Transformative Vocabulary: Fusing Vocabulary Instruction with Citizenship Education

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Abstract

This action research sought ways to maximize secondary social studies teachers' instructional time and merge their core functions as literacy, content and social-justice instructors. Drawing on a wide literature demonstrating potent correlation between requisite vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension, this action research investigated the potential interface between explicit literacy instruction, particularly robust vocabulary instruction, and democratic citizenship, while keeping in mind the intent of the Common Core Standards. In other words: is it possible to fuse robust vocabulary instruction to achieve transformative citizenship? Data collection included multiple in-person and digital interviews with veteran K-12 teachers, administrators and university professors about their views on social justice, literacy instruction, and potential connections between the two. Results indicated that while secondary social studies educators value both literacy and social justice, they do not employ systematic literacy or social justice pedagogy to achieve their goals. However, the limited sample, in terms of numbers, convenience, and lack of racial diversity calls for further investigation.

Keywords: *transformative civics, vocabulary, robust vocabulary instruction, vocabulary selection, social justice, social studies education*

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Section I: Introduction

Secondary social studies teachers face two separate but interrelated challenges: how to promote just, democratic citizenship while also instructing essential 21st century literacy skills. Indeed, while national, state and district mandates often broadly dictate skills and content, the core purpose of every social studies curriculum is to prepare young people for civic participation in a diverse, democratic society (National Council for the Social Studies, C3 Framework, Connecticut Social Studies Framework). In addition to voting and respecting the rule of law, the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) defines civic virtue as being "concerned for the rights and welfare of others" (NCSS 1992, 2010, n.p.) and charges social studies educators with helping young people make "informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society" (NCSS 1992, 2010, n.p.). Thinking along these lines, Banks (2004, 2011, 2017) merged his previous work on multicultural education with civics instruction, calling for what he termed transformative citizenship education. He identified the challenge of diverse, democratic nation-states to balance unity and diversity, contending that countries need to "provide opportunities for different groups to maintain aspects of their community cultures while constructing a nation into which these groups are structurally integrated" (p. 369). To meet this challenge, he recommended the implementation of a deliberate social studies curriculum focusing on civics content, multicultural theory, and ethnic studies (Banks, 2017).

At the same time, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS, NGA & CCSSO, 2010) require secondary social studies teachers to help students "read and comprehend history/social studies texts...independently and proficiently" (p. 61), including the ability to identify the central ideas of texts, cite textual evidence to support ideas, and determine the meaning of words and

phrases in text (NGA & CCSS, 2010). Fortunately, expanding students' word knowledge

bolsters these other literacy skills. Extensive research supports the link between vocabulary

development and reading comprehension (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Nagy, 1998;

Cromley, Snyder-Hogan, Luciw-Dubas, 2010; Sparks, Patton, & Murdoch, 2013; Vadsay,

Sanders, & Logan Herrera, 2015). A longitudinal study by Cunningham and Stanovich (1997)

found a strong correlation between first grade reading ability, including vocabulary knowledge,

and eleventh grade reading scores. Subsequently, a replication study by Sparks, Patton, and

Murdoch (2013) confirmed those findings. The research is clear: time spent on quality

vocabulary instruction has knock-on effects for other core reading skills.

There is also wide consensus about what constitutes quality, or robust, vocabulary

instruction. Most scholars agree that effective instruction involves explicit teaching, intentional

word selection, student-friendly definitions, semantic connections, morphemic instruction and

repeated exposure and authentic use (Adlof, Frishkoff, Dandy, & Perfetti, 2016; Beck &

McKeown, 2007; Coyne, McCoach, Loftus, Zipoli, & Kapp, 2009). However, well-known

research by Nagy and Anderson (1984) estimated that teachers can robustly instruct only 400

words per year, a small number next to the estimated 88,500 words in printed school English

(Nagy & Anderson, 1982, 1984).

Compared to the relative consensus about the instruction itself, there is far less agreement

among researchers about how to select vocabulary words to teach. Various scholars suggest

systems for selecting vocabulary and maximizing the limited time available for robust

instruction. Beck and McKeown (2007) suggested a three-tiered approach, focusing on Tier II, or

academic vocabulary. Alternatively, Graves et al (2014) developed an approach known as

Selecting Words for Instruction from Text (SWIT), filtering words into four categories: essential,

valuable, accessible and imported. Still other scholars, including Biemiller (2009) and Marzano (2004), preferred academic word lists highlighting frequently-occurring terms (via Graves et al., 2014). Despite certain overlap, including a focus on the academic utility of a given word, there is no agreed upon standard among researchers for determining instructional vocabulary.

Context

Vocabulary instruction became a national focus in the United States with the 1985 publication of *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (1983) by the National Institute of Education (NIE). Authored by leading literacy scholars, the report synthesized the available research to compile "interpretations of both current knowledge of reading and the state of the art and practice of teaching reading" (National Academy of Education., & Anderson, 1985, p. 1). Among its 155 pages was an assertion that children must "have at least a basic vocabulary, a reasonable range of knowledge about the world around them, and the ability to talk about their knowledge" (p. 40). Crucially, the report asserted that deep vocabulary knowledge helps "form the basis for comprehending text" (p. 40).

Ten years later researchers Hart and Risley published their seminal work *Differences in the Everyday Experiences of Young American Children* (1995), further heightening the salience of vocabulary in American educational discourse. Eager participants in the 1960s war on poverty, they hoped to explain the growing consensus that "many children from families in poverty lack the vocabulary used in advanced textbooks" (p. 192). Hart and Risley estimated a 32 million "word gap" between professional households and households on welfare by age four (a difference of 1540 words heard per hour). Notably, the "word gap" meant words heard per hour and was not a reflection of words known; however, as late as 2014, Hart and Risley's work

inspired a vocabulary and talk initiative by President Barack Obama's Department of Education (Shankar, 2014).

Subsequent, valid criticisms notwithstanding, Hart and Risley's earnest quest for an equitable education for the poor combined with the attention-grabbing "32 million word gap" figure propelled the educational community to focus on vocabulary. In 2000, the National Reading Panel (NRP) listed vocabulary as one of its five core domains of reading (National Reading Panel, 2000), which coincided with the inception of the Bush-era No Child Left Behind legislation (NCLB, 2002). Nearly a decade later, the 2010 Common Core Standards enshrined vocabulary knowledge as an essential goal of a social studies education (CCSS, NGA & CCSSO, 2010, p. 61). Indeed, the CCSS mentions the word "vocabulary" more than 150 times throughout the document (Manyak et al, 2014, p. 1).

In 2013 a consortium of state Departments of Education and leading social studies educators built on the CCSS and created the C3: College, Career, and Civics Framework. The C3 Framework pushed social studies teachers to directly address literacy, declaring one of the framework's guiding principles to be "direct and explicit connections to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts" (n p.). At the same time, the framework brought a renewed focus on civics education to the discipline, with the NCSS (2013) declaring civics education critical to the "future of our democracy" (n.p.).

