

A Multicultural Approach to Identity Development among Latina Youth

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Abstract

This capstone focuses on the effects of the white, euro-centric dominant curriculum on Latina youth from immigrant families and how that affects their identity development. It is of high importance to incorporate diversity into curriculum today. Oftentimes, students who are diverse from the norm are not being reached by teachers. These students are typically of color, of lower socioeconomic status, have varying English proficiency, and a different country of origin. Their lived experiences are different from the history we teach in schools. This discussion will demonstrate the need for multicultural curriculum reform and its impact on identity development. Through a wide array of research regarding identity development among Latina youth, I focus on the effects of educators, family, and society on their identity development. Using James Banks' (1993) *Five Dimensions of Multiculturalism*, I will discuss how the *dimensions* relate with the specific factors of identity development. This overlap demonstrates the importance of implementing a multicultural curriculum, as it shows how more students are positively affected. One such way to achieve this is through employing immigrant narratives that highlight essential features of transition and negotiation, which I discuss as a specific strategy. I highlight the benefits of employing immigrant narratives in order to support positive identity development among Latina youth. Finally, I discuss the real-world events that support the need for a multicultural education reform. Today's social and political climate evidence a time of heated discourse that have various impact on students. This evidences a need for changing the way other cultures are discussed, valued, and represented throughout society.

Keywords: multiculturalism, Latina, identity development, immigrant narratives

Introduction

It is of high importance to incorporate diversity into curriculum today. Oftentimes, it appears that teachers are not reaching students we consider diverse from the norm. These students are typically of color, of lower socioeconomic status, have varying English proficiency, and a different country of origin. Their lived experiences are different from the history we teach in schools. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's TED Talk (TED Conferences, LLC, 2016) warns viewers of the "danger of a single story." The single-story allows minds to remain closed, perpetuates the status quo, and inhibits change or progress. Despite the limitations in content and perspective, this single story emerges time and time again in classrooms. This persistent view of history through a white, euro-centric, heterosexual, male dominated lens limits and warps the way information is delivered to students (Yosso, 2006 in Howard, 2010, p. 56). This has lasting negative effects on youth of color and who are immigrants or come from immigrant families because they do not receive education about their diverse cultural backgrounds.

In my capstone, I plan to focus on the effects of the white, euro-centric dominant curriculum on Latina youth from immigrant families and how that affects their identity development. In doing so, I will demonstrate the need for multicultural curriculum reform, specifically through employing immigrant narratives that highlight essential features of transition and negotiation. Using James Banks' (1993) *Five Dimensions of Multiculturalism*, I will discuss how the *dimensions* relate with specific factors of identity development. Following this, I will discuss the benefits of employing immigrant narratives in order to support positive identity development among Latina youth. Through this, I hope to evidence the potential strides that can be made through this content and structural reform.

Problem in Practice

The euro-centric view, mentioned above, promotes the dominance of white society and because of this preference, diverse students are pushed to the margins. Students, for the purpose of this paper, Latina youth, who are minorities inevitably fall victim to this curriculum that labels their cultures as unimportant. The cultures and histories of different countries are taught through a European or American lens rather than through the perspective of the citizens of the country being discussed. This provides an incomplete and, often, simplistic view of the narrative, which leaves out significant amounts of history and does a disservice to students. The lack of dialogue surrounding countries other than our own alienates students who come from different ethnicities, races, and cultures. This has varying degrees of effect on students from diverse backgrounds. For example, Acevedo-Polakovich, et. al. (2014) discuss in their article “Acting Bicultural Versus Feeling Bicultural” how involvement in European American culture predicts positive relation to academic success among Latina students, while participation in Latino culture suggests lower educational expectations (p.34). As educators, we cannot accept this fate for Latina students. Nieto (2010) argues for the importance of social and instructional interventions in order to increase success and prohibit failure. This can be done through the bridging of home and school cultures so that students can utilize both (Nieto, 2010, p.18). In doing so, we pave the way to enhance positive identity development among marginalized Latina youth.

