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KAMIAR MEHRABIAN
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HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AND THEIR EXPERIENCES FROM U.S. HISTORY CLASSROOMS

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BY

_____
Dr. Kristy Brugar, chair

_____
Dr. Neil Houser

_____
Dr. Crag Hill

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Abstract

United States history is taught at least twice to all students in the United States that are between thirteen to seventeen years old. *"All"* is a word that suggests something that is complete, that encapsulates the entirety of some object, idea, person, and so forth. However, sometimes the idea "all" can be quite understated-- the problem identified in this study lies in that aspect of *all*; not every person is represented in the U.S. history curriculum, mainly just white, male, property owners. For a society that wants to educate its own people about the greatness of the country various people live in, it is quite problematic when *all* but one type of individual seems to be marginalized or peripheral to their own society.

This research project explores how representations (inclusion/exclusion) of individuals and events in the high school U.S. history curriculum impact students' understanding of U.S. history as well as their connection to history in general. I want to know if students thought about marginalization regarding the U.S. curriculum towards various groups of people, but also how it impacted their view of education, history, learning history, and their notions of their own further education in general. How has this view of history impacted them? Impact was indicated through interviews and focus group interviews regarding students' experiences in the class(es) they have taken. In order to explore my question deeply, I interviewed former students that wanted to contribute in such a study.

The findings of my study place student-voice at the center. Students describe what they have learned, how they are being taught, and what their personal thoughts, which was somewhat surprising to me. It confirmed my thoughts as a child about

enjoying a diverse education about my family's heritage. Many students were disconnected and disinterested in learning the current curriculum because of content and pedagogical practice.

Introduction

Since an early age, I have always been curious about how history "worked." When I was in World History class as a teenager, I learned about the ancient Greeks and the Mycenaeans - and it was incredibly interesting. Then, when it was time to learn about the Persians and their empire, it was my jam! It was like I learned about my family and heritage which was amazing because all the people in the story look somewhat like me—then to find that it was the greatest empire in the world at one point, it was incredibly empowering. While in my U.S. history classes, I became alienated from what I was learning. There was no way that I could see myself in what was being learned in class. It truly made me feel that my heritage was insignificant and it seemed like I was learning about *somebody else's* history.

When one looks at history textbooks, specifically United States (U.S.) history books, it is quite easy to see who is represented. Older, prestigious, white men are found in students' textbooks and curriculum calendars more often than they are not, especially in comparison to the other groups of people that are present. These representations may go unnoticed by students as they mindlessly go from classroom to classroom without thinking about the curriculum. Students learn what they are "supposed to learn." As a classroom teacher, a student might say, "Mr. Mehrabian, are we going to learn about this? Or when does this pop up?" And sometimes, I have to tell those eager students, that is not what they are "supposed to be learning"—the curriculum includes a set list of people (usually Anglo men), places, events, and time periods, and we simply do not have time to cover anything extra.

That is quite tragic when one considers that the American history textbooks are patriarchal hierarchies that are bound and forced upon various age groups of young women and men.. What about women and their historical significance? What about people of color, those that do not share backgrounds from the popular narrative in these books? What about women of color, and how American history has treated them so poorly? In what spaces are these ethnic minorities learning about people that are just like themselves? Or are they? How can we help them identify with who and what these people are learning about?

Sincerely enough, the issue behind many of these questions is the narratives of U.S. history taught to students. Textbook content has remained roughly the same since the 1980s (Roberts, 2014). However, the population of the United States is growing ever-diverse. This is a problematic notion because the growing population that does not even come close demographically to mirroring the history which students are learning. As a result, I would say that quite a few students are being "taught at" as passive learners, rather than being active learners. My inclination is that this has the potential for many to feel disengaged from the narrative of U.S. history that does not often reflect their own heritage.

Considering the lack of diversity in curriculum and textbooks, how do representations (inclusion/exclusion) of individuals, and events in the high school U.S. history curriculum impact students' understanding of U.S. history as well as their connection to the curriculum? I was curious to know how a lack of diversity impacted students that have taken the mandated U.S. history course. Did it make them become

disenfranchised to their own education? In what ways have students of their ethnic minority group received education about their own personal heritage?

As an ethnic minority and classroom teacher, my goal is to create a new United States history experience for my students that focuses on not just the white-male dominated parts of American society, but also encompassing the "peripheral" narratives as well—they are just as important. Sincere questions, or maybe worries that I have in regard to a newly adjusted curriculum is whether or not schools would be willing to adopt such a curriculum? Would veteran teachers be willing to change their the content and pedagogy of their teaching? What about textbook companies? With a new curriculum comes new texts and literature to help educate youths upon these new subjects.

In the following pages, I describe the theoretical frameworks that I have used to guide this work as well as foundational research that has informed my work. Then, I share the methods of how this study was designed along with the categorical findings that I identified. After, I conclude a discussion of the implications regarding the outcome of the study ensues.

Theoretical Framework

For this study I have used two inter-related theories associated with curriculum and pedagogy. One theory draws from Ladson-Billings (1995) and her discussion of cultural competence and recognition among one's own culture. Secondly, I also drew from the work of Eisner (1985) regarding the varying types of curriculum that are taught by educators.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy is the concept in which educators are able to educate students for academic success and competence of recognizing culture, but also the students are taught to recognize, understand, and even critique social inequities as well (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The concept describes one's ability to display cultural competence, but in the essence that each student could then relate what they are learning to their own culture. In some ways it could bridge an approach of a "one-two" narrative historical pedagogy to multiple narratives that would reach most students on a culturally relevant ways. Since this study is based upon understanding who or what is represented, or possibly not represented in regard to U.S. history curriculum, looking through this lens encapsulates what I am trying to accomplish: analyzing if students are impacted in such a way that it alters their connection to U.S. history or history in general because of the amount of diversity they see in their U.S. history courses.

In 1985, Elliott Eisner wrote about the teaching of curriculum, but it was also a discussion about educational institutions educating students more or far less than the intended approach. Eisner approached what is to be learned in three varying categories of curricula: explicit, implicit, and null. The explicit curriculum is simply what the educator is trying to convey to students out of their own practice—this is the most

common of the three categorical methods according to Eisner since it is written in their curriculum guides and course content. Second, the implicit curriculum is the interpretation of material by teachers, it is not written down in a curriculum calendar or guide. It cannot be replicated by other teachers simply because it is individually done. In the implicit curriculum, teachers may teach unintended lessons about certain topics due to their implicit thoughts and biases regarding such concepts while preparing their own materials for class. Lastly, Eisner discussed the null curriculum, the content that is not taught. It is not in the curriculum guides or calendars, nor the course content.

Literature Review

This study draws on several areas of established research including: curriculum, pedagogical practices, and curiosity. All three of these areas of the literature are integral in my study. The research I read and share here ranges from empirical research to practitioner pieces both involving educators and students.

Curriculum

In 1988, James Banks discussed various approaches to U.S. history curriculum reform in regard to becoming more diverse and multicultural. He suggested that there were four definite approaches to integrating ethnic content into the curriculum with the following approaches: The Contributions Approach, Ethnic Additive Approach, The Transformative Approach, and The Decision-Making and Social Action Approach.

The Contributions Approach (Banks, 1988) is the most-frequently used approach and it is the first phase in an ethnic revival movement. It is characterized by adding in ethnic heroes into the curriculum— people that have done something significant. The Ethnic Addition Approach allows an educator to incorporate ethnic content into the curriculum without actually restructuring it, but it fails to help students view society from diverse and cultural perspectives. Banks suggested that this approach does not truly facilitate student understanding of diverse communities and backgrounds.