Rationale

Secondary social studies teachers face prioritization challenges on multiple fronts. While the fundamental purpose of a social studies education is to prepare students for citizenship in a diverse society (NCSS), instruction in reading comprehension, argumentative writing, key

content and inquiry research skills are also core objectives (CCSS, C3 Framework, Connecticut Social Studies Framework). A fusion between Banks' transformative citizenship and robust vocabulary instruction and selection has the potential to simultaneously address those curricular imperatives: boost literacy skills and inculcate the social justice values students need to be part of a growing, diversifying democracy.

Problem

Racism continues to be a defining force in American life (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Dixon & Anderson, 2018). The racial wealth gap persists, with the median white family possessing $171,000 in wealth compared to $17,600 for black families and $20,700 for hispanic families (Dettling, Hsu, Jacobs, Moore, Thompson, & Llanes, 2017). Similarly, youth poverty is persistently higher for black and hispanic students, with 37% and 31% living in poverty as opposed to 12% of white children. These statistics mirror educational outcomes, where black and hispanic students lag behind their peers. National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading scores from 2017 revealed that 45% of white students were at or above proficient versus 18% and 23% for black and hispanic students, respectively. Raj Chetty and his colleagues, in their massive longitudinal study of life outcomes for over 30 million Americans, found that "neighborhoods in which children grow up shape children's outcomes in adulthood" (Chetty, 2018, n.p.). Chetty and his team concluded that "low-income families are segregated into lower-opportunity areas," (2018 n.p.) and the link between housing and school districts only compounds those findings.

These racial and economic disparities directly threaten the political project of constructing a diverse, just, democratic society (Banks, 2011, 2017). Recognizing the enormity of the challenge, Banks (2011) wrote that to protect the rights of minorities in the United States

the country must be "unified around a set of democratic values such as justice and equality" (p. 245). Unfortunately, racial, ethnic and socioeconomic segregation in our schools makes unifying around a shared set of values even harder. As the United States itself continues to become more and more diverse (Orfield, Frankenburg, Ee, & Kuscera, 2014; United States Census Bureau, 2019), its students continue to learn in schools that reflect often segregated neighborhood composition, not the larger society. (Whitehurst, 2017; Whitehurst, Reeves, Joo, & Rodriguez, 2017).

Solution

This action research study proposed a fusion of vocabulary best practices with Banks' theory of transformative citizenship education. Secondary social studies teachers have an equal obligation to teach content, encourage democratic values and instill essential 21st century literacy skills. While Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Multicultural Education Theory offer ideas to better educate diverse students and make the curriculum more engaging (Banks, 1993; Dixon & Anderson, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995), the reality of residential and school segregation means that many white students learn in predominantly white, middle class schools (Orfield, Frankenburg, Ee, & Kuscera, 2014; Whitehurst, 2017; Whitehurst, Reeves, Joo, & Rodrigue, 2017). Given the connection between neighborhood, school, and future life outcomes (Chetty, R., Friedman, Hendren, Jones, & Porter, 2018; Chetty & Hendren, 2018, 2018), students from privileged, segregated communities may continue to wield economic and policy influence for years to come. Thus, teachers need to encourage transformative citizenship in a diversifying society without necessarily teaching in a diverse school.

Perhaps one method is to infuse literacy instruction with the values of transformative citizenship. Vocabulary is one of the most powerful indicators of reading achievement, and the

limited number of words teachers can robustly instruct in a year makes careful vocabulary selection imperative. However, none of the selection systems proposed by scholars deal with secondary social studies specifically, and none suggest giving priority to words likely to promote transformative citizenship. Banks' (1993) seminal work on multicultural education posited five domains, the first three of which, content integration, knowledge construction, and prejudice reduction, directly relate to the core content in a social studies classroom. Given the demands to produce democratic and literate students, high-quality vocabulary instruction offers teachers an opportunity to take advantage of limited time to accomplish multiple goals: deepen vocabulary knowledge, boost reading comprehension and promote a more just citizenry.

This action research therefore proposed that in addition to the consideration of the academic utility of a word, social studies teachers should consider whether the vocabulary term is likely to promote transformative citizenship and the democratic values of justice and equity (Banks, 1993, 2017). Banks (1993) suggested that inserting ethnic studies content "into the school and teacher education curricula was necessary but not sufficient to bring about school reform," (p. 20) and this seems correct. However, Banks may have overestimated the extent to which schools made even basic curricular content changes. For many schools there may still be a need to address content integration and knowledge construction. Certainly, a vocabulary intervention cannot eradicate the racial wealth gap or desegregate schools and neighborhoods. However, by inculcating democratic values through our literacy instruction, perhaps we can make a small but significant impact on the margins.

Theoretical Framework

This action research's foundation rested on multicultural education theory and the related idea of transformative citizenship put forward by James Banks. Multicultural education theory

began as an attempt to reform schools so they could better serve students of diverse racial, ethnic and SES backgrounds. Banks (1993) synthesized the existing work at the time and proposed five core dimensions to multicultural education: content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture. Banks (1993), particularly, emphasized the need for multicultural education to go beyond simple changes to curricular content, writing that "in many school districts, as well as in popular writings, multicultural education is viewed only or primarily as content integration" (p. 5).

Later, Banks (2004, 2011, 2017) went beyond multicultural education and emphasized the danger that continued racial disparities posed to the future of American democracy. He highlighted four forms of democratic citizenship, including failed, recognized, participatory, and transformative, with transformative citizens being those that "take action to implement and promote policies, actions, and changes that are consistent with values such as human rights, social justice, and equality" (Banks, 2017, p. 367). Banks (2017) specifically highlighted the potential for social studies educators to use culturally responsive pedagogy, ethnic studies teaching, and civic action programs to promote transformative citizenship.

Research Questions

Secondary social studies teachers need to teach content, improve students' literacy skills, and mold young people to participate in a diverse, democratic society. Carefully selected and well taught vocabulary instruction presents an opportunity to accomplish those goals simultaneously. However, given the experimental nature of a vocabulary program fused with transformative citizenship education the following questions arose:

1. What type of vocabulary and literacy instruction do secondary social studies educators receive in their training programs?

2. How do secondary social studies educators incorporate social justice and transformative citizenship into their classrooms and curriculums?

3. How do social studies teachers see literacy instruction, especially robust vocabulary instruction, interfacing with social justice and transformative civics education?

Section II: Literature Review

Introduction

Secondary social studies teachers have an obligation to present important content in an engaging manner, develop 21st century literacy and inquiry skills, and inculcate the values of justice and equality in the future citizens of a diverse nation. Banks (2017) articulated a vision of transformative civic education that emphasized human rights to help students to become "fully participating citizens in the polity while retaining important aspects of their home and community cultures" (p. 368). Unfortunately, continued racial disparities in education, housing, and wealth cast a pall over the American political project. While not a panacea, interfacing vocabulary instruction with transformative civics values has the potential to make a difference on the margins.

Extensive research links vocabulary knowledge to reading comprehension (Stanovich, other study) and there is wide scholarly agreement about what constitutes quality vocabulary instruction. Quality, or robust vocabulary instruction (Beck & McKeown, 2007), features explicit teaching, intentional word selection, student-friendly definitions, semantic connections, morphemic instruction, and repeated exposure and authentic use (Adlof, Frishkoff, Dandy, & Perfetti, 2016; Beck & McKeown, 2007; Coyne, McCoach, Loftus, Zipoli, & Kapp, 2009, Wright, T. S., & Cervetti, 2017).There is less agreement, though, about which words teachers should explicitly instruct during the school year.