The deficit perception of other cultures we see today, often leads to negative racial and ethnic identity development, which has adverse effects on Latina immigrant youth. Identity development among immigrant youth specifically, is a process of constant re-negotiation that fluctuates due to influences from several factors. We create our identities as we interact with our surroundings (Anzaldúa, 2015, p.66). Anzaldúa (2015) recognizes the limitations on individual growth of the current dominant viewpoint and calls for a reframing on identity and labels in her

book *Latin America Otherwise* (p. 66). These students are balancing two cultures, two languages, and various other societal pressures. The influx of culture is intimidating and conflicting, which Anzaldúa further references in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1978, p. 78). The collision caused by the influx of culture can lead to internal strife, insecurity, and indecisiveness (Anzaldúa, 1978, p.78) which can have serious ramifications on identity development. The reinforcement of white, euro-centric dominance causes students to disassociate from their heritage cultures in favor of assimilation, Anzaldúa (2015) argues that they are forced to choose one culture over the other so as not to disrupt the status quo (p. 73). This act, in addition to other factors, results in negative racial and ethnic identity development.

Based on my research, I have decided to focus on three significant factors affecting identity development among Latina youth. The roles of educators, family, and society largely influence identity development among this group of students and provide thorough description of central features to students' lives. The Euro-centric, white curriculum in use today does not support these components of identity development. Anzaldúa (2015) argues that, as a society, we must create a way for students to maintain cultural identity as cultures blend together (p. 86). Her argument can be achieved by restructuring the current curriculum in favor of multicultural education. Banks' (1993) *Five Dimensions of Multiculturalism* provide a guideline for restructuring and reforming the curriculum to reach more students. A multicultural approach to reform allows room for all students' cultures to be valued and validated, thus increasing positive identity development among students. Since the creation of ethnic studies in the late 1960's, which later evolved into multiculturalism, programs have sprouted in urban areas, largely due to their diverse populations. These programs serve to change the current historical narrative, as well as educate students of different ethnic backgrounds on their own history.

Evolution of Ethnic Studies and Multiculturalism

In order to better understand the direction of multiculturalism today and how it can be used to repair damage done by the current curriculum, we need to understand its origins. I primarily use Banks' (1993) description of the emergence of ethnic studies and how it evolved into multiculturalism so that his point of view remains consistent throughout. Since the inception of ethnic studies in the late 1960's, various groups have leveraged their own ethnic studies programs. In Banks' (1993) discussion of this time period, he emphasizes the importance for the use of a historical perspective in considering the ethnic studies movements of the past. Banks(1993) states that "a historical perspective is necessary to provide a context for understanding the contemporary developments and discourse in multicultural education to effectively restructure schools, colleges, and universities to reflect multicultural issues and concerns," (p. 10). In other words, in order to encourage change and restructure, the foundation of these movements must be clearly understood.

The early ethnic studies movement began in the 1920's and went through the 1950's, led by Black and African-American scholars such as Carter G. Woodson, W.E.B. DuBois, and Charles H. Wesley. They sought to rectify the White controlled and dominated curriculum in schools so that African American students received an education that did not neglect Black history (Banks, 1993, p. 12). Scholars of the early ethnic studies movement worked to promote these studies through research and practice, leading to the establishment of organizations that created a self-sustaining ethnic studies community, allowing scholars to further their research. Without such organizations, support and momentum of the movement would have likely dissipated (Banks, 1993, p.10-11).

Following the early ethnic studies movement, but not directly related, was the intergroup education movement. This movement holds connections to both the early ethnic studies movement as well as the contemporary multicultural education movement. The intergroup education movement emerged as a response to the nation's racial tensions that arose post World War II. This being said, it pulled content from the early ethnic studies movement as many of the scholars discussed ways to reduce prejudice and discrimination through religious, national, and religious discourse (Banks, 1993, p. 13). The goals of the intergroup movement closely align with the contemporary multicultural education movement as both seek to "reduce prejudice and create interracial understanding among students from diverse national, religious, and racial groups," (Cook & Cook, 1954; Taba & Wilson, 1946 in Banks, 1993, p. 13). In social studies specifically, scholars advocated for teachers to pay attention to democratic values, as well as condemn injustice and oppression (Taba & Van Til 1945, p. 278 in Banks, 1993, p. 14). This movement is largely characterized by research of social scientists and the emergence of theories.

