Central Question

How can teachers use storytelling and narrative to more effectively convey to their students complex scientific concepts, in particular, evolution?

Context

Students (and teachers) often think of science as a body of knowledge and a set of techniques for research and inquiry. It is almost universally taught as a discrete subject area and as a series of facts that support ideas. Students are expected to learn key facts and understand central ideas. Yet despite decades of emphasis on cultivating a scientifically literate society, large numbers of Americans continue to show a misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and ignorance of basic, accepted ideas of how the natural world works. Ideas such as evolution by natural selection and global climate change remain controversial in public discourse even as scientists working in those fields agree on their validity. The concept of a scientific “theory” itself is widely misunderstood. Often students look back on science classes as difficult or confusing. Students not infrequently come into my own science class saying “I don’t like science,” or “I’m not good at science.” What’s going wrong?

I propose that at least part of the problem lies in how we teach science. It is generally taught as a sequence of facts leading toward a concept or idea, which in turn leads to another series of facts and more ideas, each building on the other; observations generate facts, which build upon other facts, resulting in “big ideas.” While this is the process through which modern science has developed over the last five hundred years, is it the most effective way to convey these ideas?
There is a growing body of academic literature showing that teachers at all levels are recognizing the effectiveness of stories and storytelling in communicating ideas and in fostering understanding of these ideas (Collins, Fawcett, Nash, Safir, and Wang among others). These techniques allow students to relate to others, to understand by retelling, and to assume the role of teacher in addition to being a student, a technique that has been demonstrated to improve comprehension. How can storytelling be used to augment the fact-based convention often used in science class?¹

Method

I propose approaching my central question from two perspectives: academic research and the development of a stand-alone curriculum. My proposed curriculum would use storytelling and narrative techniques to convey scientific concepts, particularly that of evolutionary theory, to middle school students. I anticipate such techniques could be extrapolated to older students as well. The included instructional plan may variously involve oral, written, digital, pictorial, and video forms of storytelling.

I will also survey the considerable and growing academic and professional literature on the use of storytelling and narrative as a pedagogical technique, in particular as it relates to teaching science (Bickmore, Dahlstrom, Hoffman, and Kuchment, among others). Furthermore, I may also draw upon the perspective of a specific science teacher's experience as he investigates the effectiveness of these techniques. I am collaborating with this colleague as part of an ongoing professional development program in which he looks at the effectiveness of digital storytelling in

¹ I should note that there is ambiguity in the term "storytelling." Some may define it as the process by which students understand and retell stories in order to foster greater understanding. Teachers can also tell stories to students. In a science class these stories could be specific to individuals or particular discoveries, or could be a descriptive story that encompasses a concept or larger idea. I intend to include as wide a variety of usages as possible.
teaching science to 8th grade students. My role in this professional development process is one of coach, advisor, and observer.

Preparation

I have taught science to middle school students at an independent school for twelve years. I have developed the integrated and evolving interdisciplinary science curriculum myself, in collaboration with colleagues at Carolina Friends School and others. I am particularly excited by two aspects of teaching science - the "aha!" moment that occur in a classroom when a student recognizes the power of an idea, and the creation of a curriculum or lesson that sparks that creative excitement.

My MALS classes have consistently illustrated the power of a story. One class, Margaret Sartor's *The Unconventional Memoir*, focused on storytelling directly, and allowed me to explore personal narratives and stories, among them my changing understanding as an early adolescent of how we view the natural world. Other classes have broadened and deepened my understanding of biological sciences and how these concepts are conveyed. Jon Shaw's *The Darwinian Revolution* not only expanded my understanding of evolutionary theory but also allowed me to see how different people see and approach this concept. In *The Philosophy of Biology* with Dan McShea, we further explored the conflict between faith in a deity and faith in a scientific worldview, as well as considering the nature and origin of life.

At a personal level, I've seen firsthand the value of a compelling story. As someone who is skeptical of anecdote and finds a body of facts far more convincing, I have seen time and again the power of a well-told story to convince. I've seen this in the absence of facts and in the presence of conflicting data; well-told stories seem far more effective that facts, figures, and data in convincing and encouraging change. While that statement is itself anecdotal, I find it compelling and thus am led to investigate this idea in my MALS thesis.
Bibliography


Nash, Cristopher. Narrative in Culture: The Uses of Storytelling in the Sciences, Philosophy, and Literature.