This action research study proposed a fusion between transformative citizenship values and vocabulary best-practices. Clearly, no shift in the vocabulary pedagogy could mitigate racial and economic inequality. However, fostering democratic virtues in all students, especially

privileged ones, is within the reach of social studies teachers whose impact has the potential to reverberate down the line.

Core Research Questions

The following interrelated research questions guided the study: What type of vocabulary and literacy instruction do secondary social studies educators receive during their training? How do secondary social studies educators incorporate social justice and transformative citizenship into their classrooms and curriculums? How do social studies teachers see literacy instruction, especially robust vocabulary instruction, interfacing with social justice and transformative civics education?

Research Process

This action research project utilized a variety of resources. The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) database, accessed via Sacred Heart University's Ryan Matura Library website, served as the primary research repository and access point. Additionally, multiple government websites, including the Census Bureau, Federal Reserve System and National Center for Education Statistics provided data on diversity, test scores, and wealth in the United States. Other websites, including the Opportunity Insights page run by Raj Chetty of Harvard University, the University of California Los Angeles' Civil Rights Project, and the Washington, D.C. think tank the Brookings Institute, gave invaluable data on the current state of school desegregation and the link between neighborhood and future life success.

The study's focus underwent consistent revision during the research process. Initially centered on vocabulary best practices in the classroom, the researcher determined that there was already wide consensus in the literature and that further study was unnecessary. At the same time the lack of consensus about how to select vocabulary words stood out, since vocabulary selection

is one of the most important choices a secondary social studies educator makes when planning a unit of study or lesson. Of particular interest was the possibility of connecting vocabulary instruction and transformative civics education; for example, when given a choice between directly instructing the term "segregation" or "mercenary," could one promote more just, democratic values than the other? This action research sought to explore the connection between literacy, especially vocabulary, and social justice and transformative civics education.

Format for the Review of Literature

This literature review begins with a justification for the use of older sources and then defines relevant terms. Following the definition of terms, the literature review details the two foundational theoretical perspectives this action research utilizes, multicultural education and transformative citizenship education. After an exploration of the foundational theories, the literature review establishes the links between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension, an important reason why vocabulary is the pedagogical vehicle for this study. Next, an analysis of the research contrasts the consensus on quality vocabulary instruction with the relative discord about selecting words to actually teach. The conclusion reflects the core mission of a social studies education, outlining Banks' (2011, 2017) notion of transformative civic education.

Ultimately, a typological framework considered topics that guided the study, including vocabulary as essential to the construction of meaning, the well-established principles of effective vocabulary instruction, the concern about which vocabulary words to teach, and the reconciliation of democratic deconsolidation and civic knowledge in a process that posits a transformation of the two.

Justification for Using Older Sources

Whenever practical, this action research project used current sources from the last seven to ten years. Works older than ten years, including some over thirty years old, provided either historical context or were seminal studies for the topics at hand. For example, 1985's *Becoming a Nation of Readers,* 1995's *Differences in the Everyday Experiences of Young American Children*, and 2000's National Reading Panel report on the five core domains of reading helped develop a trajectory of vocabulary instruction in the United States over the last generation. A current understanding of the Common Core Standards' focus on vocabulary would be difficult without an understanding of its intellectual predecessors.

Other works were too-often cited or essential to the project to leave out. Banks' 1993 *Multicultural Education: Historical Development, Dimensions, and Practice* was a foundational work in multicultural education theory, as he compiled the burgeoning field's research into one coherent strand. Similarly, while not a core piece of the project, *Ladson-Billings Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education* (1995) established critical race theory in education and this project owes an intellectual debt to her work. Over the years the vocabulary literature confirmed many of its early findings. Thus, older but oft-cited sources by Nagy (1984, 1988) and Beck and McKeown (2007) hold up today and continue to play a key role in the vocabulary literature.

Definition of Terms

Tier I, Tier II, Tier III words

Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2013) developed a tiered system to help teachers select words to teach. Tier I words constituted those used every day, Tier II words were those

appearing in mature, academic texts, regardless of subject, and Tier III words were content-specific terms. In their estimation instruction should focus on Tier II words because of their utility across different subject areas. An example of a word encompassed within Tier I is "happy," a Tier II example might be "synthesize," and a Tier III example "ribosome," referring to the part of a cell that produces protein molecules. Tier I words rarely require instructional attention, meaning vocabulary instruction refers to teaching well those Tier II and Tier III words not encountered in everyday speech.

Robust Vocabulary Instruction

A term for effective, rich vocabulary instruction used by Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2013). Robust vocabulary instruction involves directly explaining student-friendly meanings and using repeated,thought-provoking, playful activities.

Selecting Words for Instruction from Text (SWIT)

A method for selecting words to teach, SWIT breaks down unfamiliar words into four categories: essential, valable, accessible, and imported (Graves et al, 2014). For teachers, it recommends a process of identifying potentially unfamiliar words, breaking them into the aforementioned categories, determining the best types of instruction, and implementing that instruction.

Multifaceted, Comprehensive Vocabulary Instruction Program (MCVIP)

A four part approach to teaching vocabulary focusing on providing rich language experiences, teaching individual words, teaching strategies for learning words, and fostering word consciousness (Graves et al 2014).

Academic Vocabulary

A term used to describe interdisciplinary words found mostly in academic texts. Also applies to content-specific language such as "chromosome" or "hessian." (Nagy & Townsend, 2012)

Academic Language

The specialized language, both oral and written, of educational institutions, print publications, and digital media. It features Latin and Greek roots, morphological complexity, and tends to be informationally dense and abstract (Nagy & Townsend, 2012)

Word Mastery

Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2013) break word mastery into four hierarchical levels, including knowledge, general sense, context-bound knowledge, and decontextualized knowledge. The highest level involves an ability to use the word fluidly in different situations.

Morphological Analysis

Morphological analysis is the study of meaningful word parts, including roots, prefixes, and suffixes (Gunning, 2018).

Transformative Civics Education and Values

The notion developed by Banks (2004, 2011, 2017) that teachers need to promote the values of justice and equity to preserve a democratic nation state.

Theoretical Perspectives: Multicultural Education and Transformative Civics Education

Multicultural Education

Multicultural education theory and transformative citizenship theory comprise the intellectual superstructure for this action research study. Multicultural education began as an attempt to reform schools so they could better serve students of diverse racial, ethnic, and SES backgrounds. Banks (1993) synthesized the existing work at the time and proposed five core

dimensions to multicultural education: content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture. Banks, particularly, emphasized the need for multicultural education to go beyond simple changes to curricular content. Later in his career he amalgamated multicultural education and civics education, positing that schools should be preparing students to be transformative citizens.

Banks (1993, 1998) worked to form a coherent theory of multicultural education. In his influential work *Multicultural Education: Historical Development, Dimensions, and Practice*, Banks (1993) posited five dimensions of multicultural education: content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction, and empowering school culture and social structure. He pointed out that content integration, the first dimension, was the easiest to accomplish and that multicultural education should not be viewed "only or primarily as content integration" (Banks, 1993, p. 5). Knowledge construction, the second dimension, asked teachers and students to go beyond content and examine the "implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives, and biases within a discipline influence the ways that knowledge is constructed within" (Banks, 1993, p. 5).

