blank chart on a shared drive for your team to brainstorm and fill in their ideas (Again, I'm imagining this as color coded, but that's just me).
6) *Hate the idea of charts?* Think of your social studies curriculum as a flow, or a circle, or spiral, and illustrate it as such.
7) Ask folks to bring their ideas on sticky notes and add them to a chart drawn on butcher paper.
8) THINK OF A MUCH BETTER IDEA AND SHARE IT!

CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND NECESSARY EVOLUTIONS: CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE, RELEVANT, SUSTAINING, AND REVITALIZING PEDAGOGIES

By now you can tell that I am excited about this work; I am also optimistic that we ALL can do it. But a dose of realism is needed as well: Our efforts will not be universally celebrated. The multicultural education "movement" has always had opposition, since its early years of development in the 1960s

and 1970s.[6] Whether we are suggesting a reexamination of the actions of Columbus and the Pilgrims, or suggesting our students lead the identification of problems and participate in real-life action, there have been vocal opponents. In the 1980s and 1990s the most pitched battles were about "the canon" and how much we needed it, what can be added, changed, and subjected to question. One of the early leaders of the movement, James Banks, wrote about the "bitter debate over the literary and historical canon that has been carried on in the popular press and in several widely reviewed books" (1993, para. 1). Naysayers (too kind a term for those who would deny students an antiacculturating, anti-indoctrination, liberatory education) considered multicultural teaching a *program*—in the way of a "remedial" program or "entitlement"—for Students of Color. They accuse Communities of Color of wanting "special treatment" or immigrant folks of trying to avoid learning English. They insist that the white "liberals" in education are undermining American patriotism. In fact, all parents want their children to learn and be successful, they just don't want them to have to assimilate, lose their cultures and languages (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009). No one wants their children to be harmed by narratives of their histories that frame their ancestors as just a sidenote to the "real" history of the United States or as victims, criminals, or just plain outsiders to the "real" America (Sabzalian, 2019; Shear, Sabzalian, & Buchanan, 2018).

Though multicultural education didn't begin or end in the high offices of New York State, an illustrative moment of struggle comes from there: In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Thomas Sobol was the Commissioner of the New York State Education Department.[7] He gathered a diverse group of educators and teacher educators, historians, and other "learned" folks, to come up with a vision for the state's social studies curriculum. In light of the changing demographics (he invoked the oft-cited prediction that by the year 2020 "one of every three people in the United States will be a member of what we now call a 'minority'" (Sobol, 1993, p. 258) and the fact that "Many people had preferred not to 'melt' to begin with, but to maintain their separate identities. Many others, chiefly those Of Color, fund that they were not allowed to 'melt' if they tried" (p. 259); he wisely recognized that a change in the content was needed. Opponents of the plan derided it (they began to call it "The Sobol Report" in a sneering tone) and resorted to name-calling and alarmist right-wing rhetoric. One anonymous *National Review* writer called Sobol "the flugelman" of multicultural education and warned against "having the myths of multiculturalism fed to all schoolchildren by a state monopoly" (Anonymous, 1991). Governor Mario Cuomo, under political pressure from conservatives, tried to hold a middle-of-the-road position, while Sobol stuck to his plan. "'Life and history are complex, and it is the mark of an educated person to see things in their multifaceted complexity,' Mr. Sobol wrote. Describing how

Europeans and American Indians [Indigenous peoples] might have different views of Columbus's landing in America, he asked: 'Why do we find it so hard to entertain these two views simultaneously?'" (Sack, 1991, p. B4). In the larger analysis, the very ideals of the U.S. nation-state are at stake in this struggle. *Does the slogan E Pluribus Unum (out of many, one) really hold up to a pluralist society?* "Panelist Arthur Schlesinger Jr. said that the [Sobol] report was 'saturated with pluribus and neglectful of unum'" (Anonymous, 1991). Anonymous titled his outburst "Ex Uno, Plus" (in one there are many).