There are major differences embedded in these two movements. The intergroup education movement focused on developing democratic racial attitudes and values among students, however, critics claim they only promoted a weak form of diversity. These critics favor the ethnic studies movement as it fosters the empowerment of marginalized groups, specifically African-Americans. Both movements, however, contributed significantly to the growing body of theories and practice that eventually lead to the emergence of the multicultural education movement.

This being said, following the intergroup education movement we find a resurgence of ethnic studies marked by the drastic social and political landscape of the 1960s and 1970s. This period was marked by an increased interest among ethnic communities to create individualized

programs. Groups such as, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, American Indians, and Asian Americans, worked to generate curriculum for the purpose of educating youth on their heritage, culture, and tradition. However, this period did not so much advocate for the integration of these programs into mainstream school as it did for the separation of these programs in order to empower the students. During this time, scholars saw the reemergence of research and books from the early ethnic studies program. These works were crucial in continuing the process of ethnic studies in the social sphere, as well as providing new perspectives for Americans on how they should view history and culture (Banks, 1993, p. 19).

Multicultural education evolved in phases, the first of which is directly linked to the early ethnic studies movement. The leading scholars of multicultural education were significantly influenced by the work of the African-American leaders of the early ethnic studies movement and were working in African American ethnic studies prior to the start of multicultural education (Banks, 1993, p. 19). They, in addition to scholars who were a part of the Mexican American, American Indians, Puerto Ricans, and Asian Americans ethnic studies program, played essential roles in the advancement of multicultural education.

Banks (1993) breaks down the evolution of multicultural education into four main phases. The first being ethnic studies, primarily because it was a time educators decided to “initiate individual and institutional actions to incorporate the concepts, information, and theories from ethnic studies into the school and teacher education curricula” (Banks, 1993, p.19). This phase is where we see the inception of African American studies, as scholars work to fill a curriculum void left by white dominance. This led to the second phase, multiethnic education, in which teachers began to understand serious systemic and structural reform needed to take place in order for changes to prove sufficient in the education of the students. The changes of this

phase focused on prejudice reduction and ameliorating racial tensions. The third phase of multicultural education took place when other groups who felt victimized by society, such as women and people with disabilities requested to be incorporated into the curriculum. This is where we see groups emerge who identify as minorities based on gender and ability, in addition to racial and ethnic minorities. The final phase described by Banks, is the development of research, theory, and practice that connect race, class, and gender (Banks, 1993). One of the largest developments in multicultural education came in 1977, when the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), issued standards that required teacher education programs to implement courses and programs in multicultural education (Banks, 1993, p. 21). From these phases, Banks derived his *Five Dimensions of Multiculturalism*.

Making Connections: *Five Dimensions* and Identity Development

Through a multicultural curriculum, more students are positively affected, allowing educators to help students develop new perspectives of society. Banks' (1993) *Five Dimensions* are often portrayed using a pyramid, denoting a clear hierarchy. Banks (1998) argues that a total restructure cannot occur overnight, it is a task that is built up over time. The *dimensions*, however, were created with blending and fluidity in mind. Banks (1998) acknowledges that integration of the dimensions is more natural in the humanities, however, schools' integration of a multicultural curriculum gradually can, and should, expand to incorporate all content areas. The pyramid's focus progresses to rely on teacher instructional reform and restructure rather than only content integration (Banks, 1998). The *Five Dimensions* are pictured below in Figure 1.