Transformative Civics Education

Later in his career, Banks (2004, 2011, 2017) developed the notion of transformative civic education for American schools. He framed the central challenge facing democratic nation-states, and by extension the social studies educators teaching civics, as how to integrate diverse ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious groups in a way that allows them to be full political and societal participants while retaining their group identities (Banks, 2017). He wrote that civic education for citizens should "include human rights but emphasize helping individuals from

diverse groups learn to become fully participating citizens...while retaining important aspects of their home and community cultures" (Banks, 2017, p. 368). He recommended that schools prioritize civics education, which itself has a unifying effect, implement civic action programs connected to communities, and integrate ethnic studies throughout the curriculum (Banks, 2017).

An Historical Overview of Vocabulary and the "Word Gap"

Although government publications such as 1985's *Becoming a Nation of Readers* and 2000's *Report of the National Reading Panel* established a national discussion about vocabulary instruction, Hart and Risley's 1995 book-length study *Differences in the Everyday Experiences of Young American Children* jolted educators on a visceral level. Responding to the social upheaval of the 1960s civil rights movement and Great Society's "War on Poverty," they sought to explain why "many children from families in poverty lack the vocabulary used in advanced textbooks" (p. 192). Their primary focus was on the differences in language development between disadvantaged groups and their more affluent peers.

Having taped and transcribed over 1300 hours of observations in homes, they set about coding and analyzing the data. Most importantly, they found that children's patterns of speech and variety of vocabulary closely mirrored their parents; indeed, their results determined that 86 to 98 percent of children's vocabulary were also in their parents' vocabularies. Their headline conclusion was that children on welfare had less than one-third as much experience with words (616) in an hour than did children in professional households (2153). Projecting forward, Hart and Risley (1995) estimated a 32 million "word gap" between professional households and households on welfare by age four (a difference of 1540 words heard per hour). Notably, the "word gap" did not describe word knowledge but exposure to words while supervised by a primary caregiver. The results led them to conclude that "the problem of skill differences among

children at the time of school entry is bigger, more intractable, and more important than we had thought" (p. 193).

Scrutiny and criticism trailed the study after its publication. Some of the critiques went to the authors' historical assumptions, including the supposition that "desegregation laws removed barriers to jobs, housing, and educational institutions (Hart & Risley, 1995, p. 1)," which proved to be a far too optimistic assumption (Coates, 2014). Other claims, including the theory that those on welfare raised children in a "culture of poverty" instead of what Hart and Risley termed "mainstream culture," (p.2-3) were also disputed.

Later scholarly work also disputed the findings themselves. Sperry, Sperry, and Miller (2018) conducted a replication study and found that the results did not support Hart and Risley's conclusions. Instead, they found that the "differences in the number of words children hear cannot be predicted by socioeconomic standing alone" (Sperry, Sperry, & Miller, 2018, n.p.). Their hybrid ethnographic and vocabulary study drew on longitudinal findings from five diverse American communities, three urban and two rural, two poor, two working class, and one middle class. Unlike Hart and Risley (1995), who considered primary care givers only, Sperry, Sperry, and Miller (2018) attempted to capture the richness of households with different beliefs about family life and where "many lived in large families with several siblings and frequent comings and goings of other family members and friends" (Sperry, Sperry, & MIller, 2018).

Their findings starkly contrasted with those of the work of Hart and Risley (1995). They found that children in South Baltimore, a poor community, heard 1,048 words per hour from primary caregivers, not the 616 Hart and Risley found for welfare households, totaling approximately 60% more words than Hart and Risley (1995) found. More strikingly, children in a low income Alabama African American community heard 1,838 words from their primary

caregivers alone , nearly three times the number of words heard by Hart and Rilsey's welfare group. Ultimately, Sperry, Sperry and Miller (2018) suggested that the families in Hart and Risley may have been outliers and suggested that definitions of verbal environments that exclude multiple caregivers and bystander talk "disproportionately underestimate the number of words to which low-income children are exposed. (Sperry, Sperry, & Miller, 2018, p. 1)."

Another replication attempt (Gilkerson et al., 2017) which used 329 families and a small recording device, found a gap of four million words heard between SES groups by the age of four million, not 32 million. Attempting to provide a more natural environment free from a bulky tape recorder or observers, they used a small recording device and analyzed over three thousand hours of recordings through the Language Environmental Analysis System (LENA). While they did indeed find significant differences in words heard and spoken between SES groups, they found that in-group variance was high.

Studies Affirming the Link Between Vocabulary Instruction and Reading Comprehension

There is a clear and consistent link between vocabulary and reading comprehension in the research literature. Two longitudinal studies, in particular, established that connection. Cunningham and Stanovich (1997) argued that early reading ability, including initial speed and vocabulary acquisition, predicted reading scores in 11th grade. They recruited 56 first grade, middle class students, 32 boys and 24 girls, for a ten year study of reading interventions. They established a baseline for the students using the Nelson-Denny Reading Test, Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, a print exposure measure (ARTMRTZ), and others. During their schooling, students received basal instruction, a phonics workbook program, and a spelling and writing curriculum developed by their teachers. After ten years, 27 students remained in the district to provide results. An important caveat was that reading ability in 3rd and 5th grade was even more

predictive, suggesting that students who lag in first grade but catch up by 5th grade have strong outcomes.

A replication study by Sparks, Patton, and Murdoch (2013) confirmed Cunningham and Stanovich's (1997) findings. However, unlike the earlier study they found that 2nd and 3rd grade reading ability strongly correlated with 10th grade ability, suggesting that interventions have less time to take hold in order to be effective. Their study administered fifty-four 1st grade students reading, spelling, vocabulary, IQ, and listening comprehension measures, testing them again when the students reached 10th grade. Like the earlier study, they found that the "speed of initial acquisition by 1st grade in overall reading, word decoding, spelling, and vocabulary was related to ability in these skills in later grades" (p. 207). Early vocabulary acquisition, in particular, was essential for growth in vocabulary over time.

Quality Vocabulary Instruction: Wide Consensus

There is consistent agreement among scholars dating back to the 1980s about what constitutes effective vocabulary instruction. Nagy's groundbreaking (1985) meta-analysis of effective vocabulary research found three core qualities of powerful vocabulary instruction: words being learned in comparison to related words, which he termed integration, repetition in different contexts, and using word meanings to make inferences. A more recent meta-analysis by Neuman and Wright (2014) increased the number to five core qualities: explicit and implicit instruction, intentional word selection, building word meaning thorough knowledge networks, repeated exposures, and ongoing professional development for teachers. These findings, thirty years apart, largely agree with one another and capture the overall landscape of research on vocabulary instruction.