Banks described The Transformative Approach as very different from the previous two approaches—this one does not add in ethnic heroes, rather it is an infusion of various perspectives and points of view. Instead of interjecting new historical figures as in the previous two approaches, the Transformative Approach positions learners to gain a greater understanding of diversity and multiculturalism through varying

perspectives and points of view. Lastly, The Decision Making and Social Action Approach simply includes many elements of The Transformative Approach, but it also contextualizes student learning in particular units with decision-making. It requires students to study and analyze social problems and to henceforth enact agency of social justice. Although Banks (1988) suggested these methods of multicultural curriculum reform in the late 1980s, the ideas are consistently relevant in comparison to what Sam Wineburg revealed in his 2008 study.

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Black America celebrated Negro History Week with speeches, parades, and educational events—but not until the 1960s did White America take much notice to it (Wineburg, 2008). During the 1940-50s, causal textbooks (those most often used in public school classrooms) essentially ignored Black Americans (Fitzgerald, 1986) except in their faceless silhouette as slaves. Fitzgerald wrote that blacks were never really acknowledged, they were written out of the curriculum (Eisner, 1985). They were literally and figuratively invisible. One might consider Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, a novel where Ellison pointed out the placelessness of African Americans in society in 1952; Fitzgerald (1986) echoed, the narratives of various textbooks during the 1940-50s described the population of the United States with this idea that African Americans and Native American populations should be cast aside, and that is what social studies education was taught and received by students. Many men and women that were in grade school during this fragile time in U.S. history were given a partial history to operate from—but to the narrative in which they operated, it was "normal." Now, Wineburg suggested that although those were the

texts from the early Cold War Era, today's mainstream books look like a radical turnaround—in fact minorities had moved center stage by the 1960s (Wineburg, 2008).

In a discussion about educational materials inside textbooks, Roberts (2014) examined them in general and discovered what was problematic with them in various ways. He suggested that there were ways to make textbooks and studies more effective for educators. First, he suggested that it was important to analyze both the textbook and the standards simultaneously. In this essence, sometimes the text did not match the standard that was supposed to be conveyed, so it would be necessary for a teacher to seek additional resources. Secondly, Roberts pointed out that it is important to analyze an entire textbook, and from then to move off from topic driven studies of an evaluation of a text—it is much better to analyze a book's strengths and weaknesses in this way. Lastly, he suggested to simply provide student centered lessons. He suggested that textbooks should make more practical guides for educators in an attempt to deliver quality, detailed, possible lesson plans that eliminate textbook bias or controversy. Of course, the most important piece of information to Roberts' study was that textbooks and their analyses have not changed for more than twenty years—which is problematic.

My previous notions that certain groups of people are not represented in U.S. history curriculum were certainly reinforced by this literature. It is true, minorities had finally made their way into the U.S. history textbooks, but is it something to be celebrated? Of course, after being a part of the null curriculum, something that's not there, it is quite exciting to finally "win a battle" *per se*. But what about the fashion in which minorities are portrayed or placed in these new textbooks or curricula? Would students remember these diverse historical figures when they were taught; or *if* they

were taught the new information by their teachers? For example, Dred Scott was added into the curriculum to for United States government to serve as an example of a court case; it was ruled that a slave is still a slave regardless of the position on the map. Essentially, the newer textbooks were using these "new figures" like Dred Scott in history as typical tokenism (Foster, 1999).

Students do learn U.S. history beyond simply textbooks. It is intriguing that students are more likely to learn history from television, movies, fictional texts, museums, and images than from reading informational text (Rosenzweig & Thelen, 2013). Historians, Roy Rosenzweig and Dave Thelen, explored the popular uses of history in American life (e.g, mainstream films). They conducted a national survey, which revealed that 80% of respondents ranked museums as the most trustworthy source of historical information, followed by personal accounts from grandparents or other relatives (69%). College history professors were ranked at 54%, followed by high school teachers (35%), nonfiction books (32%), and movies and television programs (11%).

Rosenzweig and Thelen suggested that students ranked where they get trusted historical information— museums, older relatives, and college professors were more valid to students than high school teachers and non-fiction books. So, regarding a discussion of what students remember from their U.S. history courses, Wineburg (2008) set out to explore this idea of historical consciousness since the early Cold War. He questioned if the contemporary classroom changed its views upon who is reflected in their curriculum, and how it impacts students and their knowledge. Wineburg's study gave students blank paper to list famous Americans since 1492 and they must not list

presidents of the country. He tried to be as conscious of demographics as possible, even branching out to American-born adults that were over the age of forty-five, sampling those that have been "processed" through American public schools and the results were quite interesting besides celebrities: Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, and Harriet Tubman. The region in which students were polled played a great role in establishing these significant figures, but it was quite apparent that whites were exponentially more likely to name white figures just as black individuals were to name other African American figures.

In a curriculum where few minorities are recognized, and when they are, it is quite marginal, where do ethnic and gender minorities go to receive their education? Popular culture in YouTube videos, shows like *The Sopranos* and *The Simpsons* are closing the gap to the lack of education, the new age of culture is a powerful force when it comes to learning (Bailey, 1956). And, just like myself during public school, is this lack of "formal education" for minority students about people such as themselves creating disinterest among students to continue their education or pursue a path of social studies?

In a matter of who is truly present in historical narratives, Shear, Knowles, Shoden, and Castro (2015) investigated how frequent or infrequent people of indigenous histories or cultures were represented in textbooks—but also how they were covered, depicted and analyzed. Similar to the Wineburg study, this one too suggested that Euro-American voices dominated textbooks and influenced classroom experiences (Barton, 2004). In regard to reviewing the literature, I found it quite frustrating to not find a study that depicted interviews explicitly stating how lack of personal identity for

ethnic and gender minorities had an impact on students' social standings in the public classroom. In the end of that study, Shear et al (2015) suggested similar data to what Wineburg did—the ethnic minorities, in this case, indigenous people, were incredibly undervalued and misinterpreted in the national curriculum and only slightly accurate in certain states where these people were a substantial portion of the population. It was noted that indigenous people were portrayed in a fashion that was more geared toward pre-1900 American civilization; the textbooks portraying the information have not been changed for nearly twenty-five years, which is nauseating (Roberts, 2014).

Pedagogical Practices

In a study done by Martell and Stevens (2017), researchers found that many teachers made race explicit in their classrooms by actually including race in teaching units that were not necessarily considered race-related; the lessons typically focused on not only race, but inequality as well. While many educators did emphasize race in the classrooms, they did it in differing ways: some educators focused more on tolerance of race, while others projected more towards equity. Many teachers however taught race as a social construct, but as a part of society. In contrast, some focused simply on tolerance, making them the gatekeeper of race in the classroom (Thornton, 2005). It was quite clear that there is a division among educators upon how they approached their students in a conversation of race relations.

Similarly, Epstein (2009) discussed race and identity in classrooms across the United States as it pertained to pedagogy as well as students' reactions and opportunities in those environments. Epstein evaluated the pedagogies of various teachers across the country, analyzed the impact on student identities and student

interpretation, examined racial divides in the interpretation of U.S. history, and finally discussed the implications of U.S. history teachers that teach race from a stance of social justice. Her results showed that many educators simply dedicated a month to African Americans, one does not have to undertake extensive research to pinpoint the certain month: February. Educators do not always include diversity in a discussion with historical narrative throughout the entire school year (Epstein, 2009; Martell & Stevens, 2017). Some simply dedicate a small portion of time to discuss diversity among race in various times throughout the year.

