**Very nice discussion of this article- and nice bridges to other readings, especially in the beginning literature review. One thing to think about might be to circle back to broader comparisons to other readings/research when you discuss the significance of the piece at the at the end (i.e. what this specific case teach us about the socialization and identities overall- in light of the lit review presented- ).**

**Grade: A**

**Leisy**

**Creating Social Identities through Doctrina Narratives**

**Patricia Baquedano-Lopez**

**Part 1: Situating the Research**

The creating of social identities can happen through socialization and language. Socialization is the acquisition of knowledge, orientations and practices enabling individuals to function appropriately and effectively in a community (Garrett and Baquedano-Lopez, 2002). Language is used to socialize individuals, and individuals are socialized to use the language (Garrett and Baquedano-Lopez, 2002). It has been found in research that language socialization practices are a main focus in creating the identity of ethnicity, cultural identity, morality and personhood (Baquedano-Lopez 2000, Fader 2000, He 2002, Paugh 2001, Smith-Hefner 1999).

This study investigates the implications of teaching a religious narrative about *Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe* to a doctrina class (a Catholic class taught in Spanish). The class is comprised of children from families who have recently emigrated from Mexico and relocated in Los Angeles, California. The socialization of these children is observed in terms of language and history of their culture. The narrative draws upon personal and past experience, and then adapts it to present day socialization by creating a local collaborative version of the narrative. This bridges the past to the present and intimately ties the children to their Mexican culture. The entire class is taught in their native language of Spanish, as a language that is referred to, as “the language of the heart,” for this is the language they use to communicate with God.

The researcher’s main focus is on the discussions and interactions of the teachers, parents and students as they participate in the doctrina class. The research spotlights the one narrative, Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe, and how it builds social identities among the students.

**Part 2: Summary of the Scholarly Piece**

***Literature Review***

Collaborative narratives have been an entertaining and engaging way for cultures to express experiences and give meaning to those experiences. Narratives are designed to teach, inspire and bring people together or tear them apart. This research study is compared with another study of narratives from the African-American experience. This study by Morgan (1995) points out that storytellers talk about the collective history of slavery of the African Americans. The collaborative narrative of this group is similar to the narrative used in the doctrina. Both groups are oppressed through economical exploitation and dominance of language. Through these narratives the respective cultures are influenced by past experiences that could effect the current population. The culture is held together and socialized by the past narratives, present collaboration of narratives and future direction of the narratives.

Another place where narratives are widely used is in churches or religious communities. It has been noted by anthropologists that churches can be the first place that children are exposed to literacy and formal use of language. Heath (1983) found that the socialization practices taught at home were mirrored at the churches in the Piedmont Carolinas. In Western Samoan, the Bible lessons taught to the children socialized them in the English language and the American culture (Duranti 1994; Ochs 1986; Duranti and Ochs, 1986). Churches can be a prevailing influence on cultures as they expose their views and language to the community.

***Research Site and Participates***

The setting for this study is a doctrina class in a Catholic parish located in Los Angeles, California. The majority of this parish is composed of recent Mexican immigrants who were either born in Mexico or whose parents were born in Mexico. The parish has a large Spanish-speaking population, and the doctrinaclass offered at St. Paul’s Catholic Church is conducted in Spanish. There were 42 children taking the doctrina class ranging in age from 6 to 15. The teacher of the doctrina class is a monolingual Spanish-speaking woman in her fifties, who immigrated to Los Angeles from Mexico when she was a young woman.

Another class that is offered at St. Paul’s Catholic Church is *catechism*. The catechism class is comprised of 15 children, ages 6 to 9. These children come from a variety of different cultures including, Latino, Asian American and European American. Most of the Latino children in this class are second or third generation immigrants from Mexico or South America. These children are more proficient in English than they are in Spanish. The teacher of the catechism class is a monolingual English-speaking woman in her late forties. She is European American and has live in Los Angeles her entire life.

This study looks at both classes and the pedagogical practices used to teach the students about the narrative of *Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe*.

***Data Collected***

The data collected for this study was a collection of video and audio recordings from both the doctrina and catechism classes. Interviews and field notes from conversations with teachers, parents and children were also collected. The time frame for collection of data was 20 months from 1994 to 1996.

Transcripts are used directly in the research study to show the different styles of teaching and how social identities are formed in the different classes.