Beck and McKeown, in conjunction with Kucan, contributed valuable work to the vocabulary instruction literature. Beck and McKeown (2007) confirmed conventional wisdom and found that "more instruction brings about better results" (p. 264) and that in particular, students responded to instruction that required them to "make decisions about the appropriateness of contexts for newly learned words, develop uses for new words, and explain why uses made or did not make sense" (p. 264). Their 2007 paper was actually the combined findings of two separate but related studies. The first compared the word learning of 98 kindergarten and first grade students, 52 of whom received robust instruction and 46 of whom received business-as-usual instruction. The second study, meanwhile, examined the difference in word learning of 76 kindergarteners and first graders, half of whom received three days of instruction and half of whom received six days. Finding that associative learning activities and more instruction generally leads to better outcomes, they termed this type of instruction robust, or rich, vocabulary instruction; they contended that it went well beyond what typical classroom activities asked students to do with words.

Coyne, McCoach, Loftus, Zipoli, and Kapp (2009) affirmed that extended opportunity with words produced a deeper and more refined knowledge of vocabulary, concluding that "word knowledge may not become permanent or fully established unless students receive continued encounters with target words over time" (p. 15). Their goal was to study the effects of direct, powerful instruction of vocabulary words compared to incidental exposure during read alouds. Terming the two methods "embedded" versus "extended" instruction, graduate students received training in the two methods prior to implementation. Focusing on a low-achieving Northeast district where only eight percent of fourth graders met the state goal in reading, they taught target words to a group of 42 kindergarteners using both methods. Comparing posttest results, they

determined that there were "statistically significant differences at posttest favoring words taught with extended and embedded instruction over words receiving only incidental exposure during story reading on all measures" (p. 14).

Adlof, Frishkoff, Dandy, and Perfetti (2016) came to a similar conclusion highlighting "the importance of repeated exposures to high quality contexts for robust word learning" (p. 1). However, their results went beyond the need for repeated exposures to vocabulary, finding that orthographic learning depended on the number of exposures but emphasizing that "the quality of a context is a major factor in word semantic learning" (p. 31). Their goal was to study whether partially-known words were better targets for instruction instead of completely novel terms. Examining 38 students grades four through six and 18 adults, all of whom scored above average on reading comprehension measures, they determined that "familiarity with a word prior to instruction does not necessarily improve word-learning outcomes" (p. 1). Instead, like most previous vocabulary instruction studies, they reiterated the need for repeated and robust exposures to words with active, engaging activities afterwards to cement the learning.

Selecting Words to Teach: Less Consensus

While the research largely agrees about how to teach vocabulary, there is relatively little consensus about what vocabulary words to teach. In an exhaustive review of previous work and new research, Nagy, Anderson, and Bolt (1982) determined that printed school books in English contained approximately 88,500 distinct words. Considering instructional implications, they wrote that

> Even the most ruthlessly systematic direct vocabulary instruction could neither account for a significant proportion of all the words children actually learn, nor cover more than a modest proportion of the words they will encounter in school reading materials (p. 1).

Extrapolating from Beck, Perfetti, and McKeown's work (1982), Nagy (1984) estimated that at best, an intensive, robust vocabulary program could cover approximately 400 words per year, well short of the total words children would encounter in school texts. Expanding on these conclusions, Nagy (1985) determined that "the most powerful method of vocabulary instruction (robust) is quite inefficient and the least powerful method (context) is quite efficient" (p. 1). He argued that selecting those 400 words is one of the most important decisions a teacher makes.

Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2013) recommended using a three tier system when determining which words to teach. In their system, Tier I words constituted those used every day, Tier II words were those appearing in mature, academic texts, regardless of subject, and Tier III words were content-specific terms. In their estimation instruction should focus on Tier II words because of their utility across different subject areas. Graves and his colleagues (2014) developed a system termed Selecting Words for Instruction from Text (SWIT), which breaks words into four unfamiliar typologies: essential, valuable, accessible, and imported. They recommend teachers begin by identifying potentially unfamiliar words in a text and then break those words into the previous categories. Once instructors have done so, they choose the activities and strategies best suited to the particular words, while also considering whether any of the unfamiliar words are not important enough to warrant instruction. Coyne and colleagues (2007) proposed yet another framework for word selection focusing on two categories: words reserved for embedded instruction and those reserved for extended instruction. Embedded instruction words are academic words encountered in advanced texts and discourse but not essential for immediate comprehension, whereas extended words are those immediately needed to understand the ideas and concepts of a text. Teachers would then match the two categories of words to the instruction best suited.

Vocabulary and Literacy Practices Among Social Studies Teachers

Studies examining vocabulary and literacy practices among social studies educators revealed mixed practices. Swanson et al (2016) observed differing degrees of supportive vocabulary practices among 11 social studies teachers and 9 English language arts teachers. Conducting 137 observations over the course of a school year, they found morphology instruction occurring in only 3.8% of classes (p. 209). Additionally, they observed that in social studies classrooms the "most frequently observed vocabulary instructional method was teacher-presented definitions, and teachers presented these definitions with low-average quality" (p. 215). Crucially, their observations indicated that "ELA and social studies teachers miss key opportunities to implement the type of vocabulary instruction that aids vocabulary acquisition and subsequent reading comprehension" (p. 216).

Harmon, Antuna, Juarez, Wood, and Vintinner (2018) investigated the vocabulary knowledge and practices of high school social studies teachers. Their interviews showed teachers grappling thoughtfully with vocabulary instruction, but struggling with challenges such as curriculum pacing and teaching complex, conceptual content to English Language Learners (ELL). Highlighting the tension between robust vocabulary instruction and real-world curriculum constraints, the authors noted "teachers felt pressured many times to move forward in covering topics" (p. 293) despite knowing that robust vocabulary learning involves "multiple exposures with words and terms in meaningful ways before word ownership occurs." (p. 293). These tensions may explain their stark conclusion that there isa "dearth of evidence that teachers provided opportunities for multiple, meaningful exposures to new terminology" (p. 295).

Summary

The well-established link between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Nagy, 1998; Cromley, Snyder-Hogan, Luciw-Dubas, 2010; Sparks, Patton, & Murdoch, 2013; Vadsay, Sanders, & Logan Herrera, 2015) highlights the importance of quality vocabulary instruction in secondary social studies classrooms. While there is wide consensus about robust, or quality, vocabulary practices, there is less consensus about what words to teach. Given Nagy's (1988) estimate that only 400 words per school year can be taught using time-intensive, robust instructional methods, educators need to carefully choose the most meaningful words possible. What does efficient, wise vocabulary selection look like in a secondary social studies classroom?

Ultimately, the words teachers choose to explicitly instruct is a judgment call, and Banks' (2004, 2011, 2017) argument for transformative civics education could provide a possible answer. For schools with limited ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic diversity, purposeful vocabulary selection and instruction offers the potential to promote transformative citizenship while boosting reading comprehension. Ultimately, this action research study sought to expand the literature on literacy and vocabulary practices amongst secondary social studies educators, and at a deeper level investigate how, or if, these educators envision the possibility of fusing vocabulary instruction and transformative civics education.

Section III: Methodology

Secondary social studies educators confront significant prioritization challenges. Unlike a mathematics course, for example, where mastery of the content is virtually synonymous with skills acquisition, social studies courses seek to teach important content, build literacy skills, promote inquiry and inculcate democratic, humane values in the future citizens of the United States (CSS, NGA & CCSSO, 2010; NCSS 1992, 2010). While there is a strong consensus in the literature about robust vocabulary instructional practices, there is little consensus about how educators should select words to teach robustly. Few, if any, studies propose linking literacy instruction and transformative citizenship into one coherent practice. This action research study used interviews with practitioners to understand if secondary social studies educators, including teachers, professors, and administrators, felt there was room to link social justice, civics education and vocabulary practices at the secondary level. In addition, the interviews sought to establish the literacy training these practitioners received, as well as their current classroom literacy and vocabulary practices.