Advocates for multicultural education have all along resisted these attacks on what we know is good teaching. Cornel Insert: Pewewardy's (1993) statement in regard to Indigenous students can apply for all nondominant groups: "We have let schools act as an assimilationist force for too long, attempting to insert culture [dominant culture] into education, instead of putting education into the context of culture [the student and community culture]" (p. 78). Multicultural educators (of all races and ethnic groups, as well as LGBTQ teachers and activists, advocates for students with disabilities, for English learners, DREAMers, children growing up in poverty and for girls and young women) have maintained that this is "just good teaching" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 159) for *all* children, not just those traditionally marginalized in the curriculum and pedagogies of the U.S. nation-state's assimilative schooling system. Yes, "academic improvement of ethnically diverse students will improve when they are taught through their own cultural and experiential filters" (Gay, 2002, p. 106). And multicultural teacher educators, researchers, and theorists "agree that the movement is designed to restructure educational institutions so that all students, including middle-class white males, will acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function effectively in a culturally and ethnically diverse nation and world" (Banks, 1993, para. 2).

The community-based and inquiry-driven social studies learning framed in this chapter is part of an illustrious history and an exciting present of resistance to whitestream curriculum and pedagogy, and as such has the potential to be transformative in process as well as content. Woven throughout the curriculum and in the teacher's style of delivery, are considerations of the home cultures of students, and the culture of the school's surrounding community. There is significant overlap between this manner of "doing social studies" and the ways of any teaching that connects with and inspires students. In order to situate this work in its appropriate context, and to avoid the white settler pitfall of using concepts and definitions, along with their acronyms (especially those of Scholars of Color and my scholarly "elders"), as buzzwords, I offer a sketch of the interrelated work of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRelP) or Curriculum (Gay, 1988), Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) (Paris, 2012; Paris &

Alim, 2014). McCarty and Lee (2014) proposed Culturally Responsive and Revitalizing Pedagogies to address the ongoing issue of colonialist practices, including and especially language erasure in Indigenous communities.

Gay has continually called for the inclusion of diverse cultures in curriculum and pedagogy. Her article, "Designing Relevant Curricula for Diverse Learners" (1988), is foundational, and a classic in our field. She expanded this concept over time, ultimately offering her book, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*, in 2000 (now in its third edition (2018)). She has called cultural responsiveness, "using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. It is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly" (Gay, 2002, p. 106).

A distinct yet complementary approach has been offered by Ladson-Billings: CRelP: "I have defined culturally relevant teaching as a pedagogy of opposition not unlike critical pedagogy but specifically committed to collective, not merely individual empowerment. Culturally relevant pedagogy rests on three criteria or propositions: (a) Students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 160). Ladson-Billings and Gay are thought of as the generators of these terms, but meanwhile many other scholars and teachers are working on this as well. Pewewardy (1993) used the term "culturally *responsible* pedagogy" (p. 77, emphasis added), while Bartolomé (1994) described a "*humanizing* pedagogy that respects and uses the reality, history and perspectives of students as an integral part of educational practice" (p. 173, emphasis added). Sleeter (1996) framed multicultural education as "social activism," acknowledged its antihegemonic nature, and encourages us, especially white folks[8] to resist traditional/conservative definitions of "what count[s] as culture and knowledge" (p. 39).

More recently, Paris (2012) has offered this conceptualization of CSP: "This research and the pedagogical, curricular, and teacher learning innovations it forwards is interested not in relevance or responsiveness, but in sustaining and extending the richness of our pluralist society. Such richness includes all of the languages, literacies, and cultural ways of being that our students and communities embody—both those marginalized and dominant" (p. 96). Paris & Alim (2014) have emphasized the need for "pedagogies that are not filtered through a lens of contempt and pity (e.g., the 'achievement gap') but, rather, are centered on contending in complex ways with the

rich and innovative linguistic, literate, and cultural practices of Indigenous American, African American, Latinx, Asian American, Asian Pacific Islander, and other Youth and Communities of Color" (p. 86). Expanding further, McCarty & Lee (2014) offer Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing (CSRP) conceptions of pedagogy in terms of Indigenous communities' urgent need to revitalize Native languages: "Sustaining linguistic and cultural continuity and building relationships are central CSRP goals, premised on respect and reciprocity" (p. 117). Falcón & Jacob (2011) forward a "human rights pedagogy" while Poitras Pratt & Danyluk (2019) invite us to consider the possibilities of a "reconciliatory pedagogy" (in the context of Canadian/First Nations schooling).