Because of the various methods teachers went through educating about race in the classrooms, Epstein broke down how each teacher taught race relations in a pedagogical style table. These approaches included a focus on race relations, rights, and teacher- or student-centered practice. Regarding the approach to race relations, she documented whether or not teachers conveyed it as racism and violence, racial cooperation, or as a problem yet to be solved. When identifying the approach to equality of rights in the United States, she identified teaching styles as part of rights being expanded, racism still existing, equality existing, or equality exists but alongside individual prejudice. Lastly, she documented whether or not the method of teaching students about race relations happened to be teacher- or student-centered. In her narrative, it was very mixed upon the approach to the race relations, but it was very clear that the majority of the lessons that were teacher-centered left very little wiggle room for student interaction. In this method, the teacher would have complete control of the narrative, lack of student voice, and possible exclusions from the curriculum (Eisner, 1985; Freire, 2000).

In a narrative of varying approaches from educators in relation to educating about race, Martell and Stevens (2017) suggested that through the comparing and contrasting of teachers' methods, one can better understand the experiences of students that are sitting in classrooms. What they found in their study was that some teachers, more often teachers of color, made students aware of racism—that is important because white teachers in suburban schools tended to give students more of an analysis about what race meant in society. The contrast between how students were approached with interaction regarding topics of race in the classroom was intriguing. Some of what was communicated was the idea that white students should also confront their white privilege—creating an atmosphere for discussion among the kids about hierarchical development of society (McIntosh, 1989). However, Martell and Stevens (2017) found when teachers conveyed a message of tolerance, it squashed student interaction. Thus, it provided very little room for students to discuss race and other social inequalities.

Discussing race relations in the United States can be uncomfortable, so it is not surprising that teachers proceed cautiously with their students about this topic. For example, Hess (1998) examined public schools and how educators taught controversial public issues, or CPI. In the process, she observed many teachers, interviewed them, and looked for artifacts that were helpful in teaching CPI. Hess established six major concepts from her study: first, teachers should teach for discussion, it molds critical thinking skills, creates an atmosphere conducive to content, and develops student interpersonal skills. Secondly, it is imperative that teachers make discussion a forum for students. Third, an educator must select an appropriate mode of discussion that is useful and can be later defined as effective discussion among classmates. Fourth, Hess asserted

that there must be a way to properly assess student participation in discussing CPI. Fifth, she acknowledged that the teacher view should not play a substantial role regarding the CPI, but also admits that the teacher interferes simply by influencing the choice of CPI. Lastly, Hess stated it is quite important to have received support from the school administration—in other words it is important that what is happening is aligned with the school views and operations. Although Hess outlines these necessities, they are not always present in schools and for teachers.

Epstein (2009) discussed the impact of certain pedagogical practices regarding race that might influence students in the classroom. One of the impacts that Epstein pointed out was the Civil Rights Movement and those that were involved. She examined that white students tended to view minorities during the era as victims—people that were being targeted. In contrast, the students that are minorities viewed the people that struggled for equality as actual figures of momentous history. Interestingly enough, Epstein also pointed out that the white students viewed Europeans as positive figures that were nation builders—almost as if humanity would not have gotten very far without the help of modern Europe. There were differences in the frameworks of how varying students learned historical content: white students saw Native Americans as isolated members of society, people of African descent as victims, and Europeans as positive, transformational groups that spurred economic and social growth. But black students viewed Europeans and white Americans as folks that enjoyed many rights around the world to which that same privilege for people of color was excluded. Epstein (2009) identified a lasting effect on students regarding the pedagogy of teachers in all of this study: educators have the ability to amplify any pre-conceived notions about

history, whether it is intentional or not (Eisner, 1985). This unintentional passing of knowledge Eisner conceptualized is known as the implicit curriculum, something that teachers themselves create in their own methods that could misguide students if it is misunderstood.

Student Curiosity

In 2005, Thornton wrote a piece about curricular gatekeeping, what it meant for educators and students. He explicitly stated that the teacher is crucial in three elements in regard to gatekeeping: the aims of what one wants to teach, the subject matter and methods to carry out the aims, but also student interest and effort. Students often become lazy and lack effort in social studies because they're not interested or challenged in any way—teachers should not only be including content into classroom experiences, but also captivate interest. Or, students may actually give some sort of effort, but not in interest of the subject matter as much as it is interest to get their work done. Pope (2001) called it "doing school," this is basically where students complete the work and give off a vibe of academic success and excellence but are lacking in any intrinsic interest in their studies. Although students gain the reward of a good grade, Pope suggested that "doing school" leaves no long-lasting impact upon the student and any content that was previously learned would be quickly forgotten.

Thornton (2005) expressed that it is imperative to build genuine student interest about what they are working toward. The best route to their engagement and achievement is something that is challenging but also interesting. There can be no development without any sort of interest—it is completely necessary to excite the imagination and thoughts of students to gain their attention (Whitehead, 1967/2011).

However, in order to gain interest, the educator must first get to know their students and figure out what they enjoy, in order to tie it with lessons in hand.

It would be a mistake to simply look for a motive to study some sort of lesson instead of the actual motive inside the lesson (Dewey, 1902/1975). For students, peaking their curiosity does not simply suggest to an educator needs to come dressed up for whatever lesson they are about to teach or give out treats for correct answers in order to get through a lesson— The concepts being taught should be captivating in the lesson of what the teacher is trying to convey. Thornton (2005) suggested that students would not be interested in learning lessons if they felt coerced to be motivated, because then it could lead to be quite ritualistic, like doing school (Pope, 2001).

A large part of student curiosity and motivation is simply student voice and perspective. As Thornton (2005) suggested, students would like the curriculum to be more individualized in order for peak curiosity and interest—this way classroom interactions are far more frequent to spur conversation about real content matter. Also, the idea of choice is likely to peak a student and their curiosity—if one or two narratives is placed for learning, it could develop a lack of care for the topic or message at hand. However, if multiple perspectives from various social groups was adopted, it would likely create an atmosphere of curiosity, to which would be carried into excitement of group conversation allowed by the gatekeeper.

Conclusion

After reading the research by Wineburg (2008), Epstein (2009), Eisner (1985), and Ladson-Billings (1995), and others, I was struck by the seeming lack of student voice around these issues. My study attempts to fill that gap. There are many studies

somewhat similar to the Wineburg (2008) and Shear et al (2015) projects, but none of them directly discuss inherently what I am interested in: how representations (inclusion/exclusion) of individuals and events in the high school U.S. history curriculum impact students' understanding of U.S. history as well as their connection to the curriculum. Epstein (2009) mentioned the study explicitly in a chapter in which students were impacted by the Civil Rights, but the study itself is centered around the teachers and what pedagogy they are using. My study is student-centered. I want to know if people realize how marginalizing the U.S. curriculum is towards most groups of people, but also how it impacts their view of education, history, learning history, and their thoughts of their own further education in general.

In light of this, my research question is:

Are high school seniors impacted by the representation of the amount of diversity in U.S. history curriculum in such a way that it alters their connection to U.S. history or history in general?

Methods

Research Design

The primary focus and nature of this research study is social and behavioral—it does not *only* pertain to pre-existing research and records. The research design is a case study at Anderson High School in order to interview former students from several differing backgrounds. I chose a case study strictly to investigate a concept within a community since its basic tenets focus on a descriptive question such as, "what is happening here" or something more explanatory, such as, "how or why this happened?" (Shavelson & Townes, 2003). The reason I am approaching the study in this way is to gain an immediate and greater insight into the complexity of students and their connections to the amount of diversity in their U.S. history curriculum and whether or not students are impacted in a way that they are more connected or disconnected from their learning.

Context and Participants

Anderson High School is a suburban city that is classified as one of the most populated schools in a state within the Southern Plains. The population of the school comes from primarily blue-collar backgrounds—middle and lower class socioeconomic statuses are very apparent. The school hosts approximately 2,400 students. According to *U.S. News*, 53% of the population is white, 18% is multicultural, 12% is Hispanic, 8% is African American, 7% is American Indian or Alaskan Native, 2% is Asian, and 0.1% is Pacific Islander; Gender distribution among the school is 52% male, 48% female. More than a third of students (36%) is labeled as Economically Disadvantaged and qualify for free and reduced lunches.