The focus on transformative citizenship and literacy instruction grew out of an iterative process grounded in the literature review and the interviews themselves (see Table 1 for the various phases). While standardized interview questions are a professional norm in qualitative research, the differing instruments (see Table 3 and Table 4) reflect both the shifting focus of the action research and a purposeful response to the face-to-face interviews. Regardless of the

instrument, the explorative nature and thematic focus on literacy and social justice in a

democratic society remained the same across all interviews (see Figure 1 for a visualization of

the relationship between instruments and participants).
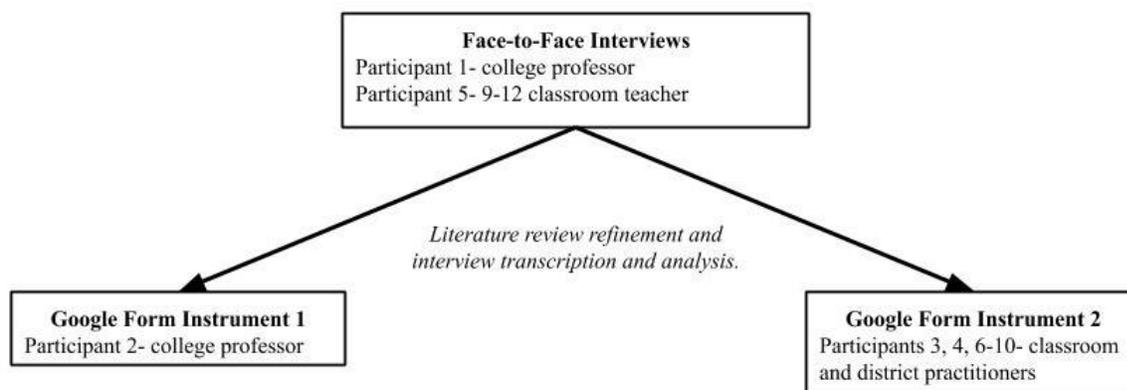
FIGURE 1 Research instrument creation

Face-to-Face Interviews
Participant 1- college professor
Participant 5- 9-12 classroom teacher

*Literature review refinement and
interview transcription and analysis.*

Google Form Instrument 1
Participant 2- college professor

Google Form Instrument 2
Participants 3, 4, 6-10- classroom
and district practitioners

TABLE 1 Shifting Action Research Focus.

Phase	Primary Focus	Reason for Shift
1	Best practices in vocabulary instruction	Literature review research revealed wide consensus about robust, quality instruction going back 30 years. This action research could not contribute meaningful and new understanding to the overall literature.
2	Best practices in vocabulary selection in social studies	Literature revealed a lack of consensus about which words teachers should robustly instruct each year.
3	Using vocabulary selection to promote social justice in students	Vocabulary is a key indicator of content choice and values. Could curated selection promote a social justice oriented transformative civics? Research revealed a lack of consensus about the efficacy of antiracist curriculums, and valid measurement of such changes in student views posed significant challenges to the action research project. Determination was made that this theoretical framework was not ready for implementation or measurement in the classroom. Shift made to measure practitioner views on the theoretical idea instead through a series of interviews.

4	Practitioner views on the potential links between transformative citizenship, vocabulary instruction and vocabulary selection.	Initial face-to-face interview with a classroom teacher and education professor (Participant 1 and 5) revealed a lack of systematic vocabulary instruction practices and no views or knowledge of vocabulary selection research. Additionally, Banks' notion of transformative citizenship was unfamiliar to both, instead the term "social justice" resonated better with both. Generalized literacy and social justice would better connect with practitioners.
5	Practitioner views on literacy, social justice, and potential links.	Using the first face-to-face interviews as guides (and given time constraints), the action research shifted to Google Forms surveys for data collection for the remaining 8 participants. One survey was crafted for the lone remaining collegiate professor (Participant 2) and a separate form for classroom and district practitioners (Participants 3, 4, 6-10).

Participants and Setting

This qualitative investigation featured ten participants from six educational institutions throughout southern New England, including two high schools, one middle school, a district central office and two universities. Collectively, the teaching and educational experience ranged from 10 years to over 30 years, and educational attainments ranged from Masters Degrees in education to Doctorates in curriculum and instruction. Given the limitations imposed by regular teaching duties during the action research, the study used convenience sampling to acquire interview subjects. At the time of the interviews, the classroom teachers instructed a diverse set of courses including American History, Human Geography, Introduction to Psychology, and Advanced Placement World History.

Seven of the ten participants hailed from a mid-sized, affluent suburban district, one was from an urban setting, and two were university professors tasked with training the next generation of social studies teachers. According to the 2017-2018 *District Profile and Performance Report*, the suburban district, featuring seven of the ten participants enrolled

approximately 4200 students, of whom 82% are white, 6% are Asian, 7% Latino/Hispanic, and under 1% are black (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2018). As of 2017 1.7% of the student population qualified for free and reduced lunch, as compared to 36.4% of the state population overall. Of the two university professors, one taught at a public research institution of over 30,000 students, while the other taught at a small, private institution of under 10,000.

TABLE 2 Participants.

Participants	Years in Ed.	Highest Degree	S.S. Area	Response
1	30+	Doctorate Education	Professor	Google Form
2	30+	Doctorate in Education	Professor	Face-toFace Interview
3	25+	Doctorate in Education	Humanities Coordinator	Google Form
4	25+	6th Year in Ed Leadership	Building Principal	Google Form
5	10+	Masters in Education	9-12 Teacher	Face-toFace Interview
6	10+	EdD in Ed Leadership	9-12 Teacher	Google Form
7	10+	Masters in Education	6-8 Teacher	Google Form
8	10+	Masters in Education	6-8 Teacher	Google Form
9	10+	Masters in Education	6-8 Teacher	Google Form
10	10+	6th Year in	6-8	Google Form

Ed Leadership   Dept. Chair

Materials

The face-to-face interviews and Google Form surveys involved a total of four related but unique instruments (Table 3 and Table 4). The questions asked participants about their educational attainment, educational experience, and views on social justice, literacy education, and any perceived interface between social justice, transformative citizenship and literacy. Despite the efficacy of using standardized questions, the different instruments reflected the shifting nature of the research and purposeful analysis of the interview transcripts.

Procedures

I began by conducting two initial, half-hour face-to-face interviews recorded via the Recorder application on my iphone 10. After transcribing and reflecting on the interviews, I formed a smaller set of focused questions. Given time and logistical constraints, I followed up on the face-to-face interviews with eight Google Form surveys developed from the interviews.