All of these conceptualizations of an active, liberatory school experience are important and worthy of careful consideration. To return for a moment to the national motto: Paris (2012) reminds us that pluralism "is part of the democratic project of schooling. . . . A pluralistic society needs both the many and one to remain vibrant. Such educational and cultural values of pluralism in linguistic and cultural practices have been supported by the Unites States in word—though rarely in deed" (p. 95). Schools have too long been used as tools of domination, and all of these scholars invite us—even implore us—to reconsider it as a tool of liberation; community-engaged social studies can be a direct contributor to this work. Students know what injustice looks like, and they can imagine what justice looks like. While the student population of the United States is becoming increasingly diverse, the vast majority of teachers (80% as of the 2015–2016 school year according to the U.S. Department of Education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019, p. or para. #)) are white women. I am one of the 80% myself. It is not enough for us to say to ourselves "I don't see color" or "I love all of my students equally." To engage in this color blind fantasy does not embrace but erases our Students of Color (Crowley, 2019; Jupp & Slattery, 2012; Matias, 2013).

To take our work to our students, and to their communities, requires teachers from all backgrounds to trust our students, and respect their points of view. Sometimes this is hard to do, maybe even a little bit scary, because it means that teachers give up control/give up our place at the front of the room (Cook-Sather, 2002). On one of our community walks, a group of middle schoolers spent a great deal of time examining the brick wall that "protected" a church garden from the community. Someone had painted on it. There was some disagreement as to whether this should be mapped as an asset or as a deficit: it was graffiti in that it was not invited public art, but it was art in that it was more beautiful than a brick wall that reminded residents of this block of their "place" as lesser than in the community. I may have said ten words during that discussion. It was a joy just to witness it. I even had time to take a picture, which is one of my greatest treasures of teaching.

In another example, my younger students (fourth graders) identified a community elder who I might have called a nuisance (a neighborhood gossip with seemingly not much else going on) as an asset—they perceived her as part of the glue that held the community together, part neighborhood watch, part grandma to all the kids on the block, part living neighborhood newsletter and history report. As a white settler cis-hetero able-bodied person in America, I have to continually work against my own assumptions and work to unlearn the racism and classism that has been surrounding me my entire life. This is an ongoing process, with no clear endpoint. I always tell my white students, "If you think you're *woke*, if you think you've done all the work to be an ally or co-conspirator with People of Color, you're wrong. Ironically, knowing you're not *done* is part of knowing you're doing it right." Those of us inhabiting dominant group statuses must commit to always working on ourselves: learn to *stop talking* (Merculieff & Roderick, 2013) and *practice trust* in our students, their communities, and their inherent *community cultural wealth* (Yosso, 2005)—working against the tide of "white teacher hero rescues poor Brown kids" tropes that saturate film, television, news media.

CONCLUSIONS

We must not allow fear, dread, or other uncomfortable feelings keep us from the work of self-exploration required for us to be the, deeply caring, creative, risk-taking teachers of students who come from backgrounds vastly different from our own. It's not easy, and it is not done in a bubble. I invite you to do some exploration of these issues with teacher allies you can trust to have difficult conversations. Perhaps even form your own Teacher Inquiry Group (Navarro, 2018) to support your work. Use technology to connect with colleagues from other schools. I hope you will think of the "References" pages below as a list of resources and recommended readings for discussion. Finally, I want to leave you with one more example of a project I did with some students: one that demonstrates the possibilities that social studies "in action" opens up for us and our students—if we let it.

Using this story, I follow up with final thoughts on dimensions of community-engaged social studies that are not explicitly found in the standards, but are nevertheless important to our work: deep participation, diversity of curricular content, and the importance of this work for *all* students.