<http://go.galegroup.com.proxy.lib.duke.edu/ps/i.do?id=GALE|A232395793&v=2.1&u=duke_perkins&it=r&p=AONE&s=w&asid=0f0e6b029d4c46f4f5d669514177f584>.


Central Question:

How was a long-lasting interracial marriage between a high-ranking British military official and a Caribbean woman of mixed ancestry possible in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, and what does such a marriage reveal about attitudes toward race and gender in Great Britain and its Caribbean colonies during the age of revolution (1780-1820)?

Context:

The marriage of British Army colonel, Edward Marcus Despard, and Catherine Despard, a woman most likely of African ancestry, was quite unusual for its time. Yet, their union appears to have been successful and went unchallenged by the government and many individuals they encountered. Today we often assume that white racism is an unfortunate heritage from a generic past and that its power has lessened gradually over time. The past against which the present is usually juxtaposed is the century after the American Civil War: Jim Crow’s defeat of Reconstruction in the U.S. and the new imperial era in Great Britain. On both these shores of the North Atlantic segregation was the norm, enforced by violence when law proved inadequate to the task.

In this period a marriage such as that of Edward and Catherine Despard was effectively impossible. While certainly not normalized at the turn of the nineteenth century, their marriage was recognized, and Catherine Despard was received by some women in polite society, such as Lady Nelson, the wife of British naval officer Lord Horatio Nelson. So while exceptional, their marriage is a marker of the more fluid and tolerant character of racial attitudes in this earlier period.
Despard was in many ways a traditional elite. He was a member of an Anglo Irish planter family, joined the British Army at age 15, and became an Army colonel in the 1780s. He was stationed in the Caribbean from around 1766 until 1790, and his early duties included serving as an engineer tasked with helping to design shore batteries and fortifications in Jamaica.

We are not sure where Despard met Catherine or when he married her, but she is identified as his wife in several London newspapers, and they most likely met during his time in the Caribbean, prior to his return to England. As a renowned military official, Despard played a key role in protecting Britain’s interests in Jamaica, Nicaragua, and other colonies during the 1770s and 1780s, a period of intense rivalry and war with Spain. He returned to England in 1790 with his wife Catherine, and they both became involved with revolutionary activities. Despard’s association with radical groups, including the London Corresponding Society and the United Irishmen, led to his being arrested several times. Catherine in turn wrote many impassioned letters to government officials complaining of the deplorable conditions in local jails and prisons. In 1803, Despard was tried and executed for high treason by the very government he had spent most of his career serving.

Careful examination of the lives of the Despards both before they met and while they were married can provide a better understanding of the social issues at the heart of many scholarly debates about late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Britain, including race, class, gender, freedom, and human rights. People of color throughout the British Empire endured hardships, including but not limited to enslavement; they were certainly not viewed as equals. That said, the existence of such a couple suggests a very different understanding of race than that which prevailed a century later. What about this environment (that would no longer exist by the end of the nineteenth century) made it possible for Despard, born in Ireland, and

June 28, 2013
Catherine, a colonized woman whose race and gender should have severely limited her freedom, to live together as man and wife? How were they viewed, separately and together, by their peers? Why did they become revolutionaries?

Method:

This project will describe the Despards’ marriage—what we know about their relations with one another and how they were viewed by their contemporaries—by consulting the following wide range of primary as well as secondary sources. Primary sources include Despard’s treason trial transcripts; Catherine’s letters on her husband’s behalf during his imprisonment; discussions of prison conditions by Parliament, which were prompted in part by Catherine’s letters; news items in the British press; and personal correspondence between Despard and government officials, including John Dalling, governor of Jamaica, and Lord Grenville, Britain’s secretary of state. I will also consult secondary sources that explore: issues of class, race, and gender in the British colonies in the Caribbean and in London during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; the political climate during this time, including the involvement of many individuals and groups with British and Irish radicalism; and the influence of the French Revolution.

Preparation:

My preparation for this project has primarily been through my coursework. Prior to enrolling in the MALS program, I had some familiarity with the Atlantic slave trade but only from the U.S. perspective. Two MALS courses in particular introduced me to Britain’s involvement with the slave trade: Age of Empire and Caribbean Literature. Other courses also
allowed me to explore broader issues related to race and history, including two non-MALS courses. One, Cultural (Con)fusión in the African and African American Studies Department, exposed me to questions related colonization, national identity, and citizenship in parts of the Caribbean and the Pacific. The other course, Microhistory in the History Department, offered me a chance to begin to explore the lives of Edward and Catherine Despard.
Bibliography

Primary Sources:


“Colonel Despard, &c.” The Observer Feb. 20, 1803. 2.