TABLE 3 Phase 2 Face-to-Face Interview Questions for Participant 1 and Participant 5

Participants	Questions
Participant 1	Could you please provide a brief sense of your educational career in social studies up to your current position? What is your current position? What is the purpose of a social studies education? What does it mean to you to train thoughtful citizens? [Follow-up] What kind of literacy-specific training do you provide your social studies education students? Do you do any specific vocabulary, morphology, or root training? Do you see social justice and literacy instruction interfacing or interacting in the classroom?
Participant 5	What type of teacher training did you receive? How long have you been teaching? Could you please describe your teaching experience in terms of courses, grades, and schools.

In your mind, what is the purpose of a social studies education?
How do you incorporate core literacy skills into your social studies courses?
How would you describe your literacy instruction during your teacher training program?
How do you implement vocabulary instruction in your classroom?
How do you define social justice and how do you seek to incorporate it into your social studies courses?
How do you see vocabulary and literacy skills interfacing with social justice instruction?

TABLE 4 Google Form Survey Instruments 1 and 2

Participants	Questions
Participant 2 Instrument 1	What is your teaching position currently? What is the goal of a social studies education? How do you train your preservice teachers to instruct Common Core literacy skills (reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, etc)? Do you teach your preservice teachers any specific vocabulary instructional or selection strategies? How do you try to inculcate social justice in your preservice teachers? How do you see literacy skills and social justice education interacting with one another?
Participants 3, 4, 6-10 Instrument 2	Where did you attend school? What type of teacher training did you receive? How long have you been teaching? What is the goal of a social studies course? How do you see literacy skills and social studies courses Interacting? Please provide your personal definition of social justice. How do you try to promote social justice in your classroom and curriculum? How do you see literacy education and social justice skills interfacing?

Section IV: Data Collection

Secondary social studies teachers need to focus on core content and skills while simultaneously instilling democratic values in their students (CSS, NGA & CCSSO, 2010; NCSS 1992, 2010). This action research study used interviews with social studies professionals to determine if there is a way to link content, skills, and democratic citizenship.

Process for Generating, Gathering, and Recording Data

I coded transcripts and printouts of the interview and survey responses for emerging themes and patterns related to the overall research questions. Once done, I charted standout quotes and grouped them by similarity, ultimately labeling each of the clusters thematically. Aftwards, I returned to the interviews to conduct a more detailed analysis and look for exceptions to the thematic categories previously created. Finally, I broke out the findings into two data sets: core learnings and avenues for future research (see Table 5).

TABLE 5 Process for Analyzing Data.

Research Stage	Procedure
Stage 1	Code and categorize interview transcripts and survey responses for emerging themes and patterns related to the action research study questions.
Stage 2	Perform a more detailed analysis, including possible exceptions to the themes and patterns identified in stage 1.
Stage 3	Filter down to a core set of conclusions and implications for the future.

Presentation and Analysis of Findings

Data analysis revealed significant patterns among the respondents, including a strong belief in the civics mission of a social studies education. Additionally, while there was wide

consensus about the importance of literacy skills amongst k-12 teachers, they also acknowledged a lack of formal, systematic literacy training during their teacher preparation programs. Interviews with two professors who train social studies educators confirmed those statements, as both described a training regimen more focused on history-specific skills than generalized literacy practices. At this juncture, a fusion between vocabulary practices and transformative civics education would be putting the cart before the horse; until systematic literacy practices become routine for social studies professionals, extensions seem unlikely.

TABLE 6 Core Themes and Exemplar Quotes.

Core Theme	Exemplar Quote(s)
Lack of formal literacy training for secondary social studies Educators.	"...we took a three week course before student teaching saying how do we do literacy, meaning how do we do literacy, meaning how do we make one lesson about literacy cool good luck...so...I think the training we got was very piecemeal...there wasn't a systematic way of how to really drill down into teaching central idea, into teaching corroborating evidence…" "[I received] very little [literacy training], it was a long time ago!"
Professors training preservice social studies educators do not provide explicit, direct literacy training.	"[Literacy instruction] is more infused throughout. We do somethings with globes and maps, with economics…" "I actually completely ignore the common core...we do plenty in methods that deals with literacy, I just don't frame it in terms of common core or explicitly connect it to the common core…"
Professors training preservice	"The first part of literacy we address is historical

teachers focus on history-specific literacy skills.

literacy. Most methods students show up with weak historical literacy skills. What does it mean to know and understand history? What do historians do...so historical literacy is huge and is a big part of how we do literacy."

"You know, it's history and social studies...I do a lot as far as getting the students to think about how they can introduce primary sources to their students, that's it about what is it that historians do, what is it that a political scientist does…"

Broad agreement about the purpose of social studies: prepare thoughtful citizens who use the past to contextualize the present.

"It's about preparing students with the tools they need to understand the past and how it influences present and a little bit about how to participate in ways thoughtful citizens should participate."

The core, or bottom-line for social studies education is to prepare K-12 students to be active citizens in a democracy and good citizens in a global society. In social studies classrooms this is done by studying history and current events, directly tackling difficult historical and contemporary issues, connecting the past to present…"

"The goal of the social studies classroom is to make students literate in their civic life. As students encounter sources...they need to be able to interpret what it means, the historical context, how it affects their life or their community."

"[The goal is] to provide students with the opportunity to engage content in a contextual and experiential classroom that not only prepares them for continuous schooling but to be productive global citizens of the world."

"To help students develop the critical thinking skills and historical context needed to be a successful and informed global citizen.

Literacy skills are critical to social studies, but secondary social studies teachers do not employ systematic vocabulary or literacy practices in their rooms.	"Literacy skills in social studies are essential. Students read, interpret, analyze and synthesize sources, accounts, biographies to build an understanding, support an argument or write a research paper."
	"Literacy skills are an absolute necessity in social studies courses...literacy is the foundation of it all."
	"Literacy skills are an integral part of the social studies course. Each day the students read something in class. Sometimes that material is on grade level and sometimes it is not. If it is not, students need to learn about it."
	"I don't do the Frayer model, I used to do word walls, but I don't find them meaningful, I didn't find them purposeful...all that systematic learning that was supposed to happen did not happen."
	"The ability to use close reading is extremely important to 'read between the lines' in social studies courses. In history, there are many primary source documents that require a thorough examination in order to tease out the underlying meaning, and in all disciplines it is necessary in order to draw connections between content."
There are a distinct, important set of historical and social studies-specific literacy skills.	"I want them to think critically, break down core ideas, devle through and question it together, elicit student questions. They talk to each other...which is very beneficial for that civic conversation." "Good citizens can evaluate sources, draw conclusions, and make arguments using evidence and ask good, informed questions. Social studies education should promote students to seek out, understand, and critique multiple perspectives."
There is broad agreement about the	"Social justice is an attempt to make society fair

meaning of social justice.	For all people."
	"[Social justice is] action taken to bring awareness to inequity in the world around us, and ideally motivate change."
	"Social justice is about equity. Equity for resources, education, essentials."

Section V: Discussion, Recommendations, Conclusions

Overview

James Banks, a founding scholar of multicultural education theory, wrote in 2017 that "one of the challenges of diverse democratic nation-states is to provide opportunities for different groups to maintain aspects of their community cultures while constructing a nation into which these groups are structurally integrated," (p.369) and secondary social educators are on the

front lines of that challenge. However, promoting transformative, social justice-oriented citizenship is only one of many roles they have; in addition to civics, secondary social studies educators need to teach essential Common Core skills and important content. Is there a way to effectively and efficiently reach these objectives? This action research sought to see if current practitioners, including k-12 teachers, administrators, and education professors, saw potential connections between quality literacy instruction and the promotion of social justice-oriented, transformative citizenship. Special attention was given to vocabulary instruction, as the choice of which words to teach reflects content priorities, and robust vocabulary instruction is an effective way to improve comprehension.