The Hair Project

One of our weeklong intensive integrated projects centered on hair. Some of the fourth- and fifth-grade white girls thought they could do a hair-cut-a-thon

and donate their hair. They didn't consider other students' involvement in the project, but the Black girls did! Our group ended up being racially and ethnically diverse (but all girls). Even so, it would have been easy, if we were afraid to "get into it" or if we were not informed on the issues, for us as teachers to sidestep all of the difficult history of racism and Eurocentric beauty standards. As adults, we could have flexed our authority and just not included that in our plan. We could have forced the unit in the direction of children's cancer statistics and the cost of wigs for poor families. Instead, both my partner and I talked to the girls about our own hair (my stick-straight white hair that I rarely cut but let hang down and his very well-kept TTA or teeny tiny afro) and let girls talk about theirs. We discovered common ground, that we think of our hair as a part of us, it's important to our identities, that we express ourselves with our hair. My teaching partner and I tied the girls' interest in hair issues to literature (*Bernice Bobs Her Hair* (Fitzgerald, 1995) was surprisingly a hit), art (*Queens* (Cunningham & Alexander, 2005) was predictably popular), history (a timeline of hairstyles that spanned the length of the room).

The most impactful piece, emotionally and politically, was the math/economics piece. Not an abstract lesson, it provided the context that allowed students to talk to each other about hair, society, and politics in a way they had not been able to before. A field trip to the local CVS store had us all measuring the hair care aisles, counting the products, taking pictures, and furiously writing down prices for different products. Sadly, I do not recall the exact figures, but our findings reflected the cultural emphasis on hair for women (there were very few products for men) and particularly for Black women, with a clear and obvious emphasis on products to change their hair to more closely approximate white hair (perms, relaxers, straightening irons, etc.). With this stark evidence in front of them, students were able to talk to each other, and learn from each other, about "good hair" and media representations of Black women, and most importantly how that impacted the day-to-day lives of the Black girls. The white girls learned that they had "good hair"—a phenomenon that they never considered—and this led to a discussion of privilege and equity.[9] As teachers it can be scary to have these discussions with our students—*wouldn't it be easier if we just TOLD them about the problem?* Maybe—but this way they learned from each other in an authentic way, rather than from an adult droning on at the front of the room.

In the end, we did have the haircut-a-thon and donate LOTS of hair and money. We turned a classroom space into a salon, where anyone could come to donate their tresses, or just to get a cleanup (we accepted donations as the price of the cuts; local hair salons and barbers donated their time). We were sure to have the salon "waiting room" strewn with magazines representing different cultures, languages, and hairstyle options, and each client received

a pamphlet that explained what we learned about hair culture and the political and personal importance of hair in terms of racism, identity, and multicultural awareness. Everyone learned a lot about each other and the racial politics of hair. Everyone was satisfied, except perhaps myself and my partner. I think we hoped for some more visible, radical change in our students, but we also recognized "the importance of letting students come to conclusions about their effectiveness on their own. . . . the real victory here is that students felt empowered to apply the lessons they learned in school to challenge the immediate conditions of their lives" (Duncan-Andrade, 2008, p. 7). A few years later, in middle school, a couple of the Black girls from this group, along with a few of their friends, started an Affinity Group for Black women as a school club. The "good white person" in me would like to think maybe there is some small connection between this endeavor and The Hair Project, but, in truth, these girls' mothers, grandmothers, and aunties get all of the credit for the brilliance of these young women, including their idea for this club.

Deep Participation

Eve Tuck's (2013) conceptualization of deep participation provides a guiding vision for our work with students in transformative social studies classrooms. She helps us to differentiate between answering the questions that others are asking *of* us, and asking the questions that are important *to* us. She invites us to think more carefully, to engage our students more profoundly in their social studies work. Rather than focus our energies on accumulating the "core knowledge" that Hirsch (2009, p. 7) and his colleagues advocate, Tuck, along with social justice teachers such as Duncan-Andrade (2009) advocate (in alignment with the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 2013) guidelines for inquiry) that students should be inquisitive and come up with the questions and problems on their own, with support from teachers. This is how students become active learners, coconstructors of their own knowledge, and learn to "apply what they learn in the classroom to real issues in their lives" (Duncan-Andrade, 2009, p. 6).

