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Resistance and Accommodation: A Case Study of Social-Emotional Learning for Adolescent Black Boys Led by Black Men

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ACCEPTANCE

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The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chairperson, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty.

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RESISTANCE AND ACCOMMODATION:
A CASE STUDY OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING
FOR ADOLESCENT BLACK BOYS LED BY BLACK MEN

by

JOSEPHINE GRANT LINDSLEY

Under the Direction of Ann Cale Kruger. Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

This two-part paper considers the relationship of research to practice when developing and implementing school-based social-emotional learning (SEL) programs.

The first chapter reviews conventional implementation values for SEL. Since the passage of No Child Left Behind, educators have been tasked with bringing research findings to the classroom (Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), 2015). The emphasis on research-informed instruction has brought teaching into the arena of *implementation science,* a field typically associated with interventions in health care (Bauer, Damschroder, Hagedorn, Smith, & Kilbourne, 2015; Biesta, 2007). The migration of implementation science concepts to education is evident in federal and state documents where terms like *fidelity* and *response to intervention (RtI)* describe teaching and learning (ESSA, 2015; NCLB, 2003; Georgia Department of Education SST Resource Manual, 2011). But for educators adopting SEL interventions— interventions which are value-laden, occur in messy environments, and can be difficult to reliably measure—fidelity may be an ill-equipped guide.

I propose *reciprocity* is an alternative to fidelity, based on its congruence with a complex systems framework of learning, and the growing field of improvement science (Bryk, 2016;

Jacobson, Kapur, & Reimann, 2016; Lewis, 2015). With the understanding that successful collaborations require structures that maximize the expertise of both researchers and educators, I offer markers (and risks) of reciprocity to stimulate conversation about implementation integrity for SEL.

The second chapter is a case study (Stake, 1995) of an unscripted SEL intervention led by two Black men for ten adolescent Black boys. The case offers a naturalistic picture of how resistance and accommodation to stereotypes permeate reasoning about social competence for Black boys and men (García Coll et al., 2006; Rogers & Way, 2018). There is scant attention in traditional SEL programs to how adults interpret and pass on particular social competencies that grow up around experiences of bias. The intervention presented here offers an example. It was developed to address concerns about sexualized behavior among boys and girls at a middle school, using a Participatory, Culture-Specific Intervention Model (PC-SIM) (Varjas et al., 2006). Following Gilligan and Eddy's (2017) Listening Guide, I found the men's talk focused on concern for the *boys'* safety. Their talk was characterized by survival-oriented resistance to stereotypes about Black male criminality (Ward, 2018) and an embrace of traditional masculinity, to the detriment of considering alternative ways of relating to girls. As an example of a collaborative SEL intervention, the case offers a foretaste of blind spots and questions that may arise when university-driven research interacts with event-sensitive, community-generated goals.

INDEX WORDS*:* Black males; adolescents; stereotypes; resistance; accommodation; social-emotional learning

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1. LESS FIDELITY, MORE RECIPROCITY: RE-THINKING IMPLEMENTATION INTEGRITY FOR SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Social-emotional wellbeing is fundamental to students' academic achievement, and the concept of social-emotional learning (SEL) is set in the educational canon (Durlak, 2015). SEL is defined as "the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (Weissberg, Durlak, Domitrovich, & Gullotta, 2015, p. 6). Well before SEL was an acronym, educational philosophers advocated personal character as a primary aim of schooling (Dewey, 1923; Eisner, 1994). More recent evidence for the role of attachment and regulation in children's academic achievement sharpened the focus on their affective relationships, and strengths-based models for whole school adoption have proliferated (Cozolino, 2014; Weissberg, 2019). SEL interventions designed to cultivate empathy and perspective-taking have demonstrated a durable, positive influence on children's development, as far as 18 years later (Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017). Lending urgency to concerns about student wellbeing, bullying research has described the harmful effects of harassment on children's achievement and sense of belonging (Espelage, 2016; Olweus, 1993). SEL is now presented as a suite of teachable skills, and as a cross-cutting mission of schools (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellingher, 2011).