“Colonel Despard’s Funeral.” Bell’s Weekly Messenger Mar. 6, 1803: 79.


“Friday’s Post.” The Ipswich Journal Mar. 5, 1803.


The National Archives of the UK (TNA), Home Office (HO) 42/43/127. Folios 291-293. 1798.

The National Archives of the UK (TNA), Home Office (HO) HO 42/48/96. Folio(s) 188-190. October 2, 1799.


“The trial of Edward Marcus Despard, Esquire. For high treason, at the Session House, Newington, Surry, on Monday the seventh of February, 1803. Taken in short-hand by

June 28, 2013

The Trial of Colonel Despard and his Associates for High Treason and a Conspiracy, &c., &c. ... To which is added an Account of their Execution. Published from the London Morning Chronicle.” New York: 1803. Print.

Secondary Sources:


June 28, 2013


June 28, 2013
Higher Education in North Carolina: An Analysis of Goals and Models for the University of North Carolina System

Central Question

New UNC system president Margaret Spellings (2016) has laid out her goals for the state’s public university system: affordability, accessibility, accountability, and quality. What does Spellings mean in each of these? Why are these goals important, how can they be met, and how would the required changes affect institutions in the UNC system?

Context

The University of North Carolina system is a fairly typical public university system. The system encompasses 16 universities and one public residential high school. There is one flagship institution, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, followed by the other state universities of varying size, ranking, and research productivity. The UNC Board of Governors made a number of substantial changes to the UNC system in 2015, including ousting system president Tom Ross, and hiring Ms. Spellings to replace him. Additionally, the Board of Governors cut and consolidated 46 degree programs across the UNC system and closed several university centers. These changes came with controversy, criticism, and campus protests, but also with vocal supporters and advocates. 2015 also saw the introduction of Governor McCrory’s Connect NC bond, which passed the state legislature and was approved by voters as a referendum on the March, 2016 primary ballot. The recently approved measure includes almost $1 billion towards buildings and renovations on UNC system campuses. All of these changes will have implications for Ms. Spellings and UNC’s future directions.
Ms. Spellings' concerns about cost, access, and outcomes are not unique to North Carolina. Universities across the country are struggling with rising tuition costs, reduced state budgets, and suboptimal retention and graduation rates. A number of interesting university models have arisen in response to these challenges. Arizona State University has come up with a number of innovations to address quality and cost, largely through technology and scale (Crow & Dabars, 2015). In an effort to improve access and student degree completion, the University System of Georgia Board of Regents has consolidated Georgia State University and Georgia Perimeter College (Rivard, 2015). The University of California Berkeley recently began a strategic planning process, and is considering costs, efficiency, and structural changes at all levels of the institution, including online expansion and increasing athletics revenues (Dirks, 2016). These emerging models provide guidance on how Spellings' goals can be met, with the understanding that they would come with associated costs; potentially radical changes in structure, philosophy, and purpose; and a fair amount of critique.

Before she took office in March, Margaret Spellings presented her goals for the UNC system to the Board of Governors at a retreat last month. At the same retreat, the Boston Consulting Group (BCG), who was requested by Spellings to perform a study of the 17 campus system (Spellings, 2016), presented their preliminary findings. Much of Spellings and BCG's presentations were in sync; BCG called for clear priorities (The Boston Consulting Group, 2016), and Spellings laid out four specific goals: affordability, accessibility, accountability, and quality. BCG recognized the need for "shared accountability to deliver against a set of high-priority performance goals" (p. 6) and Spellings stated that "we must set clear expectations of institutional leaders," and later followed with "if goals are not met, we must take action" (p. 3). Spellings and BCG likewise echoed one another by highlighting individual institutional identity, identifying UNC's need to be of service to the state, and reiterating that affordability is written into the state constitution. Spellings' speech and BCG's report lay the framework by which to evaluate new models to consider for the UNC system.
Method