The eight participants selected for the study have a familiarity with the me, many of them were former students and other participants in marching band which I serve as a marching technique advisor. The participants are seniors at Anderson High School. Eight participants were chosen from the pool of available participants to reflect the demographics of Anderson High School (See Table 1). There were four male and four female participants—of the males, they identified as: African American, Caucasian, and Native American. Of the females, they identified as: Caucasian, Mexican, and Native American. All names are student-selected pseudonyms. The focus on this study does not just hone in on students' perspectives and thoughts, but how those ideas may impact their education.

Table 1.
Participant Identifier

Name	Former Student	Self-Identified Gender	Self-Identified Ethnicity*	Social Studies after High School?
Hugh	Y	M	Caucasian and Native American	Y**
Jane	Y	F	Caucasian	Y***
Lorenzo	Y	M	Caucasian	Y
Katerina	Y	F	Native American	Y
Katheryne	Y	F	Caucasian	N

Kyanna	Y	F	Mexican (Latina)	Y***
Maxcyn	Y	M	African American	Y
Publius	Y	M	Caucasian	Y

* The categories were identified by *U.S. News and World Report*.

Y**- Denotes student that intends to take political science

Y***- suggests a participant that will take social studies or history classes after high school, but only as a notion of mandated General Education classes.

I recruited, gained consent, and collect/organized data. The participants were approached to participate because they previously took American history at Anderson High School. The study allowed students to reflect on a completed experience (the class) and look forward to future educational experiences.

I approached the participants in a fashion of using a system called *Remind* (a group messaging platform for schools), a safe electronic messaging system that allows teachers to communicate between current and former students. The students for the study are current seniors in high school, that way they have previously experienced the current mandated United States history curriculum. The information given to the students in the remind message will be as such: "I am doing a graduate study at The University of Oklahoma regarding your U.S. history classes taken last year. If you are interested in participating, please stop by my classroom on [date]." In order to minimize

coercion of students that may or may not want to participate in the study, after the initial *Remind* is sent out to former students, there was one more final follow-up message.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collected for this study include individual (n= 8) and focus group interviews (n= 2). In order to gain the necessary information for my proposed study regarding thoughts, feelings, and experiences, initial individual semi-structured interviews based on a list of questions will be conducted (See Appendix A). The students were asked various questions in order to create a narrative of their personal experiences that paint a completely accurate depiction of their U.S. history courses. The questions build from basic blocks to more specific, deeper thought provoking material—as the interview process continues, the participants should find themselves addressing the more complex content. A couple of example of questions from the individual interviews: "Tell me about your experiences regarding your previous class of U.S. history, what did you learn?" Also, "How would you describe the diversity of our school, community, and nation?" Students also took part in focus group interviews that were designed to follow up on individual interviews and put students in conversation within one another in order to elicit deeper memories to create a better understanding of student experiences. A couple of examples questions from focus groups: "If you had to pick three very important figures you learned about in U.S. history, who would they be, and why?" Also, "Considering how you identify yourself (race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion), what factors do you think have influenced what you learned or remembered about U.S. history?"

Following the individual and focus group interviews, I transcribed all interviews. Through this transcription process, I was able to reflect upon the various responses that include the participants' tone and body language. Once the transcriptions were completed, I shared the interviews with students – an opportunity to member check. A member check was used to increase the validity of the data and provides participants an opportunity to clarify, amend, or expand upon their interview, previously. Once the member checking was completed, I worked with my advisor for initial reading and analysis. We followed a three-step interpretivist approach (Miles, Huberman, & Saldona, 2013). The first step in analyzing the transcriptions, we coded 25% of interviews together, then coded 25% independently, then we met and discussed questions or concerns that arose from this process, then the final 50% (n=4) were coded completely independently.

Findings

In this section, there is a commonality among all participants regarding their connections to U.S. history or lack thereof, and I explain it through the lenses of culturally relevant pedagogy as well as the differing curriculums such as the hidden, null, or implicit. An exploration of student interviews in relation to their responses and conversation from focus groups served as a meaningful insight as to how they view U.S. history and history, in general. The participants involved in the study were: Maxcyn, Katerina, Hugh, Katheryne, Kyanna, Lorenzo, Publius, and Jane. I have organized my findings into three categories and the following pages are organized under these three headings: curriculum, pedagogical practices, and curiosity.

Curriculum

Table 2.
Participant Summary, Curriculum

Name	Self-Identified Ethnicity	Summary
Hugh	Caucasian and Native American	He noted the repetitive nature of the curriculum, e.g., Civil War cites.
Jane	Caucasian	She noted the repetitive nature of the curriculum, e.g., figures and events associated with World War II
Lorenzo	Caucasian	He acknowledged interest in the presentation of diversity in terms of change but expressed lack of interest in terms of gender diversity.

Katerina	Native American	She focused on presentations of inequities, particularly in terms of rights and gender.
Katheryne	Caucasian	Her understanding of the curriculum appeared to be confined to a list of vocabulary presented in classes.
Kyanna	Mexican (Latina)	Her understanding of the curriculum appeared to be confined to a list of vocabulary presented in classes.
Maxcyn	African American	He expressed interest and disinterest in the curriculum presented as it connected with himself.
Publius	Caucasian	He viewed the curriculum as diverse and expressed a need for multiple perspectives.

Across the several interviews of participants, there was a commonality between several students and their interactions with curriculum and education. Maxcyn, one of the participants, was impacted by the amount of diversity by immediately being drawn to topics that resembled himself (Ladson-Billing, 1995) as a young, African American man. He had peaked interest and connection when he felt like he was included within the content of what he was being taught. At the same time, I believe that his focus and connection regarding the theme of oppression is dear and important to him for others to learn—he wants to be a history teacher in order to create a comfortable atmosphere of diversity and learning for his future students.

Similarly, Katerina is engaged in history, and she also focused in on the inequality of rights. She was able to recognize not just what she is taught, but what is also not taught (Eisner, 1985)—and those are the concepts that engage her the most.

Overall, she is impacted by the amount of diversity that represents her (Ladson-Billings, 1995), but she is taken aback to ponder why others are not represented in curriculum, public figures, and entities. Through the interviews and focus groups, it became clear that Maxcyn had not necessarily been taught with an emphasis upon culturally relevant pedagogy as much as he identified with members of society that he envisioned himself as being. However, with Katerina, it was clear that she was able to bridge connections of what was in the text and what was not necessarily there, whether it was in the classroom or not. It may have been a combination of her classroom education and personal curiosity, or simply her teacher was fantastic at delivering something that was culturally relevant, but her understanding of connections between the explicit and null were very clear.

Kyanna, Hugh, and Katheryn were a stark contrast to Katerina and Maxcyn; Kyanna was not afforded the opportunity of engagement with her teacher—she was not prompted with controversial details of history, but she did seem intrigued by political science, which somewhat connected what she was supposed to have learned during her U.S. history course. Kyanna was an incredibly passive participant in her education—she was not able to take any active participation within her own learning because of the complete control her teacher had over the classroom atmosphere. She said, "last year, I learned nothing but to write from the book and take notes… it was the class I slept in… literally all we had to do was write notes and vocab words and then we were done for the day. So I'd get it all done fast." Similarly, Katheryne was also not afforded opportunities to engage in possibly controversial topics in class activity and was subject to constant work from a textbook that entailed defining words for sake of vocabulary.

This notion of classroom activity or lack thereof created an atmosphere conducive to Katheryne becoming a passive participant in her own education, which disconnected her from U.S. history all together. Hugh was a product of the environment that was teacher-centered and not student driven. His lack of education in the classroom peaked his interest in politics because he was curious as to why the United States had certain predicaments in its social settings. He was able to recognize diversity, where it is present and where it is absent, and his peaked interest in political movements caused him to buy into social studies.