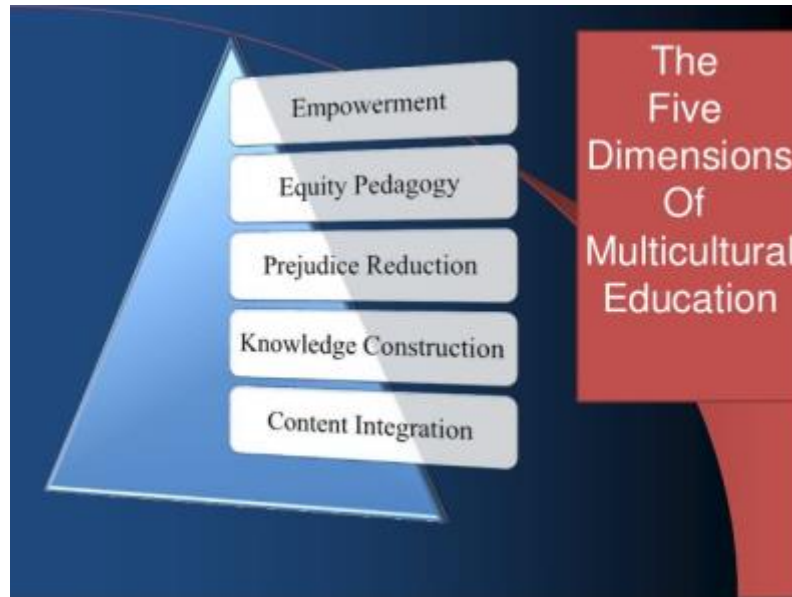


Figure 1 (Saculo, "Dimensions of Multicultural Education", 2014)

For each of the following dimensions, I describe the dimension and its relation to a factor of identity development discussed above. Figure 2 summarizes the relationships among the *dimensions* and factors.

Empowering School Culture		
Society		
While the other four focus on specific classrooms, this focuses on how school society changes to become equitable and empowering		
Equity Pedagogy		
Teachers		
Pivot point where teachers stop and re-examine biases and practices to make their teaching more equitable		
Prejudice Reduction		
Society	Teachers	Family
Through this, teachers can combat current notions that perpetuate subordinate bicultural youth	Helping students develop positive racial attitudes is key in positively promoting different races and cultures in a classroom	Dissonance between parental expectations and dominant school culture leaves students vulnerable to anti-immigrant sentiment, which can be ameliorated through prejudice reduction
Knowledge Construction		
Society	Teachers	Family
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethnic and gender role expectations affect developing self-efficacy among Latina youth This changes how they perceive society and their role in it 	Leverage students' backgrounds to make sense of world and create new understandings and opinions	"Cultural Customization" allows Latina youth to interpret tradition and knowledge from their parents and make sense of it in their current world
Content Integration		
Teachers		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate multicultural content as they see fit which typically take the form of the 4 F's: Food, Folklore, Fun, and Fashion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How teachers make different cultures seen in classroom does a lot to validate/invalidate culture 		

Figure 2

Content Integration

Banks' (1993) first dimension is content integration, which frequently takes the shape of the Four F's: food, folklore, fun, and fashion. This limited view exemplifies a simplistic understanding of culture. Not only does it pigeonhole different cultures into a single-story, it breeds room for stereotypes to be perpetuated. Banks (1998) acknowledges the difficulty in incorporating multicultural curricula into math and science classrooms in particular. While it does not incorporate multicultural information as in depth as it is necessary, it is better than ignoring the existence of other cultures. This is an important step in reconsidering how content is portrayed across the curriculum.

This dimension most readily aligns with the role that teachers play in education. It only begins to breach the surface in terms of restructuring, yet it is an important first step. Content integration is what we most often see in today's classrooms, and teachers primarily have control over its presentation. One example given by Weisman (2001) discusses how teachers' cultural identification and language ability affects their teaching style in her article "Bicultural Identity and Language Attitudes: Perspectives of Four Latina Teachers." Weisman (2001) interviews and observes four teachers at school to better understand how and if they leverage their Latina heritages in their classrooms. The first two teachers, while bilingual, identify more with the mainstream culture than their Latina heritage. They use Spanish in the classroom, however, they see it primarily as a tool to better explain concepts to their Spanish-speaking students only when necessary. Rather than attempt to leverage their backgrounds, these teachers continue to marginalize students in refusing to incorporate meaningful and relevant content into lessons. Granted it is considered good practice to utilize students' first language, it is similar to hanging

up posters of Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, and Sacajawea, in which multicultural information is delivered in a decontextualized manner.

Knowledge Construction

The second dimension is knowledge construction where “teachers help students to understand, investigate, and determine the implicit cultural assumptions and frames of reference and perspectives of the discipline they’re teaching,” (Banks, 1998, p. 1). Knowledge construction is a major component in helping students develop tools to utilize new perceptions and enhance understanding. Because of this breadth and depth, it encapsulates all three factors of identity development. It helps to explain the role society plays in establishing norms, values, and information. Making this explicit to students is an important step in helping them individually evaluate differing perceptions, such as understanding their family’s transition into a new country. In doing so, difference is celebrated as opposed to neglected or repressed. This prepares students for acceptance and tolerance, which in turn helps to restructure the social climate of a school, thus making it more welcome for students who do not adhere to the norm.