I will analyze alternative models for public institutions, such as those previously mentioned for ASU, GSU, and Berkeley, and consider how well these models address Ms. Spellings stated goals. I will also consider how these models relate to recent actions taken by the UNC Board of Governors, and how they would impact the UNC system further. In assessing impacts to the UNC system, I will make note of critiques of each model, including concerns like restrictions of academic freedom, shared governance, or questionable quality. I will juxtapose these concerns with data supporting each model, thereby identifying both potential costs and benefits. In the end, I plan to identify several universities that offer strategies that Ms. Spellings and UNC can adapt to achieve increases in access, accountability, reduced costs, and improved outcomes. The analysis will be the key component of my project, and will answer my central question. However, I believe it is also important to include a discussion of current public university models as well as those that are emerging, and also analyze what Spellings means by each of her four stated goals. “Quality” is particularly problematic, as it may refer to graduation rates, course content, teaching abilities, research productivity, job placement, or test scores.

Preparation

Two of the courses that I have taken while in MALS are particularly relevant: Issues and Innovation in Higher Education, and the Specials Readings (independent study) on Purpose and Policies in Higher Education that I completed with my project advisor, Noah Pickus. These courses not only exposed me to alternative and emerging models of higher education, but they also gave me a background on the history of research universities, the multiple purposes of an institution, and common critiques of our current academic system. Other courses have provided useful skillsets as well. Everyday Cognition exposed me to principles of cognitive psychology and how humans learn and process knowledge. This is interesting to consider as I review different pedagogical philosophies in each model. Making Social Policy gave me a greater understanding of the North Carolina Legislature, and versed me
in reading and understanding bills and policy briefs. This course also focused significantly on k-12 education in North Carolina, which is useful considering that these students go on to make up the majority of enrollment at the state’s public universities. In a similar manner, the course on Race, Social Inequality, and Education provided insight on racial disparities in k-12 education, an important note in a very diverse state when one of the stated goals is improved access. Finally, in addition to the coursework that I’ve taken, I’ve also worked in higher education for 11 years post-graduation, as well as having served as a peer advisor during my undergraduate career. I’ve worked at two public universities, one private, and one proprietary. I have a deep passion for higher education, and regularly read articles and books well beyond what I have been assigned for class.

Works Cited


Preliminary Bibliography

Primary:


US Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. (ND). The Intedgrated Postsecondary Education Data System [Data Sets].

Secondary:


Central Question:

Entering the word “hijab” (an Islamic term that describes modest dress for women, including a head covering) into YouTube’s search engine results in more than 400,000 videos; some reflect an ongoing discussion within an internet community of women of all faiths about why they wear the hijab. I plan to study videos produced and posted by a number of these commentators in order to better understand how new media is interacting with established religious principles such as female modesty in the construction and performance of online identities.

Context:

YouTube, the popular video-sharing website, provides people with a unique platform and setting to express their opinions, interact with one another and make connections based on their personal interests and beliefs. This ability to search for people with beliefs similar to their own point of view may reduce inhibition, promote self-disclosure and increase a sense of connectedness with others. The site also offers participants unique opportunities and challenges in regard to self-presentation behaviors. Unlike traditional face-to-face self-presentation, YouTube provides users with a certain level of anonymity, thus giving them an opportunity to fabricate entirely new identities or to manipulate viewers by only revealing personal attitudes and aspects in a controlled and socially desirable fashion.

I have discovered a YouTube community of female users who claim that they choose to
wear the hijab for religious reasons. Within many religions, modesty is presented as a virtue and impetus to moral behavior. This is true whether we examine Christianity, Judaism or Islam. Religious texts often command or encourage meek behavior and attire that is not sexually provoking. Although guidance is given to both male and female believers, special emphasis is placed on women’s appearance, especially her head.

Some religious sects believe head covering is an integral part of modest attire, or a command to be adhered to as strictly as possible, while other sects insist that religious passages related to modesty, in particular head covering, are culturally specific—corresponding directly to the time, environment and social context in which these texts were written. While most Christian and Jewish women no longer believe that their faith commands them to cover their heads, there seems to be a growing number of Christian, Jewish and Muslim women in the West who are choosing to be committed to modest dress, which they may or may not refer to by the Islamic term “hijab.”

Method:

I will examine these videos qualitatively in light of secondary scholarship on gender, religious studies and computer-mediated communications and identity, paying particular attention to theories of self-presentation and performance as a framework for understanding the intersection between online behavior and identity and how these issues are framed and rewritten by their presentation on YouTube.