Through Kyanna's, Katheryne's, and Hugh's narratives, it was very apparent that they were not subject to culturally relevant pedagogy, if any at all. Their experiences in the classroom fit under the null (Eisner, 1985) or hidden curriculum (Anyon, 1981) based on their memories and our conversation they were not given the opportunity to engage in dialogue that may be seen as controversial (Epstein, 2009; Hess, 1998). They often referred to working from a textbook as their source of education during their time as a junior in high school.

Jane, Publius, and Lorenzo also had an interesting dynamic attributed with their interview responses. Jane was able to see the frequency in which people are placed in the curriculum, but she was not provoked to think about it. She had peaked interest regarding the people not listed in the curriculum, notably the LGTBQ+ community, but she was seemingly detached from U.S. history. She viewed history has repetitive, something she re-learned every year—I think if she had a variety of concepts to learn from an abundance of perspectives (Ladson-Billings, 1995), she would not be largely disenfranchised to U.S. history.

Lorenzo is an interesting case; he is intrigued by diversity especially when change is associated with it, but diversity among gender, specifically women, disengaged him. He had the ability to see who or what was represented, however he viewed some content as connecting and important as well as he donned other concepts as meaningless. He was an active participant in his class, but I am unsure if he gained anything from them beyond merely reinforcing preconceived beliefs before entering U.S. history. Lorenzo enjoyed U.S. history far before he reached his junior year of high school, he credited it to media by saying, "I watched a lot of 'Crash Course' world history with John Green, I enjoy that a lot. I have also watched a good degree of documentaries" (Rosenzweig & Thelen, 2013).

Publius viewed his education as diverse, he thought that his classroom teacher covered the major people as well as the major religions that were associated with the United States at the time. He suggested the class became stagnant at time and the games the teacher would play kept him interested to keep coming to class. Lastly, he viewed his curriculum as diverse, but mentioned that it would be no fun to learn about something without multiple perspectives.

Both Lorenzo and Publius suggested that the only things that kept them engaged in class was the meaningful content that the curriculum brought to them—both viewed impactful moments of history in their own context to take greater ownership and connectivity to U.S. history (Ladson-Billings, 1995). However, Jane, she had peaked interest in other aspects of history and was not prompted to think about how her curriculum was set up, nor the key figures that make up the content of U.S. history.

The study yielded more results than I was initially anticipating. It was completely necessary to divide the findings further into three separate categories: curriculum, impact of pedagogical practices, and student curiosities. The curriculum is related to Eisner's (1985) previous discussion about what is taught from a curricular standpoint—they are explicit, implicit, and null. The explicit material is what is being delivered by the educator to the students while the implicit is understood as teachers that have delivered instruction, but some information the students take away was not intended by the teacher. Lastly is the null curriculum, Eisner (1985) pointed out that this sort of curriculum or content was not taught, it is left out of instruction. Regarding the category of pedagogical practices, I looked into students' experiences and they reflected upon how their own teachers' instruction may or may not have affected them. Lastly, I looked into student curiosities because the participants are naturally curious about things that they learned—but also did not learn. I was intrigued to understand in what ways the participants were curious inside and outside of their classroom atmosphere.

All three categories, curriculum (described above), pedagogical practices, and curiosity, have major implications for the future as it pertains to U.S. history curriculum and the methods in which educators provide students with various experiences for an all-encompassing, diverse, U.S. history education (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Pedagogical practices encompass how various methods of teaching may have influenced students and their thoughts regarding U.S. history. In the category regarding student curiosity, it served a few purposes for students that sought after knowledge for a variety of reasons—for example, a student might want to know more about a topic, so they research it on their own. Or, a student noticed a concept in history that they are fond of

happened to not be covered at all through their classroom experience, so they sought after additional information, themselves. Through these categories, I report the information on if students have altered connections to U.S. history or history in general in regard to the representations of the amount of diversity in the curriculum they learned as juniors in high school.

The participants in the study were incredibly forthcoming in their responses to my interview questions. All eight of them were prompted if their community and school were diverse places, to which all of them approved of that sentiment to a certain extent. The majority of the participants suggested that there was a sense of diversity in general terms of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, and sexuality. However, Lorenzo and Jane mentioned sexuality and gender more in particular. Participants were then prompted if they felt whether or not the diversity they believed to be present in their communities were also present in their curriculum of study for U.S. history—six of the eight participants stated no, a couple of them were very absolute in their ideas that the diversity of people we had just discussed were completely absent from their learning: the null curriculum (Eisner, 1985).

Who is included? Who is missing? Building on Epstein's (2009) and Wineburg's (2008) works, the high school students identified presidential candidates, World War II, and the Civil Rights Movement from their U.S. history experiences. However, the participants were able to identify the groups of people and concepts that were missing, and even why they think they might be missing. As some suggested, the curriculum that these teens were studying is heavily based upon historical leaders that tended to be white men. Others suggested explicitly who they believe was missing from

their study of the United States as juniors in high school: women, Hispanics, Middle Eastern people, and members from the LGTBQ+ community. This notion of absenteeism among the majority of participants did not just settle in the classroom; some participants even projected this notion of history and its dominant figures in public places such as parks involving memorials for war and other valiant efforts the people of the United States have endured. In her interview, Katerina stated "you can go to parks and see monuments and stuff like that of people that died in battle or people important to the city. You don't really see women or people of other ethnicities… you don't see them being celebrated for the same accomplishments that they had of someone else" (Eisner, 1985).

However, two other participants, Lorenzo and Publius, thought the curriculum was diverse and well-rounded from their own educational experiences. Both thought that their class covered many ethnic backgrounds, religions, men and women, although Lorenzo believed that there was a gap in the curriculum in regard to varying sexual and gender counterparts of society (to which he explained there may not be much information about those groups). Lorenzo, who is a very advanced student in terms of his history courses, believed that sometimes the makers of history curricula are "shoe-horning" information. He explained, "I feel like they try and shoe-horn in women's actions. Like some things that were less relevant that seem kind of forced in there just to check a box. Maybe they can find more relevant information about what we were doing." I asked him what he meant by that, he said, "like, to make sure they're being diverse. I feel like there's been stuff that isn't necessarily historically relevant to today" (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

A very common theme among the participants was the overall knowledge, understanding, and interest in world wars, specifically World War Two. It was very apparent that the students remembered and were able to recall those specific events. The overarching theme behind this according to the students in their focus groups was that the participants remembered world wars far more than anything else because it was stressed by their educators, the content was covered later in the year, and the units of content lasted longer than many of the other concepts.

Another common theme among the curriculum that students were able to identify was the discrimination of groups of people, or a hierarchy that was developing in the null and implicit curriculum (Eisner, 1985). Katerina suggested history curriculum is more focused on the benefits of time passing and the accomplishments that come with it rather than the drawbacks. She listed African Americans of the 1960s as an example. They were being arrested for doing normal things and wanting equality, but they are still being mistreated and arrested in today's society because of how they are represented in her curriculum. A common theme among the participants was an established hierarchy in the curriculum that white men of power or the fiscal elite were top notch, and the remaining population fell by the wayside in regard to what they were learning.

All too often students are enrolled in a high school course, complete the required tasks and move on to the next class – particularly in the social sciences where there is little explicit connection from class to class. This opportunity to sit down with my former students and reflect on their experiences and memories of U.S. history was quite powerful. I prompted the participants to talk about the diversity of their community in

comparison to the amount of diversity in their curriculum as they saw it and I asked them how it made them feel. Hugh said he felt sad, Katheryne, Jane, and Kyanna were not sure how to feel about the lack of diversity because they were never prompted to think about it, Katerina suggested she was negatively impacted by it, Maxcyn was not sure what to make of it, Publius said, "it would not be fun to learn about one particular race or one particular religion," and lastly Lorenzo stated he did not really have a reaction to it.