Deep participation means that all of us get to identify problems, we don't need to wait to have the problems handed to us or framed for us. In fact, we are able to disrupt the framing of the issue that was presented. To do this we must hone our own understanding of how the world works, and always be working to be toward a more critical understanding of structures of power. The hair industry (and capitalism in general) frame our hair one way—as a thing that needs intervention—and something to be monetized. Their advertising dollars buy images that are intended to make us believe that an intervention is needed, exactly what it is, and how we can get it. Our little group understood that these images can hurt. They can break our hearts and burn our

scalps. Our girls framed their hair as an intensely personal mode of expression, and the media discussion of it as the problem. Once we understand that we can define our own problems we feel more powerful, more able to take action.

Diversity of Curricular Content

Especially in "higher-need" schools (i.e., those with high proportions of children experiencing poverty and homelessness, students in racially minoritized groups, high numbers of students with special education or health needs, etc.), the past two decades of overemphasis on standardized testing, combined with budget cutting, has led to a narrowing of curriculum (Smyth, 2007) to focus almost solely on what the tests will measure (Au, 2016). Kober (2001) was an early advocate of comprehensive strategies to address what she called "the achievement gap" even as her report recommended improvement of "housing, nutrition, and health care" (p. 25) for students in traditionally marginalized groups. Teacher and education activist Deborah Meier (2009) has declared this difference between the education offered to the elite *schooling for ruling* and named it as a dire threat to democratic practice. Research by the National Research Council (2011) highlights changes in school practice that "were focused on the specific structure of the incentives system, such as shifting instruction to focus on aspects that count in the system and away from aspects that do not count: these changes involved an increased focus on tested subjects, on lower performing students at the threshold of attaining proficiency, and on material that closely mimics the tests" (p. 62). In his analysis of the side effects (or "collateral damage") of high-stakes testing regime, Yong Zhao (2017) is more pointed, claiming that it has had the result of "denying vulnerable and less advantaged students [the benefits] of a true education" (p. 12).

Often, this has meant a deemphasis on social studies. A more well-rounded curriculum is better for our students and for us. It keeps our creativity and professionalism at the forefront of our daily work (Davies, 2013). It gives children with differing gifts a time to shine. Making curricular integration part of this transformation of how we "do social studies" makes more room for so many more opportunities to learn and grow. I hope this chapter has sparked some ideas for how classroom teachers can partner with other teachers or "interventionists" (e.g., math specialists, English teachers, art teachers) to integrate civic engagement with topics that *are* the focus of the tests. We can also use an "efficiency" argument to demonstrate how when we integrate art with social studies we are doing twice as much teaching and learning; we are meeting the math standards within our community-engaged work.

We teachers, as fallible humans, may sometimes fall for politicians' and the media's (and some education scholars') framing of the "achievement gap" as stemming from individual student's deficits (for a complete dismantling of this deficit mindset, see Valencia, 2010) or the rhetoric of education "reform" (with increasing standardization along with test-and-punish programs) as the *civil rights issue of our time* (Rice, 2017; Robinson, 2016). We must be critical thinkers ourselves, even as we are teaching our students to do so. I know for myself, I continually ask, "*Why is a shallow curriculum good enough for kids and communities that are already on the margins of U.S. whitestream society? And what is my role in resisting?*"

Social Justice Teaching and Learning for *All* Students

For the United States to move beyond its legacy as a country built on stolen land with stolen labor, all of our students will need to know how to think deeply and critically, and to act for social justice. This is not just for the Black and Brown students, or the poor students, or the Native students. It is for all of us. Community-based problem-solving involves students, families, and community members in active work on behalf of community and emphasizes community assets and local knowledge. Just as multicultural curriculum content is important for everyone, community-engaged social justice work is important for all of our students.