I will look at the YouTube conversation around the hijab and modesty, but may also include case studies of 3-5 specific video self-presentations. I hope to discover what the attraction might be for women who affiliate themselves with a mode of dress many associate
with the subjugation of women; if adhering to hijab acts as a clear identity marker; the role the hijab plays in the women’s commitment to religious fundamentalism, what empowerment the women derive from the hijab; and how this online form of self presentation compliments or conflicts with their religious norms.

Preparation:

My final paper in Dr. Kent Wicker and Donna Zapf’s course, “Self In the World,” was the catalyst for my body of research. Since this introductory MALS course, several classes that I have taken during my MALS experience have equipped me to explore and dive deeper into these topics, such as Dr. Amy Hall’s “Protestantism and National Identity in American Literature and Film,” where I learned about the implied rules for religious and civic normality in Western Society. My academic experiences thus far coupled with my undergraduate studies in Communications and Advanced Social Sciences and my professional experience in Corporate Communications have given me the knowledge needed to address this topic and to make sense of the intersection between new media, gender and religious studies.
Central Question

How are African Americans represented in the HBO series *The Wire*? In what ways does *The Wire* challenge and/or replicate racial stereotypes that suffuse American media and popular culture?

Context

*The Wire* is a television series that aired for five seasons on HBO from 2002-2008. It was created by David Simon, a former crime reporter for *The Baltimore Sun* and true crime author. In its first season, the show juxtaposed the efforts of the Baltimore police department in combating the city’s drug trade against the lives of drug traffickers who tried to keep their trade going while avoiding police interference. Over the course of its run, *The Wire* expanded its focus to include institutions such as unions, political offices, the school system and the media, all while showing how each of them both influenced and was influenced by the war on drugs.

Although *The Wire* never received particularly high ratings, it received a great deal of critical acclaim. Publications such as the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Guardian*, *Slate* and *TIME* magazine called it the best show on television. Others, such as the *New York Times* and the *San Francisco Chronicle* referred to it in literary terms, with the latter saying “it must be considered alongside the best literature and filmmaking in the modern era.” *The Wire* also received a Peabody Award for “distinguished achievement and meritorious public service.”
In addition to critical acclaim, *The Wire* has become a popular subject for academic study. Universities such as Brown, Duke, Harvard, Johns Hopkins and California at Berkeley have all offered courses using the show as the central subject matter. These courses have spanned disciplines such as law, sociology and film studies.

Due to its focus on the war on drugs, *The Wire* by extension also takes the time to provide an examination of the lives of those most vulnerable to its effects. Many of the show’s main characters are people living in poverty in Baltimore’s inner city. Largely African American, some of these citizens are willingly connected to the drug trade in some form or fashion. Others are not yet must still navigate a livelihood and environment that is largely dictated by said trade. This was an unconventional approach to the depiction of African Americans on television. While previous media portrayals often exploited societal fears of African-Americans to invent and perpetuate stereotypes of them, *The Wire* attempts to contextualize how Black people are depicted by examining the broader role that society plays in their day to day lives. In retrospect, *The Wire* has also proven to be prophetic. It addressed many issues that are currently front and center in the political and cultural landscape at a time when few outlets were discussing them on a large stage. Things such as police brutality in African American communities, the ethics of the war on drugs and mass incarceration were all discussed on and by the show.

**Method**

I am primarily interested in exploring the place of *The Wire* within the context of the media’s historical representation of African Americans. I will conduct a review of the
interdisciplinary literature that discusses how African American communities have been depicted in film and television during the 20th century. I will pay particular attention to key films and shows whose representation of Black people has had the greatest cultural impact—including but not limited to D. W. Griffiths’s Birth of a Nation. I will then narrow my focus to the police procedural television dramas that share the same “cops and criminals” DNA as The Wire, such as Hill Street Blues and NYPD Blue. I will then focus on The Wire. Over the past 10 years, there has been a significant growth in the body of research on the series. It has been discussed from both the perspective of entertainment as well as covered in academic fields such as government, criminal justice and communication. I will examine these resources using the depiction of African Americans as the common thread.