The majority of the participants did have an altered connection to U.S. history because of what was not in the curriculum and it was manifested in various ways. Some participants came out and said that they viewed history different strictly by being an ethnic minority—Maxcyn suggested that because he is a black male, his view upon history is different—he said, "I feel like that was the biggest stuff to me [learning about African Americans]. I guess you could say because I'm black. Um, even when I was watching it [the movie *Selma*], I kind of got a little angry." Katerina was the most forthcoming participant when she connected how minorities were treated in previous decades in relation to how those same groups of people are now treated, it had quite a negative effect on her view of U.S. history; it did not make her less interested *per se*, but it added to her frustrations about the curriculum she had learned. Hugh and Katheryne had limited interaction with the curriculum, but it altered their connection to U.S. history in other ways as far as media, protests, and varying voices for political and media platforms. For Jane, her response was incredibly interesting—she said that history did not interest her because it was repetitive. Her response may be stemming from her junior year, or all history classes leading up to her senior year of high school,

but suggesting that history was static because they learned the same things every year is quite telling to what is and is not being taught.

In regard to identifying the possible null curriculum, I believe that at least half of these students had altered connections to U.S. history or history, in general. Their interviews indicated that observing possible cases of overt inclusion to satisfy a requirement, long units over certain topics, themes of hierarchy and discrimination of minority groups, and a repetitive curriculum has led to diverse voices being presented. Some participants rebelled against the pedagogical practices and curriculum in search for more knowledge or diverse perspectives, other participants increasingly point out the civil inequalities and injustices that have happened since the required material will not mention them. For example, Katheryne logs in to Twitter because the social media platform provides millions of views, perspectives, and people. But, some participants were seemingly unaffected by the null curriculum as it pertains to their connection, maybe because of pre-conceived notions or reinforcing of the status quo—this was apparent when Lorenzo already had an extensive knowledge of U.S. history before he moved into his junior year of high school.

A variety of these students do not feel connected to this history as a whole, or at least they do not view it as culturally relevant to themselves (Ladson-Billing, 1995). The students that did not identify as white suggested that they have a peaked interest when it came to learning about people such as themselves because it was relevant information—it was their history. Meanwhile, Lorenzo said, “I really enjoy history. But when I feel like I’m learning something irrelevant or pointless—not necessarily irrelevant or pointless, maybe less impactful to me, it’s kind of not interesting to me

(Ladson-Billings, 1995). The participants feel disconnected from U.S. history as a result of not viewing their education as culturally relevant.

Impact of Pedagogical Practices

Table 3.
Participant Summary, Pedagogical Practices

Name	Self-Identified Ethnicity	Summary
Hugh	Caucasian and Native American	He described a teacher-centered classroom and projects for assessment.
Jane	Caucasian	She described a fairly passive classroom experience where content may or may not have been the focal point.
Lorenzo	Caucasian	He described a fairly passive classroom experience where content may or may not have been the focal point.
Katerina	Native American	She described a fairly passive classroom experience where content may or may not have been the focal point.
Katheryne	Caucasian	She described limited interaction between teachers and students. In addition, she reported a lack of student voice.

Kyanna	Mexican (Latina)	She described limited classroom interactions. In addition, she reported a lack of student voice.
Maxcyn	African American	He described classroom experiences including audio and videos, which allowed him to learn more about himself.
Publius	Caucasian	He described a fairly passive classroom experience where content may or may not have been the focal point.

Pedagogy is the method in which educators wish to project the concepts and knowledge to their students in order to create higher understandings of content knowledge. The educator impact of pedagogical practices developed as a theme in this study because it was a constant talking point for participants in individual interviews and even more so in the focus groups. The impact of the teachers and their methods to get content across to students has certainly altered the way students viewed U.S. history, and history, in general.

Through interviews, participants discussed a variety of ways that their teachers delivered instruction. The main mode of practice by Hugh, Katheryne, and Kyanna's educator was "book work," as they described it. Hugh pointed out that he thought it was pointless and often mindless work, it was also very boring. When Katheryne was asked what she learned in class, she said, "We mostly did vocab. So I just did vocab. I vaguely remember any of the vocab that I learned." Kyanna discussed her experience with the same method of pedagogical practice in the classroom by explaining that when she had

finished her work from the textbook or any sort of worksheet given to her, she was able to sleep in class. When she was prompted a couple of times on what she remembered she laughed and said it was the class she "had slept in"—and that is how she viewed it for the year.

Other participants, such as Lorenzo and Publius, described a somewhat different experience. Their teachers often played games with them or got off topic during classroom instruction. Publius described his teacher as "being funny," and that he enjoyed his class because the side-conversations were mildly entertaining. It was fun to go to class because although history was the topic, he knew it was likely that a discussion of something completely unrelated would break out and take up a considerable amount of time. Both Lorenzo and Publius shared the same idea that their teacher (same professional) played very many review games with them in order to keep track of what they were learning. Publius and Lorenzo stated that the review games usually kept them entertained and willing to come to class—they never mentioned content or curriculum that made them intrigued (Thornton, 2005).

Another theme emerged; an absence of student-centered pedagogy and a more teacher-centered classroom (Epstein, 2009; Freire, 2000; Hess, 1998). Lorenzo discussed his thoughts about his class after I asked him what stuck out to him—he said, "mainly going over the PowerPoints in class, that was helpful for me." However, Katheryne mentioned longer lectures that truly never focused on other cultures or groups of people (Epstein, 2009; Martell & Stevens, 2017). She believed that the teacher shied away from much diversity during classroom opportunities to discuss controversial topics about various groups linked to politics. In further discussion, she

mentioned it seemed to her that the teacher did not prefer to discuss things that have happened in the past—she did not allude to why she thought that. The amount of limited discussion around diversity of people, places, or events taken from the curriculum was controlled by the teacher, which does not leave Katheryne or her peers to take that much power or investment for themselves in being learners.

During the focus group discussion about what the participants learned, which is explicitly an interview question, became something of note. When participants were hesitant to answer what they learned, I prompted them to tell me what they remembered the most. Kyanna, Hugh, and Katheryne all said they either learned nothing, or vocabulary from the book. I followed up with all of them regarding their comments of "nothing," both Hugh and Katheryne were able to identify some people or events that seemed important to the teacher and themselves. However, Kyanna said she remembered the Boston Tea Party strictly because she has heard about it every year she has been in a history class because it is a repetitive subject, something similar to what Jane said in regard to her declining interest in history.

When the participants were learning about history, the majority of what they could remember was the length of the units or the pure shock or tragic value of the content that was being learned. Maxcyn, Hugh, and Jane all mentioned that they remember certain topics, subject, or content knowledge because their teacher covered them for the longest. When prompted regarding what they remember of the topics that were taught at length, they were not able to give much information about them other than the period of time it took for the educator to project the knowledge to them. Publius mentioned what he remembered the most, "certain events; like Pearl Harbor, 9-

11. I guess a lot of tragic events that are turning points." When asked why these things stick out to him the most he said, "they're the most prolific. Like, to think of the bad before you think of the good, unfortunately." It would seem that it is possible Publius's historical education was based in a manner of sharp turning events or national tragedies, which would captivate his attention to learn about a certain topic or subject. The way in which his teacher taught material was dramatic for a reason, possibly because the content being taught was not as purposeful or exciting (Hess, 1998).