One example of teachers’ role in knowledge construction is evident in García and Gaddes’ (2012) article “Weaving Language and Culture: Latina Adolescent Writers in an After-School Writing Project.” They discuss several ways to leverage bicultural Latina students’ prior experiences to make sense of their place in the mainstream society. Their article describes an after-school program that seeks to rectify “a curriculum devoid of cultural relevance for minority students,” (García & Gaddes, 2012, p. 144). Although this takes place in an after-school setting, the skills they teach students are easily transferable to the classroom. They argue for culturally responsive teaching in schools that makes connections explicit and use instructional practices that legitimize what students already know (p. 144). In order to oppose what Valenzuela (1999)

calls, *subtractive schooling* (Valenzuela in García & Gaddes, 2012, p. 144), they create an after-school program for Latina students where they read texts written by Latina authors, such as Sandra Cisneros. The Latina students were then encouraged to write texts of their own. The texts varied from poetry, to prose, to re-writing quotes that resonated with their life stories. In doing this, García and Gaddes (2012) analyze how these students learn as well as how their past experiences may influence their learning and identity. At the end of the program, they held a banquet where the students read their work. The students wrote and performed in both English and Spanish, demonstrating the flexibility that Weisman (2001) describes. The validation of culture among the young, Latina women in the workshop encouraged them in their schooling.

Family influence significantly affects students' construction of opinions regarding society. Weisman (2001) describes what she calls the "concept of bicultural identity," (p. 205), and the various debates and struggles felt among bicultural families in the journey of socialization in two worlds. Successful socialization in both worlds allows flexibility to maneuver the two cultural worlds these people inhabit (Weisman, 2001, p.205). This directly empowers them to construct their own opinions and perspectives regarding societal norms and values, as they have the knowledge of two cultures supporting them. Martinez et al. (2012) discuss the process called "cultural customization," (p. 198), in which bicultural youth interpret tradition and knowledge passed down from their parents and make sense of it in the current world. This helps to negotiate the relationship between family and culture. This also aids in the meaning-making process as Latina youth "decide which interpretation of culture they want to integrate," (S. Martinez et al., 2012, p. 195). For example, the decision of which language to speak and when. Bilingual, Latina students may find this difficult as they realize the power English holds in society, even though it may not be the language spoken in the household. This is

an extremely important process that is highly influenced by familial relationships and one that many Latinas struggle with as they seek to find a balance between preserving culture and integrating into mainstream society.

Influences young girls of color receive from society about ethnicity, race, and gender roles considerably affect their paths later in life. This relationship is what Gushue and Whitson (2006) analyze in their article, “The Relationship of Ethnic Identity and Gender Role Attitudes to the Development of Career Choice Goals Among Black and Latina Girls.” The research they conducted found that ethnic identity and gender role attitudes found in society play an important role in developing positive self-efficacy (Gushue & Whitson, 2006, p. 384). Messages they receive affect their construction of knowledge about their role in the world. For example, depending on the exposure and reinforcement of the “Latina maid” stereotype, this can affect Latina students’ interpretation of their own potential. However, providing them with examples of strong Latina role models, such as Sonia Sotomayor will increase their self-efficacy. The stronger sense of self-efficacy led to more ambitious career goals for the young girls. Self-efficacy is essential to foster in young girls, especially those of marginalized communities. Part of why they are not reaching their full potential is the lack of validation they feel in school. This can lead to decreased motivation and disinterest in school, which in turn leads to a self-fulfilling prophecy of stereotyped norms.

Prejudice Reduction

The third dimension, prejudice reduction, focuses on the attitudes and values of students. More specifically, it focuses on developing positive racial attitudes among students, which is a value all teachers should be cultivating within their students (Banks, 1998, p. 2). This value was present during the intergroup education movement in an effort to dispel racial and ethnic

tensions. Currently, anti-immigrant sentiment is found in numerous places, the school should serve as a safe haven for students who are immigrants, which can be achieved through prejudice reduction.