The promotion of SEL in education coincided with federal mandates requiring educators to adopt evidence-based practices (Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), 2015; No Child Left Behind (NCLB), 2003). Faced with the task of bringing academic and non-academic research findings into practice, educators entered the arena of *implementation science,* a field typically associated with interventions in health care (Bauer, Damschroder, Hagedorn, Smith, &

Kilbourne, 2015). The migration of implementation science concepts to education is evident in federal and state documents where terms like *fidelity, research-based practice,* and *response to intervention (RtI)* describe teaching and learning (Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), 2015; NCLB, 2003; Georgia Department of Education (GA DOE) SST Resource Manual, 2011). *Fidelity,* the focus of this chapter, is the degree to which a practitioner delivers an intervention as it was originally tested for effectiveness (Century & Cassata, 2106). It has become a defining feature of evidence-based teaching practices (Century, Rudnick, & Freeman, 2010; LeMahieu, 2011).

As any educator knows, however, fidelity can be an elusive goal. Among the realities that conspire against fidelity are daily schedules which conflict with proper dosage (Hill, Maucione, & Hood, 2007), teachers who lack training or buy-in to the content (Datnow, 2000; Harn, Parisi & Stoolmiller, 2013), students who differ from the researched sample (Suhrheinrich, Rieth, Dickson, Lau, & Stahmer, 2016), and a mismatch between program values and cultural norms (Castro, Barrera, & Martinez, 2004). In addition, robust data on fidelity of implementation (FOI) are scarce (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Century & Cassata, 2016). In a review of FOI of K-12 curricula, O'Donnell (2008) found few empirical studies provided meaningful information regarding implementation fidelity, and there was no consensus on how to define or measure the construct.

For educators adopting SEL interventions—interventions which are complex, occur in messy environments, and can be difficult to measure—fidelity may be an ill-equipped guide. Fidelity defined as program adherence may be unattainable or even undesirable (Cross & Barnes, 2014; Graczyk, Domitrovich, Small, & Zins, 2006). Rather than serve as a conceptual link between research and practice, fidelity may reinforce the divide. Effective SEL programs are

comprehensive, cultural, and multi-dimensional (Oberle, Domitrovich, Meyers, & Weissberg, 2016), characteristics that require other markers of implementation integrity.

This chapter explores *reciprocity* as a principled alternative to fidelity for developing and evaluating site-specific SEL curricula. The first section reviews fidelity as a construct in implementation science and education. The second section describes the shortcomings of fidelity as a guide for SEL interventions. The third section proposes reciprocity as an alternative, based on its congruence with a complex systems framework of learning, and the growing field of improvement science (Bryk, 2016; Jacobson, Kapur, & Reimann, 2016; Lewis, 2015). An example from a middle school intervention illustrates how reciprocity may enlist local knowledge and practices. The last section offers markers (and risks) of reciprocity to stimulate conversation about implementation integrity for SEL.

FIDELITY AS A CONSTRUCT

Where Does Fidelity Come From?

Fidelity is a positivist value (LeMahieu, 2011; Cho, 1998). Positivism is an epistemology, or a way of knowing, that uses experimental models to manipulate and make claims about observable phenomena. In experimental science, understanding is built through controlling and isolating variables, and close adherence to protocols support internal validity (Lewis, 2015). It follows a linear model of causation (Biesta, 2007). Comparing a medical intervention to an educational intervention, one can say that FOI provides the justification that an outcome (e.g., a dependent variable like health, or learning) is due to the delivery of the intervention (e.g., an independent variable like a drug, or a curriculum). Fidelity provides the "empirical warrant" for results (LeMahieu, 2011).