How did pedagogical methods play a role in students' connectedness to U.S. history or history in general by the lacking representation of diversity in their U.S. history curriculum? There were both positive and negative effects to the pedagogy in the classroom. For some of the participants, it caused them to be passive participants in their own education for U.S. history. I asked Jane what she thought about her education that she perceived to be as not very diverse, she said, "I mean, I never really thought about it." I prompted her regarding that response, asking if she had never thought about it till our interview, or if she remembered thinking it was not a diverse curriculum while doing what their educator led them to do—she said, "Now. I never really thought about the diversity, I was just learning the curriculum." She was never prompted to ask questions, she was passively accepting what the teacher was giving them. Although it is a different environment, Katheryne's teacher provided an atmosphere that was nearly uncomfortable to discuss diversity because of the political climate at the time of her Junior year was contentious. Katheryne and several of her peers simply endured the class the way it was to not cause any tension and she also remained a passive participant

of her own education. A lack of dialogue between the students and the teacher made both Jane and Katheryne disinterested in their class.

Also, the pedagogical practice caused participants to reflect on the teaching styles of their educators and think about what they believe the teacher could have done better. Hugh, Katheryne, and Kyanna expressed doing anything thought provoking and not from the textbook would be a start to improving their experiences in the history classroom. Kyanna said,

> I think the diversity of, like the way teachers teach, it can impact the way students learn…. I actually learn something because it's more interactive. So if you're just into throwing book work at someone, you're not really helping them, you're just getting them though the school year.

Kyanna, Hugh, and Katheryne received an incomplete view of U.S. history because of the lack of instruction happening in their classrooms.

Both Maxcyn and Lorenzo mentioned wanting to be history teachers. Specifically, Maxcyn lists why,

> I like the connections to people. I wanna, because, I know there's bad teachers out there in the world, like, but there's also good teachers like you (me), and uh, Mr. Adams, Ms. Bonds. You guys are my favorite history teachers. Um, uh, I feel like [there should] be like more of those people in the world.

Maxcyn viewed his history class and instruction as worthwhile and it caused him to become more invested in his history classes to replicate what he's seen in his previous classes as an adult and future educator. His connection to people, teaching, and history

altered his connection in a good way—to make sure there are good teachers that care about their students and their knowledge and well-being.

The participants in this study did not seem to be approached by their educators with culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Regarding the teaching styles of their educators, it was incredibly teacher-centric with a lack of diversity in most cases. Lorenzo did mention the text and materials he studied from, "racially I'd say [American history is diverse]. I'd say our book is fairly racially diverse. There could've been a little more gender diversity I think. I don't remember a whole lot about the women we've studied, maybe because I wasn't paying attention—maybe we should've spent more time on that." His learning was diverse, but not necessarily culturally relevant to his self (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

The participants did not have the same teachers, but they did have similar experiences. The approaches to various content and concepts caused the participants to seek out other diverse educational opportunities in order to fill in what they were not receiving in the classroom. Hugh seeks out additional content when he sees things in the news, Katheryne looks at social media for differing opinions, Lorenzo continues to watch more historical documentaries because he enjoys history but thinks his classes are not going enough into depth on various topics. Because of how pedagogy was practiced in their classes, students like Katheryne or Hugh still strived for learning about the curriculum in other ways, which would alter their connection to U.S. history or history in general in a positive correlation—those participants were very curious.

Student Curiosity

The theme of curiosity was incredibly present during the interviews and the focus groups and it spanned from what the participants may have been talking about in class, but more so what was not necessarily taught in their classrooms (Eisner, 1985).

Table 4.
Participant Summary, Student Curiosity

Name	Self-Identified Ethnicity	Summary
Hugh	Caucasian and Native American	He communicated a genuine curiosity of the world around him/social studies topics.
Jane	Caucasian	Her curiosity focused on the LGTBQ+ community.
Lorenzo	Caucasian	He extended is knowledge and interests through video.
Katerina	Native American	She expressed an interest in topics not being taught and connections in her community.
Katheryne	Caucasian	She used social media to explore areas of interest and varied perspectives.
Kyanna	Mexican (Latina)	Her curiosity extended beyond the content to the ways in which students were presented with content.
Maxcyn	African American	He explored topics of interest (presented in school) through video/YouTube.
Publius	Caucasian	He briefly mentioned interest in varied perspectives.

Many of the participants were curious but took different methods of enacting their curiosity. For example, Hugh did not feel like he received any meaningful content or things to learn in class, but he was intrigued by the news and protests. He said, "when I see protests on TV and stuff, whenever the leader is talking about what they're upset about, I pretty much look up stuff about that. Like, what is the cause of that?" I asked him if the media has opened his eyes to things that include diversity and if he simply goes and googles information—Hugh said, "yeah. Like, if there's like, a leader of Black Lives Matter protesting about unemployment or something… then I look up what, what is that true?' He wanted to know more about the world around him, especially diversity. Pushing back against classroom practices and experiences, simply put, Hugh learned much of his history and social studies from television and the Internet (Rosenzweing & Thelen, 2013).

Both Katheryne and Kyanna found themselves in similar situations as far as their curiosity carried them. Their experience in the classroom was lacking student-centered approaches and it left them much to be desired for. Both Katheryne and Kyanna opted to get their education of diverse America through news and politics. I asked Katheryne if anything she had seen in the media influenced her, or her views upon diversity in U.S. history and she said social media. She also said, "People tweeting their opinions on stuff. Everyone has different opinions on twitter…. I just like to see, I just like to read what other people think and what their opinions are" (Rosenzweing & Thelen, 2013). I asked Kyanna if the presentation of diversity in her U.S. history class has impacted her or her interest and she said,

> I wouldn't say the history of last year's (U.S. history), but this year's more like—I don't know if it's like the teaching style or like, the simple fact that we're learning more government…. And it's kinda like today's time, So like, I understand more of today's time than I do, like the past, because it's the past.

She suggested she is getting a more diverse education by simply being engaged in political science rather than what she received in her own class. However, she did mention that her Government class helped tie much of her U.S. history class together. So, although these students are not receiving diverse education in the classroom, they seek it elsewhere out of curiosity to gain a fuller picture.

Katerina, Jane, and Maxcyn were all intriguing because of the similarities in which they are curious. All three of these individuals in the focus group agreed that they believed U.S. history to be disinteresting until topics arose about people that they felt resembled themselves. Katerina is incredibly in tune with her feminist ideology, and when I asked her what she wants to learn more about if she could, she said, "I'd be more interested in learning about the feminist movements in America…. I'm thinking about the birth control judicial court ruling in Texas." When I asked her if certain presentations of diversity in U.S. history might impact her understanding of American history she responded, "so you know how you can go to parks and you see monuments and stuff like that of people that died in battle or people important to that city? You don't really see women or people of other ethnicities." She is incredibly curious and direct with what she wants to know and why public figures emanate the faces of one group of people.

Jane felt intrigued by the LGTBQ+ Community because it is something that directly impacts her. When I asked her if there was anything she would ever want to learn more about that was not part of her curriculum in U.S. history, she said, "probably more on the LGBT Community. 'Cause I feel like it's been, like, the history of LGBT Community goes on as long as history does, but it's not really mentioned." She wants to know more, but the book and curriculum is limited to what it can give her. She also learned through her friends that are very close to her in regard to diversity—I asked her if she received her education of diversity of the United States not in classes, and she said, "I feel like just in school… like, meeting, and talking to all the different people in the school kind of gives you a sense of different cultures and diversities I have friends from like, every different ethnicity, so it's like I get an understanding." Of course, Jane does not have friends from literally every different race, religion, ethnicity, gender, or culture, but she aspires to know them, what they're about, and how different they are in comparison to her, even though they are her friends.