FINAL THOUGHTS: HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

This "is difficult, inward-looking, and uncertain work" (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 96). There will always be room for growth; our profession is not about perfection, but about always making progress. The struggle for educational justice is not neat and clean. It never has been. Paris & Alim (2014) continue: "As the United States continues to change, and as we continue to think through the promises and challenges posed by CSP, we ask that youth, educators, and researchers join us to take this struggle further, with love" (2014, p. 96). Still, change is difficult—some opponents will certainly portray us using images of a social justice teacher that draws on racial prejudices; we may even be called "race traitor" if we are white. They may suggest that we are a "frenzied mob of anti-Americans trying to destroy the U.S." and want to maintain an idealized "view of the U.S., its diversity, and its position within a hierarchical, capitalistic global order" (Sleeter, 1996, p. 62). Some might even argue, such as Stotsky (1999) that "multicultural classroom instruction has undermined our children's ability to read, write and reason."

Although we certainly know better, we might become discouraged, or perhaps accidentally fall into a more neutral-liberal narrative of "inclusion" or "tolerance" because it is less daunting (and less threatening to others) than liberatory work. Amsler & Facer (2017) conceptualize a "political construction of hopelessness" and warn that hopelessness limits our vision for the future as well as our imagination for the present. There will be those who tell us we are wasting our time, that change will not happen in our lifetime, or that injustice and oppression are just the natural state of things. When we feel discouraged, we need to remember how important it is for us to continue to do our work. Our project is based on core values of *freedom, and justice for all*. Despite how our nation-state has failed to live up to its commitments up to this point, it is difficult to argue with these core values. Moreover, "While contending philosophical and political views over cultural unity and pluralism in the United States will continue to exist, more attention should be shifted to cultural values themselves. Whatever their origins, it can be asked if they are desirable and educative, questions that are especially pertinent with regard to values learned and exhibited by young people" (Pewewardy & Willower, 1993, p. 55).

If we forget to infuse critical hope into our practice, we "lack a foundation of political struggle" (Grain & Lund, 2016, p. 46) for our work. Freire reminds us: "Without the struggle, hope, as an ontological need, dissipates, loses its bearings, and turns into hopelessness. And hopelessness can become tragic despair. Hence the need for a kind of education in hope" (Freire, 1970/2000). We must look to each other to amplify hope, and to maintain our energies for the job ahead. This may mean working within your own community of teachers and learners, reading the hopeful works of those who are also involved (e.g., Ayers, 2004; Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Tuck, 2013; Weber, 2018). I don't believe a simplistic "accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative" way of thinking will keep us fueled for long, so I turn again to Tuck (2009). Her conceptualization of desire-based narratives, as opposed to those centering on damage and pathology helps us to focus on "not only the painful elements of social realities but also the wisdom and hope. [She is] is intent on depathologizing the experiences of dispossessed and disenfranchised communities so that people are seen as more than broken and conquered. This is to say that even when communities are broken and conquered, they are so much more than that" (p. or para. #).

NOTES

1. A note about terminology: service-learning is a term that specifically refers to students doing service work in the community and relating it back to curriculum, and

critically reflecting on what they're learning. Because the connotations of service can sometimes be negative (ranging from deficit-focused pity to savior mentality) the term is somewhat falling out of favor. I consciously use it, in addition to other general terms like "community-based learning" or "field experience," to refer to students out in the world, doing and learning. It is extremely important to recognize the danger of thinking of service as something done out of pity or guilt, but also I think to retain hope that "service" can also be a humble and helpful offering.

2. This is loosely based on the *New York State K-12 Social Studies Framework's* (NYSED, 2017) *social studies practices* (pp. 4–11; 62–69) and *unifying themes* (see, for example, fourth grade outlined on p. 51), which are broad enough to be found in many social studies curriculum plans, and are very likely to be in need of transformation. I also draw on the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 2013) *C3 Framework* to lend further credibility to what educational leaders in many schools or districts may see as "outside" the work of social studies (because it is outside of the textbook).