Fidelity is a central concept in implementation science, and understanding fidelity requires understanding the context it operates within. According to the eponymous journal of the field, *implementation science* is "the scientific study of methods to promote the systematic uptake of proven clinical treatments, practices, and management interventions, into routine practice, and hence to improve health" (Bauer et al., 2015). *Implementation* is defined by the National Implementation Research Network as "a specific set of activities designed to put into practice an activity or program of *known dimensions*" (National Implementation Research Network, 2018, emphasis added). In other words, the program remains intact in the course of implementation; its dimensions are known up front. The activities are contained within an *intervention*. An intervention is a routine enacted by a practitioner. To be an intervention, it must be an identifiable routine that represents a change from one's everyday practices (Century, et al., 2010; Swanson, Wanzek, Ciullo, & McCulley, 2011). The distinctions made between "intervention" and not-intervention, "known dimensions" and blurred dimensions are essential to intervention integrity under a fidelity principle. Fidelity is like the hand on the steering wheel of the intervention; it keeps the independent variable clear of comparison groups.

Interventions develop iteratively, and fidelity is positioned differently at each step. Implementation research proceeds from tests of effectiveness, to tests of efficacy, to dissemination (Gay & Airasian, 2003; O'Donnell, 2008). To determine whether an intervention is effective, internal validity is paramount. Confounds like selective participation and maturation are minimized, and fidelity of implementation is maximized by strict adherence to intervention protocols. Assuming effectiveness is established, efficacy studies then focus on external validity, a test of whether the findings are generalizable. Without FOI, there is no basis for attributing an outcome to an intervention, and no basis for a decision to scale up or abandon an intervention

(O'Donnell, 2008). Most school-based interventions take place outside of efficacy/effectiveness trials. In practice, schools adopt interventions with different degrees of effectiveness or efficacy (ESSA, 2015; Institute of Educational Sciences, 2017). Regardless, if the intervention carries the imprimatur of evidence-based practice, the duty of fidelity is passed from the researcher to the practitioner.

Fidelity itself has "no normative features," meaning that fidelity cannot answer the question of whether an intervention is worth doing or not (Alexander, 2015). It is a means not an end. It is silent on the institutional question, "What are we doing and why?" The question it *can* answer is, "Fidelity to what?" It is fidelity to a way of knowing that is linear and technique-dependent, to an assumption that knowledge is transferrable across contexts, and to a practice that guards against significant deviation from the program provided (Bryk, 2016; Cho, 1998). Once the basic epistemological framework of fidelity is embraced, adherence holds out the expectation of a return.

FIDELITY IN IMPLEMENTATION LITERATURE

There are three major strands in the implementation literature. The conceptual literature describes different components of an intervention and describes different dimensions of fidelity. The operational literature considers FOI measurement. There is also a literature dedicated to the tension between fidelity and fit, or how interventions adapt to new sites with new participants. The conceptual, operational, and adaptation literatures overlap, but I present them separately for ease.

Conceptual Themes

  Fidelity is one component of successful implementation. Fidelity tends to get the most

attention as a marker of intervention quality, both in and out of education, but it is *one*

component of an implementation. Durlak and DuPre's 2008 analysis of over 500 intervention

studies cited 23 factors that may affect implementation quality. National Implementation

Research Network (NIRN), a resource for institutional decision-makers, cites other

implementation components like dosage, reach, adaptation, fit, monitoring, participant

responsiveness, and organizational capacity (Berkel, Mauricio, Schoenfelder, & Sandler, 2011;

Dane & Schneider, 1998). The NIRN's Hexagon Discussion & Analysis Tool for previewing

how an intervention might match with a site illustrates the myriad values in play in an

implementation. There, fidelity is subsumed under six key categories: evidence, usability,

supports, need, fit, and capacity (Metz & Louison, 2018). The Hexagon Tool highlights the thick

systems that decision-makers operate within when considering program adoption.