Nieto (2010) believes that neither language, ethnicity, social class, nor gender should hinder learning. It is the job of educators to reframe these differences to allow for learning to take place regardless (Nieto, 2010, p.14). She calls for teachers to understand and accept their students' contradictory differences in values, language, and discourse among others, so that learning for all can take place (Nieto, 2010, p.20). Furthermore, teachers should pass this on to their students to continue the development of positive racial attitudes. Most importantly, Nieto (2010) wants these teachers to engage with ideas from all cultural backgrounds not just those from the dominant culture (p.18). Nieto (2010) is not alone in this sentiment, Acevedo-Polakovich, et. al. (2014) would agree with the idea of multiculturalism in the classroom. They argue that promoting biculturalism among Latinas in high school classrooms would better their attitudes toward academics because it creates a space for them to engage with both of the cultures that make up their identities (2014, p.44). There are various strategies teachers can employ in their instruction to model positive racial attitudes. In demonstrating this practice, teachers facilitate the opportunity for students develop this trait.

Students who come from immigrant families often face differing parental expectations than their American peers. S.Martinez et al. (2012), discuss how family relations can influence a young women's culture and identity development. In addition to lack of financial resources and academic issues, some issues found to be specific to Latinas are gender-role stereotyping as well as family obligations and expectations. While it is agreed upon that identity development is never-ending, the constant re-negotiation is a difficult process. Depending on the level of

assimilation of the family, it makes this cognitive process more or less demanding for the young women. They are vulnerable to the anti-immigrant sentiment, which can be dramatically lessened through prejudice reduction. Struggling to find the balance between fitting in at school and maintaining family loyalty presents immense pressure on young Latina students.

Weisman (2001) argues against the current societal power relations that hold down bicultural youth. She further explains society's role in prejudice reduction in her analysis. She incorporates Banks' (1997) idea that cultural identification is a multidimensional and dynamic process (p.206) with Romero's (1995) critical view of bicultural identity as a "historically grounded and politically conscious process" (in Weisman, 2001, p.206). Through combining these concepts, Weisman (2001) advocates for the "need to develop a critical consciousness concerning societal power relations" as necessary for combating the subordination felt among bicultural youth (p. 207). In thinking about how we can apply this critical consciousness to school society, it is important to consider how all teachers and administrators actively work to combat the subordination and demonstrate this practice.

Equity Pedagogy

Banks (1993) defines the fourth dimension as equity pedagogy. In a concise manner, Banks (1998) states that this is where "teachers change their methods to enable kids from diverse racial groups and both genders to achieve," (p. 2). This is inherently important in considering Latina students from immigrant families, or are immigrants themselves. Level of education varies for students who are newcomers and to label any student as deficit causes immense damage. More than other dimensions, equity pedagogy relies on educators acknowledging and confronting their biases. This dimension serves as a pivot point for teachers to examine their biases and how they let their biases affect their practice and instruction. These biases, conscious

or unconscious, pertain to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender and many others, and can negatively affect many, if not most, students.

Weisman (2001) directly acknowledges confrontation of bias in her article, which applies to student-teacher interactions supporting identity development. She interviews four teachers who identify as Latina on varying levels. Weisman (2001) analyzes the teachers' feelings on using Spanish in the classroom. She then leverages this information to discuss how Spanish should be used in the classroom, as well as how Spanish-speaking teachers can and should become advocates for bilingual and bicultural students. While the first two did not have a strong identification with their Latina heritage, the last two teachers largely identified with their Latina heritage. Because of this, they leverage their abilities to advocate for their bicultural students. Weisman (2001) juxtaposes these examples to demonstrate how powerful advocacy among bicultural and bilingual teachers can be for the same population of students. Examining one's biases can lead to implementation of better practices which allows for more equitable learning to take place.

Empowering School Culture and Social Structure

The fifth and final dimension is empowering school culture and social structure. While the previous dimensions hone in on individual classrooms, this focuses on the school as a whole. Banks (1993) more specifically describes it as "the process of restructuring the culture and organization of the school so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups will experience educational equality and cultural empowerment (Cummins, 1986 in Banks, p. 7). It seeks to make the school more equitable and therefore create a more welcoming environment in which students and teachers have developed democratic skills and knowledge to positively participate in society at large (Banks, 1998, p. 3).