Summary of the Findings

The initial focus on robust vocabulary practices assumed that secondary social studies teachers employed them in the classroom. However, repeated interviews confirmed what research studies concluded: social studies teachers and administrators have limited, if any, literacy training. Indeed, only one teacher referenced specific research-based vocabulary activities. Further, only one of ten participants referenced multicultural education, transformative citizenship, or James Banks. Thus, while all participants generally agreed on the purpose of a social studies education and the value of social justice and literacy skills, few employed systematic instruction or saw room for fusion between the two.

Findings and Interpretations for Research Question 1: What type of vocabulary and literacy instruction do secondary social studies educators receive during their training?

Every participant agreed on the crucial connection between literacy and social studies. Capturing the essence of most responses, Participant 3 stated that literacy skills "are an absolute necessity in social studies courses...literacy is the foundation of it all," while Participant 7 added

that "literacy skills are an integral part of the social studies course." Most respondents, though, emphasized a social studies-specific form of literacy centered on evaluating the reliability and credibility of sources, drawing conclusions, making arguments with evidence, assessing multiple perspectives, and engaging with the historical context for current news stories. Summarizing these views, Participant 1, a professor in a teacher preparation program, responded

> The first part of literacy we address is historical literacy. What does it mean to know and understand history? What do historians do? Historical literacy is huge and is a big part of how we do literacy.

The pedagogy of historical thinking, popularized by educators like Sam Wineburg of Stanford University in his book *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past (Critical Perspectives On The Past)*, continues to influence the literacy training and teaching of secondary social studies teachers.

Despite the advent of the Common Core Standards in 2010 and their emphasis on nonfiction texts and literacy skills, secondary social studies teachers do not receive systematic, generalized literacy training in their teacher preparation programs. Participant 6, a high school classroom teacher, described receiving a "one week intensive literacy course prior to starting student teaching," and participant 5, also a high school classroom teacher, described her literacy training as "not good," saying:

> The training we got was very piecemeal, moments, here's how you think critically, a lot of modeling of assignments, there wasn't a systematic way of how to really drill down into teaching central idea, into teaching corroborating evidence...but it was really focused on history itself...and assumed that the kids knew what to do, they knew how to write, how to make thesis statements.

Her response echoed the majority of others. Participant 5 was the only interviewee to mention specific vocabulary strategies, citing the frequent use of latin prefixes. Crucially, though, she went on to add that "I used to do word walls, Frayer models, but I didn't find them meaningful, I didn't find them purposeful, the students lost their sheets, all those systematic things that should happen did not happen with it."

Findings and Interpretations for Research Question 2: How do secondary social studies teachers view their role in promoting social justice-oriented civics instruction?

Respondents saw social justice-oriented civics as the central mission of a social studies class, but did not necessarily employ a systematic process to integrate it into the curriculum. They broadly agreed that social justice means, in some form or another, pushing students to advocate for "equity for resources, education, essentials" (Participant 8). Expanding on those ideas, Participant 6 described social justice as the process of "bringing awareness to the historical roots of injustice," and participant 3 articulated a curriculum whose goal is the "eradication of 'isms' (ableism, ageism, sexism, racism, classism, etc)."

Its centrality notwithstanding, few participants employed a programmatic social justice curriculum or theoretical framework, with Participant 5 stating "I do a lot [of social justice teaching], I do a ton of current events...but I'd rather have it be more systematic...it's piecemeal." Echoing those thoughts, Participant 8 stated "I don't teach a formal social justice unit or intentionally force or embed it...it pops up naturally on its own." There were notable exceptions, such as participant 7, who creates a checklist to ensure she includes meaningful study of a historically disadvantaged group in every content unit, and participants 9 and 10, who dedicate their entire fourth quarter to the theme of "protecting and preserving human rights." Banks'

multicultural education theory and his more recent notion of transformative civics education did

not formally factor into their conceptions of social justice in the classroom.

Findings and Interpretations for Research Question 3: How do social studies teachers see

literacy instruction, especially vocabulary instruction, interfacing with social justice education?

Most participants saw an implicit, not explicit, relationship between literacy instruction

and social justice-oriented civics education. Participant 1 captured this when he responded

> Social studies education should promote students to seek out, understand, and critique
> multiple perspectives whether they are political, religious, rcial, or international...this
> empathy component relates to the ability to contribute to the common good, evaluate
> sources, and take informed action.

In his conception, then, the very act of teaching historical literacy skills is social justice

education, as the skills naturally complement one another. Participant 6 went even further,

stating

> Having better literacy skills allows one to read between the lines and tease out the
> underlying meanings and connotations in a written piece, but honestly prior to this
> question I had never thought about the connection between the two.

Similarly, Participant 7 wrote that "[the interface between literacy education and social justice] is

not a natural connection for me," going on to add that "in order to understand social justice, you

have to read different viewpoints and positions," once again making the point that discipline-

specific literacy teaching in social studies inherently promotes social justice.

Recommendations for Action and Further Study

Writing in 1993, James Banks described 5 key components of multicultural education:

content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and

empowering school culture. He warned, though, that most schools stop at content integration:

> Many school and university practitioners have a limited conception of multicultural education, viewing it primarily as curriculum reform that involves changing or restructuring the curriculum to include content about ethnic groups, women, and other cultural groups (p. 4)

This small action research study suggests there is still significant room to grow, even in the domain of knowledge construction. While a fusion of vocabulary instruction and transformative civics may be possible in the future, the social studies education community needs to first embrace literacy research. A discipline-specific literacy is important but not enough to help students become literate, transformative citizens.

There is wide scope for further study. Given the convenience sampling, limited number of participants, and constrained geographic footprint, a wider study would provide much-needed rigor and validity to the findings. Additionally, replacing the Google Form responses with face-to-face interviews would considerably strengthen the scope and quality of the data itself. Perhaps most significantly, only two of the ten respondents were nonwhite. However, this is reflective of the region's overall teaching demographics: nonwhite teachers make up only eight percent of certified instructors. Future research must include more diverse ethnic and racial voices to do justice to the notion of transformative citizenship.

Conclusion

For much of American history, scholars saw a connection between literacy and social justice. In his seminal 1903 work *Souls of Black Folk,* W.E.B. DuBois described "book-learning" as a possible "path to Canaan; longer than the highway of Emancipation and law, steep and rugged, but straight, leading to heights high enough to overlook life" (n.p.). Secondary social studies educators today see much the same connection, prioritizing both discipline-specific literacy skills and implicit social justice in their classrooms and curriculums. However, few employ a research-based, programmatic system for either. This action research suggests that

there is significant room for practitioners and researchers to move beyond a piecemeal approach

and conceive of a social studies curriculum that explicitly fuses literacy, research-based

vocabulary instruction, and transformative citizenship with one another.

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