3. The use of the term "disciplinary" rather than the term "content" to describe each area is interesting and, for me, also exciting. For me it conveys that this is not simply about content, which can often be experienced by students (and teachers) as boring (i.e., something to be memorized from a thick book with chapter summaries and unit quizzes); rather, it is about the ways of thinking within each discipline which provokes an array of critical questioning: *How can any issue be viewed through an historical lens? What kinds of questions do different professionals (e.g., a geographer or an economist) ask about a phenomenon that reflect their divergent views/understanding of the phenomenon?* In teaching through these kinds of "problem-posing" questions, students are learning not just facts and dates, but new habits of mind.

4. Most of the students in this grade level group of about 60 people experienced food security and housing stability. A significant handful did not, and one student was living in a shelter with her grandmother. To the extent that they were comfortable sharing, their insights were invaluable to their classmates. For example, we went to the grocery store with the challenge to purchase food for one day with $20. The less well-to-do students were like "Duh, get the chicken with the bone in."

5. Even though we recognize a need to impose some sense of order on ourselves, the web and the table remain "living documents" to which we could refer, and add to as we came up with more ideas (usually student-generated)!

6. Read more about the "prime time" of multicultural education from movement leader Gay's (1983) retrospective article (which also includes a future-oriented look at the field, which is fascinating to read now, almost forty years later).

7. Professor Sobol's work is very familiar to me, since I had him as a professor—after he left the State Department of Education, he taught at Teachers College Columbia University for a number of years. Having heard him speak of this time in his career, as well as learning more about him as a person, I am still humbled by what he did for the children of the State of New York. These days, New York State now has its own *Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework* (The State Education Department; The University of the State of New York, 2018).

8. I believe that white teachers (and white folks in general) need white people as role models for how to do better. We should not be burdening our Colleagues of Color with our need for education and antiracist training. If you are looking for such a role model, I cannot recommend the writing of Sleeter highly enough. She is transparent with her learning and her ongoing work to do better, in her theoretical and academic work, and in two fictional works.

9. McIntosh's classic "Invisible Knapsack" essay (McIntosh, 1988) mentions hair salons as racially specific places: "I can go into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can cut my hair" (para. 12). Also, I got to tell the story of my friend and alphabet neighbor (we had the same last name and were often sitting next to each other or standing one in front of the other in various school lines. He was a Black boy and it was the 1970s—his afro was far from teeny). It was school picture day and they handed out those useless black plastic combs to everyone. I tried to calm the flyaway staticky wisps of my white girl hair with the dumb comb. He just took it from the person, shook his head and laughed. I think it was sixth grade. Final note: "the validity of hair as a catalyst for political discussions in the classroom has [since] been recognized by scholars in the United States and Canada" (Jeffries & Jeffries, 2014, p. 165) through course development at the college level.

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Multicultural Curriculum Transformation in Social Studies and Civic Education

Edited by
Kenneth J. Fasching-Varner, Kerri J. Tobin,
Norma A. Marrun, Iesha Jackson,
and Christine Clark

Guest Edited by
Averill Kelley and Chelsea DeSalvo

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Foundations of Multicultural Education

The series focuses on explicating subject area- and grade level-specific multicultural curriculum transformation geared for PK-12 pre-service teacher education and in-service teacher professional development. It is geared toward PK-12 public school educators and administrators, as well as for teacher educators. However, the series is appropriate for all PK-12 teaching and learning contexts in which critical engagement of diversity is foundational in assuring educational equity and excellence for all students.

There is a great need for contemporary, comprehensive, and teacher-friendly resources that provide concrete subject- and grade-specific examples for how to go about transforming mainstream, traditional, and/or Eurocentric curriculum. In particular, resources that "work" for PK-12 public school teachers, regardless of the specific standards and/or standardization culture of their schools, are needed. Because standards and related culture change frequently, it is also important that these resources are flexible enough to allow for pre- and in-service adaptation of them to their particular teaching contexts. As PK-12 public school student and parent populations around the country continue to become more and more diverse while both teacher candidate and veteran teacher diversity remains largely stagnant, resource rigor is more crucial than ever. Pre- and in-service teachers need specialized developmental support to be able to effectively adapt curriculum that is authentically multicultural, promotes teacher reflection, and, therefore, meaningfully addresses the key goal of PK-12 education—the education of our nation's youth.

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