Preparation

Both my Bachelor’s and my first Master’s degree are in the field of media. In both of those courses of study, I took courses that focus on issues of race, such as “Race and Ethnic Relations,” “Race, Class and Gender,” “Gender, Race, Class and the Media” and “Latinos and Media.” Since beginning the MALS program at Duke, I have further continued my study of the intersection of race and media with courses such as “Race, Class and Gender in Great Britain” and “African American Music in the 20th Century.” I took all of these courses because of my dual interest in both media studies and racial history. The course that I have taken that is most pertinent for preparation for this project is “Crime in the City,” which is a MALS course that compares Victorian era England to the modern United States by studying Oliver Twist by
Charles Dickens and *The Wire*. That course helped me decide that *The Wire* is an ideal pivot point by which to study the depiction of Black people in American media.
Why History Has Been Abandoned in the Chilean School Curriculum?

The Role of History and Social Studies in Education

I. Central Question

A Chilean educational bill of 2010, that tried to cut the hours of history and social sciences in the school curriculum, raises issues about what these subjects represent in the debates surrounding public education in Chile. This project will analyze 1) why have history and social sciences been abandoned in the Chilean schools’ curriculum? And 2) how might the benefits of history education be recognized within the current discussion about education and its purposes?

II. Context

In 2010, the Chilean Government tried to cut the school hours of history in the 5th to 10th grade school curriculum to increase the hours of language (Spanish) and mathematics. As the Chilean educational system is centralized, this reform was supposed to be implemented by 2011 and mandatory from 2012 country-wide to both public and private schools. Its purpose was to provide the students with 480 more hours of language and 320 more of mathematics through their school life. As Joaquin Lavin, the Chilean Minister of the Department of Education, explained, “The fundamental reason why this change was made is because language and mathematics are the essence and basis of education, and the truth is that it is difficult for our students to move quickly in the other branches if they do not have a good foundation in language and mathematics."

This change, which was approved unanimously by the National Education Council, was following the trend of “successful” Chilean schools that have more hours of language and mathematics and higher scores on the two standardized tests: the SIMCE and the PSU test. It also
seemed to follow an international trend in accordance with the recommendations of the OECD and the experiences of different developed countries that are references for the Chilean educational system, such as Sweden, Singapore, and Finland, which have more hours of both subjects. However, with this reform there is a risk that increasing the hours of language and mathematics, a more "utilitarian" approach will prevail in many schools that seek to increase scores on various national and international measures trying to increase their academic prestige. This reform, and the debate generated around it, represents the complexity of the school curriculum and the current tension between a humanistic approach and a more productive and testing-based one.

It can be argued that the study of history and the social sciences contributes to the democratic process, promotes democracy, and develops in students a reflective critical thinking. In this view, students will be contributors to society if they learn through reflective thinking, issue-centered education, learning as activism, and teaching for social justice rather than the traditional memorization of numbers, names, facts, and theories. Therefore, schools should not only ensure better results in tests and international standards, but promote the development of critical thinking and reflective consciousness of the social environment. This debate raises issues such as, What is a “successful school”? Can success be measured by standardized tests? These questions themselves raise fundamental demands about the purpose of education within modern Chilean society.

III. Method

The first part of the project will be an academic essay based on a comprehensive literature review of how the purposes of education have been changing in Chile. To do this I will describe
and analyze the discourse of the Chilean school reform of 2010, by which the government tried to 
re-organize the assignment of the school hours, as a starting point to analyze the situation of the 
social studies school program, and how the curriculum have been following a trend that takes 
away space to the study of social sciences in their schools.

In the second part of the project, I will analyze the tenth and eleventh grade social studies 
Chilean curriculum where, for each content area, I will discuss the expected analytical abilities and 
skills that can and should be developed. The analysis will be focused in these two grades since it is 
in those years that students are expected to learn Chilean history in an international context. 
Therefore, the contents include local and global issues, which provide a more complete view of 
how history is taught in Chile.

IV. Preparation

The following courses that I took during my progress through this program have prepared 
me for the journey of working on my final project: “Educational Leadership,” “Teaching Race, 
Teaching Gender,” “Latinos/as Re-claiming Their Education,” and “Topics in K-16.” Through these 
courses I learned about the different theories of educational leadership have been affecting the 
purposes of education, and not only the importance of the role of the teacher in the children 
education, but also the impact of different policies on the public education. In two of those 
courses I did as final projects research related with the purposes of education and the importance 
of the study of history in the school education.

Moreover, my background as a history teacher in a public school in Chile had helped me to 
understand the importance of the social studies subject in the development of a critical thinking 
and analytical abilities. Since this experience I have been attending different seminars, such as 
“Teaching as Activism” or the importance of the role of the teacher in the students’ learning.