***Analysis and Findings***

The researcher draws conclusions about the very different ways this narrative is taught to the two religious classes. This is done through observation of the communities, practices within the communities and conversations held with the participants. She looks at a couple of variables, including language, cultural mix and historical religious teaching.

She finds that the meaning of the narrative in the doctrina class is carried out differently from the catechism class. In the *doctrina* class, the children learn how to verbally display the socio-historical knowledge through interaction and engagement. The doctrina teacher helps the children to identify with their past by asking questions about their birth place, talking about the color of their skin and discussing the historical oppression of their people and language. This narrative is to help build Mexican identity among the children.

However, in the catechism class, the teacher talks in the past tense about historical events and combines narratives from many cultures to form a homogenized and generic narrative of the same type of event. This brings a variety of cultures together into one group by describing a generic, multi-ethnic Mary who crosses cultural lines.

***Implications***

This study shows that the design of collaborative narratives can help to socialize children in relating to their past cultural history. By telling the children the story of the past and engaging them to bring the story into the here and now, the children become bonded to their culture.

The use of the language of the “heart” to teach the children about their past is a powerful tool. In this study the use of language does influence the social identity of the students. The oral collaboration of one narrative to show the historical importance to the doctrina students, and the way the catechism is done by teaching in the dominant language brings all narratives together to form a collective history of cultures.

The major implication in this study is the examination of how historical religious narratives taught in a native language can help a community embrace their cultural past and build the social identity of its members.

**Part 3: Your Own Critique/Response**

There were several interesting insights that I took away from this article. First, I felt the pedagogy of teaching through narratives or storytelling is a powerful tool to use in many situations. It was entertaining, engaging and an effective way to pass on and retain information and culture. I liked the way the teacher of the doctrina class pulled the children into the story by engaging them in questions about themselves. She helped to make them an integral part of the experience and brought relevance to the students’ present lives. In using this pedagogical method, she was socializing children to identify them with their Mexican heritage. She took her teaching a step further by discussing the oppression suffered by the Indians and asked a student why the miraculous event in the narrative took place. Her response to the answer led the children to further understand the oppression and the need to be rescued from the oppressor. I thought the skin color comparison was an interesting point she made to the children. This was possibly a way to instill pride and establish unity, because of the darkness of their skin.

To be honest, I felt much more comfortable reading the description of the catechism class. Perhaps this has to do with my cultural and religious background that is mixed rather than pure. I really embraced the idea of a multi-ethnic Mary introduced into a diverse group of children. The teacher used the past tense to discuss the historical examples and left a door open for future appearances of Mary to other cultures. However, the teacher missed an important teaching moment by not taking the time to explore the individual reasons behind the specific sightings of Mary, but maybe this was not her objective. Also, in the observation of the catechism class, it was noted that the teacher did not engage the children to participate in the class. This could just be a style of teaching and not so much a cultural issue.

One small comment that made a big impact upon me was that there was no interaction between the doctrina class and the catechism class. I found this to be a sad situation. I would ask the church why these classes did not interface with each other. There was the potential to really learn from each other and expose the children to the communities in which they lived. I wondered if the teachers even knew or communicated with each other. They probably did not, since they are monologist in different languages. This really strikes me that two women teaching religious classes at the same church to children were separated by language and culture. Yes, it is a striking part of this article- and a trap we can fall into when we only think about cultures as bounded- missing opportunities for cross-cultural investigation/discussion/collaboration- even if we can see in the article how having specific classes also helped the Spanish-speaking teacher tailor her instruction in important ways for her group of students- a tension to be negotiated-

The last insight I gained from this article was how resilient people are when they are oppressed or a new idea (religion) is thrust upon them. In this instance, they turned the ideas pressed upon them by the oppressor into a powerful collaborative narrative that gave them both hope and pride in their own culture. It also amazed me how long this narrative has been in the culture, and how it is changed to adapt to the situations that the local people may be facing at the time. From the information gathered in the article, this class was in danger of being eliminated due to the changes in language policies at St. Paul’s. The doctrina class could be joined to the catechism class, and the opportunity to teach children in their native language will disappear to the more dominant language. The children would also lose the benefit of relating to their heritage through religious teaching. On the bright side, if the classes are merged and the doctrina teacher is allowed to be a part of the catechism class, then there could be chance that the catechism class could learn the collaborative narratives of the Mexican American culture. Is this a possibility or even a reasonable solution to the total loss of the doctrina class? Or is there some alternative, when students could have both opportunities for culturally- and linguistically- specific instruction and opportunities to work together?

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