It is through this historical and political critical consciousness that institutions can reexamine and reconstruct their existing biases and prejudices. Nieto (2010) labels society's ideological flaws as problematic, rather than the problem being inherent in teaching or education (p.19). In their article, Martinez et al. (2010) also call for a reformation and restructuring of institutions, arguing that understanding how life events and family influences affect ethnic identity can better inform institutions of the changes that must be made in order to meet the needs of Latinas. Anzaldúa (1987) shares this sentiment, calling for the white dominant society in America to acknowledge the hierarchy of cultures and take responsibility and action in order to dispel and eradicate ignorance and prejudice (p. 85,6). Through this restructure, school society becomes a welcoming and all-inclusive environment. Multicultural curriculum reform has the potential to empower more students than the current dominant curriculum.

A Turn Toward Practice: Immigrant Narratives

As we pivot to examine a specific implementation strategy for the *Five Dimensions* and identity development, I want to make explicit the ability to blend dimensions. Properly employing immigrant narratives in the classroom exemplifies the blending of several, if not most of the dimensions. In doing so, we create a space for immigrant narratives to positively affect identity development as they accurately portray experiences of students. Additionally, they serve to educate other students on the different lived experiences of their classmates. Unfortunately, the manner in which immigrant narratives are used today perpetuates the simplistic and single-story narrative of immigration constructed by society. However, by using Banks' (1993) *Five Dimensions* with the factors of identity development, we can rectify this injustice and enhance the learning of all students.

Multicultural literature seeks to reflect the racial, ethnic, and social diversity that are represented in society, as do immigrant narratives (Clifford & Kalyanpur, 2011, p.1). Today, we

often see a dichotomy of immigration narratives. The literature describes the benefits of immigration and the successes of immigrants, yet we see anti-immigrant sentiment in various sectors of society. This binary challenges the lived experiences of students who are immigrants, therefore providing them with inaccurate representations of their own lives. If the literature in the classroom illustrates stories of success, and the negative sentiments in society invalidate their right to be here, then the plight for educators is to create a space that reverses this damage. We can do this through using Banks' (1993) *Dimensions* and the factors of identity development as a guideline for implementing immigrant narratives into the classroom, which inherently addresses several factors of multicultural curriculum. Doing so would provide students with numerous accounts that represent their story, as well as the opportunity to learn new perspectives from others.

This concept is illustrated by Compton-Lilly, Porath, and Ryan (2017), as they refer to Bishop's (1990) concept of the *window* and *mirror* in literature. Literature can be used as a *window* to highlight diverse experiences and perspectives, or a *mirror*, in which students' see their lives reflected in the story (Compton-Lilly, Porath, & Ryan, 2017, p. 148). Using the concepts of *mirrors* and *windows* activate several of Banks' *dimensions*. Content integration is achieved simply through the infusion of immigrant narratives into the curriculum. More often than not, Latina immigrant students look through a *window* during these stories as the narratives do not reflect their lives. For students whose stories are not prominent in everyday discourse, it is important to emphasize using immigrant narratives as a *mirror* for them. Through this, knowledge construction is enacted. Latina immigrants can reflect on their experience and how it is portrayed, while the other students can use this as a *window* to understand the different journeys people take in life. Today, the racial, cultural, and language tensions are typically

ignored in favor of a story with a happy ending (Compton-Lilly, Porath, & Ryan, 2017, p. 147). However, providing multiple and differing narratives serves to disrupt this status quo, which normalizes simple and easy transitions, which is not usually the case.

Clifford and Kalyanpur (2011) discuss the potential for harm and benefit in young-adult novels with immigrant protagonists. They separate the process of immigration into three distinct sections and analyze the protagonists' feelings during each. The three categories being, experiences prior to immigration, the journey itself, and adjustments due to immigration (Clifford & Kalyanpur, 2011). Once again, we can apply the *window* and *mirror* concepts in determining the proper novels to select. Clifford and Kalyanpur (2011) take into account the different reasons behind immigration as well as the idea immigrants have of America prior to arriving. This largely plays into knowledge construction because it teaches students to consider alternative perceptions of their own or other countries. It pushes a step further into prejudice reduction because through this instruction, teachers create a space to talk about diverse backgrounds and why they are important to understand.