Maxcyn had the deepest connection to content that was like himself—he understood the plight of the black man in U.S. history, and he understood how things were for people that look like him. When I asked him what he remembered from class or the things that stuck out to him, he immediately responded,

> learning about segregation… I remember we watched 'Selma,' and I think we watched 'The Butler…' I feel like that was like, the biggest stuff to me. I guess you could say because I'm black. Um, even when I was watching it, I kind of got a little angry.

It was incredibly obvious as to what captivated his attention and why it did as well. Just as myself, Maxcyn suggested that he felt more impacted by what he was learning when those topics arose because they reminded him of himself and it was easy to identify with them more.

Due to the lack of diversity in U.S. curriculum, are high school students impacted by its representation in such a way that it alters their connection to U.S. history or history in general? Under the idea that students are incredibly curious beings, especially the participants in the study, all of them were impacted in various ways. The majority of students, six out of eight, believed that their curriculum was not diverse, so they explored and wandered through various settings for their own means and experiences of diversity to make them feel closer and more connected. Hugh, Katheryne, and Kyanna became far more interested in politics and media in order to supplement a lacking holistic U.S. history education in order to bring them closer to diversity. Whereas Katerina, Jane, and Maxcyn were very lackadaisical in their approach of what they were learning until something peaked their interest that they simply identified with. It was almost as they were learning somebody else's history until the curriculum gave them something to be interested in—but nonetheless all three of them are incredibly curious about diversity and sought out different avenues to learn more about their cultures that they felt are not represented in the U.S. history curriculum (Eisner, 1985). The other two participants, Publius and Lorenzo, they believed the curriculum was diverse, however were impacted in ways of relevance. Both found that if topics did not seem relevant to themselves, it made them uninterested.

These participants are obviously curious about different concepts just as a result of their personalities and their own personal ambitions and inquiries. What has been clear is that many of them want to learn about history, a diverse-laden structure that encompasses themselves, but also their friends. It is in that fashion that they may believe what they were learning was culturally relevant to them (Ladson-Billings, 1995), not necessarily what is currently in the textbooks or their modern curriculum.

Implications

The findings of this study revealed three major things to me: students are able to recognize what they are seeing and often what is missing, sometimes students have educators that do not provide them with multiple perspectives when carrying out instruction, and the students themselves are quite curious about varying perspectives. What do these aspects mean in regard to the study? What is the big picture impact, or larger question or problem that affects these many findings and implications?

High school students are able to recognize the lack of diversity in their class, curriculum, and community—they want to learn about things that remind them of their own personal culture, race, ethnicity, gender, or religion as well as their peers'. However, they are not always given that option in the curriculum of what they are supposed to be learning of U.S. history. Sometimes it is a hidden curriculum (Anyon, 1981), something that is there but transcends information such as a regulation of hierarchy or norms; more often, these students are subject to a null curriculum (Eisner, 1985) regarding diversity.

Sometimes students have educators that do not give them diverse and multiple perspectives while teaching courses in U.S. history. If the teacher is giving a student a source or a perspective and it is not diverse or from multiple angles, how will the pupil learn about certain events and how they impacted various groups of people? Is the student getting a well-rounded understanding of U.S. history if they are only given a dominant perspective with brief context as to "why this is important?" Or as I found out during the interview process, many students may not even be afforded the opportunity to engage in discussion regarding diversity and the issues that may arise from it, like the

Civil Rights Movement in the United States. This sort of thinking and action may rob students from future perspectives and force them to mold their own ideology of how the course of history has shaped the United States from preconceived notions. It could simply be letting the media or other alternative outlets project their views upon them.

Students are very curious beings and it is certainly noticeable through the participants that took part in the study. They thirst for information that has been excluded from their educational systems, as well as they want to be exposed to political and social controversies to discuss their meanings and modern-day impacts that ultimately trace back to them. In the realm of Social Studies, which includes U.S. history, there have been many things that are shocking, questionable, debatable, and intriguing—it is a clear opportunity to debrief and discuss the difficult social events that will not appear in their various classes of mathematics and the sciences of Biology and Chemistry. To withhold these conversations for any reason is also sending diversity, differing perspectives, and educational growth toward the curb.

After reflecting upon the big picture for this study, evidence suggested that students tend to focus on major events or more often the "major players" of history—victors. When the participants discussed whom they learned about, they often resorted to political leaders from the United States and Europe, while a couple mentioned Civil Rights Activists as well. Political leaders often tend to frame the historical narratives through the lens of the victor, while leaving out any conflicting information that would tarnish their reputation. If U.S. history conveyed these leaders subjugating varying groups of people for hundreds of years, how is a present group of students in the year 2018 and the subsequent future supposed to view themselves? Students in the inner

cities that are filled to the brim with diversity in regard to sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity, race, religion, or culture are learning their country's history, but it certainly does not represent them—they are learning about something else: a possible establishment of hierarchy and degradation of self-worth in a hidden curriculum. Students are not learning about groups of people at the peripherals of U.S. history, they are learning about key figures that have been winners of wars and property.

The most important issue is the curriculum itself— many groups of students in their U.S. history courses are not provided with material that is culturally relevant to them. The participants suggested that they are bored and passive when they learned the curriculum, but when diversity among many people and places appeared as classroom concepts, it was intriguing— especially when they learned about a culture similar to their own. A new curriculum full of concepts that do not suggest dominant voices control the narrative of history is necessary; one that shows people from diverse communities as integral to society and its formation and not peripheral to the whole. Students deserve to reap the benefits of inclusion of their curriculum, as well as they themselves deserve to be included in the curriculum.

Conclusion

This study is important to me because of the experiences I had in history while growing up. It impacted me in such a way that when I earned my degree in history to become an educator, I was adamant about not teaching U.S. history— I wanted to educate students about the historical events around the world, which is full of perspective and diversity. This study provided me with two major concepts: first, students are willing, curious, and waiting to be wooed by a variety perspectives and people. Secondly, many students do not view history in a negative light in the essence that they simply do not want to go to class because of curriculum content, they want their educators to provide them with fun, interactive, and engaging lessons.

This study will inform my practice as an educator by being mindful and aware of how I am reaching my students. It will make me reflect on options that I am giving to my students in the classroom, whether it is thoughtful inclusion of all backgrounds, thought-provoking discussion and debate, or activities based upon the decisions that students make. When teaching concepts, it caused me to evaluate what sources I give to my students— instead of giving them three varying perspectives regarding the French Revolution, it is important that I find a variety of resources in order to accommodate and facilitate student choice, voice, and curiosity.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions:

- Tell me about your experiences regarding your previous class of U.S. History – what did you learn?
- How would you describe the diversity of our school? Community? Nation? Do you feel as if all groups of people are represented in your education of American history? Explain.
- If you could/could have learned about anything in U.S. history, what would you be interested in learning about?
- What is your reaction to the diversity of people, places, and events in U.S. history? Explain. (can be broken into 3 smaller, separate questions)
- How has this presentation of diversity in U.S. History impacted your interest in U.S. history or history, in general?
- As a result, do you plan to continue your study of history or social studies beyond your basic high school or college requirement? If yes/no, explain.
- Beyond taking or not taking further courses in U.S. history or social studies, are there other ways in which the presentation of diversity in U.S. History curriculum has (or will) impact your understanding of regarding American history?

Focus Group Questions:

- Share some experiences that you've had from your U.S. History courses.

- If you had to pick three very important figures you learned about in U.S. History, who would they be, and why?

- If you had to pick three very important events you learned about in U.S. History, what would they be, and why?

- If you had to pick three very important ideas or concepts you learned U.S. History, what would they be, and why?

- Considering how you identify yourself (race, gender), What factors do you think that have influenced what you learned or remembered about U.S. History?

PROMPT IF NEEDED: Teacher interest cultural background

- Did any of you happen to think deeper about your experiences in U.S. History after you left the interview? If so, what were your thoughts?