Through this we begin to see how simplistic narratives can undermine the power of an immigrant's story. Equally as harmful is the immigrant narrative that promotes a "hero/heroine" protagonist, typically found in young adult literature. This structure promotes one, specific story of immigration, therefore creating an archetype of what an immigrant and his or her journey should portray (Clifford and Kalyanpur, 2011, p. 5). While there are many students who complete physically dangerous treks to cross into America, there are several others who came by plane or boat. Promoting this single stereotype of an immigrant leaves students with an incomplete truth of how and why people immigrate. This being said, we also have to consider how we want students to make use of this information. One example of an immigrant narrative

that encompasses diversity within is *Just Like Us* written by Helen Thorpe (2009). This book follows four Mexican female students who have differing immigration stories, as well as varying citizenship status. Each of their journeys to the United States differs, one completed the now stereotypical trek, while another drove over on her mother's lap (Thorpe, 2009). The diversity within this book accurately portrays four completely different accounts of immigration and transition into the United States. It is an effective immigrant narrative that acknowledges the differences within the same cultures and ethnicities, thus holding the potential to activate all *dimensions* and all factors of identity development.

Through the blending of the dimensions, along with an analysis of aspects commonly found in immigrant narratives, we can better understand their potential in a multicultural curriculum. Immigrant narratives are most effective when used in concert with multiple factors of identity and multiple dimensions. Through this, more students have the opportunity to use this literature as *windows* and *mirrors* to either learn about new perspectives or further reflect upon their own life journey. These immigrant narratives have the ability to capture the attention of youth who are not often validated or represented in school. The effect this can yield is broad, yet the overarching idea is to communicate appreciation and effectiveness in utilizing stories found in different lived experiences.

Conclusion

Ethnic identity development is extremely important in ensuring students benefit from their education and realize their full potential. Language and culture are crucial components in identity development. In order to successfully cultivate these identities, an entire restructuring of institutions must occur. Students, specifically Latina students, need to feel validation and legitimization of their culture, rather than disdain and indifference. With the Latino population rapidly increasing in the nation, a serious re-examination needs to take place to assess the

treatment of Latino students. Gallegos and Ferdman (2012) push this point further in saying that although there has been more attention paid to the increased population growth, this has not come with “a deeper, more nuanced, and shared understanding of the complexities of Latino identity and experience,” (p. 51). Additionally, educators and policy reformers must take into account the various aspects that influence identity development, such as the roles of educators, family, and society. These students are forced into a decision to either acculturate into dominant culture for academic success, or preserve their heritage and suffer as a result. Striking the perfect balance is a difficult task, especially considering the lack of support and resources, however, students should not have to face this debacle alone. The research I have discussed demonstrates a large breadth of research that provides educators and policy reformers with information for the disruption and creation of a new status quo that encapsulates all cultures. Multiculturalism is not solely an internal concept; it can be utilized in the classroom and leveraged to provide students with a more well-rounded education. In thinking about the ways we can advocate for Latina students, we need to carefully analyze the implications of language, culture, and identity on learning and leverage that information to meet their needs.

Implications

There are several reasons to push this work forward. Gallegos and Ferdman (2012) state the expansion of literature on Latino/a's in the nation, as well as why it is important. In my own work on this topic, I would like to apply Gallegos and Ferdman's (2012) theories of Latina identity development to Banks' (1993) *Five Dimensions of Multiculturalism* to see if there is a connection, and if so, understand the relationship and interaction of the two.

One of the most important reasons to continue in this work largely deals with the anti-immigrant sentiment found in present day United States. Current events and crises, such as

Donald Trump pushing for the construction of a wall to keep out Mexican immigrants, when in reality statistics show most of those immigrants come from Central America and are escaping dangerous living conditions (Nazario, 2014). Similar to this, the controversy that was sparked by the Syrian refugee crisis ignited heated political and social debates about the roles of immigrant in the United States. While this is occurring in the social sphere, we as educators must persist in achieving equity for all students, regardless of country of origin, immigration status, or first language.

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