  Fidelity is multi-dimensional. The literature that separates fidelity into components

includes the *five-dimensions* model (Dane & Schneider, 1998), the *core ingredients* model

(Abry, Hulleman, & Rimm-Kaufman, 2015), the *structural-instructional* model (Century et al.,

2010), and the *surface fidelity and process fidelity* model (Harn et al., 2013). While they differ,

the models have an underlying motivation in common: to offer guideposts for the uncertain

journey that is evidence-based practice. They center on identifying critical intervention

components up front, holding them constant during the intervention, and engaging the

practitioner's skills at engaging participants.

  Based on citations, the *surface-process* division enjoys scholarly acceptance. Surface

fidelity refers to the degree to which a practitioner's use of the curriculum, time, and materials

follows the structural requirements of the intervention. Its elements can be quantified: time spent, content covered, activities completed, and assessments given. Process fidelity focuses on the role of pedagogy and participant responsiveness. It is a qualitative dimension, more subjective, and more difficult to evaluate. In certain domains, it may be more impactful than structural fidelity (Odom et al., 2010). Century et al. (2010) add an *educative* component to the *surface-process* model. Educative fidelity refers to practitioner training. It is the behind-the-scenes component that represents the understanding and skills that practitioners need to deliver the intervention. Said another way, the educative component of fidelity provides the intellectual infrastructure that supports faithful implementation.

These two impulses: putting fidelity in context and expanding its definition, can end up at cross purposes. As fidelity expands conceptually to accommodate the inevitable complexity of intervention, it drifts away from its procedural core. The warning within the education literature about conflating fidelity with implementation quality anticipates this conflict (Century & Cassata, 2016; Dulark & DuPre, 2008; Durlak, 2010) without questioning whether this conflict signals conceptual flaws.

Operational Themes

Measurement challenges. Practically speaking, self-report is a common and affordable fidelity check. Ideally, the program developer provides a strong theoretical basis for the intervention and a description of the critical features of that particular intervention (if known) along with a checklist to support monitoring (Abry et al., 2015; Century & Cassata, 2016; Swanson et al., 2011). Outside observers are more reliable and more expensive. Frequent fidelity checks can watch for drift unlike one-time checks (Century & Cassata, 2016; Durlak & DuPre, 2008). Harn et al. (2013) propose a composite fidelity score that multiplies structural and

procedural fidelity to arrive at a summary number. The composite might multiply a percentage of curriculum covered by a percentage of Likert scale items that indicate participant responsiveness. Questions about which elements of fidelity matter most, in which context, for which participants are bound to be answered theoretically.

Odom et al. (2010) describe the differential impact of FOI for literacy, math, and behavior in their analysis of early childhood curricula: structural fidelity corresponded to better outcomes in reading, structural and process fidelity together correlated to math outcomes, and process fidelity appeared to correlate to social outcomes. Combined with evidence that students of low income may benefit more from SEL interventions than their more economically advantaged peers, a variegated picture begins to emerge regarding the impact of fidelity on outcomes (Bailey, Stickle, Brion-Meisels, & Jones, 2019). Whether influential components fall toward structural or process aspects of implementation, it raises questions about whether the impact is "in the intervention," or in the practitioner and his/her relationship with participants (Lewis, 2015).

Correlation to Outcomes. There is an assumption that once an intervention is supported as effective, FOI corresponds to positive outcomes in new contexts (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). However, given the lack of data generally about fidelity practices, fidelity's correlation to outcomes is an open question. The data that do exist paint a mixed picture. The range of acceptable fidelity as measured by Durlak and DuPre (2008) ranged from 40%-60%, with Harn et al. (2013) describing a scenario of "diminishing returns" beyond that threshold (p. 187). Harn et al. (2013) offer an example of how a reading intervention presented with lower fidelity by an experienced teacher generated better outcomes than a high-fidelity implementation with a less experienced teacher. In this case, the role of FOI, defined as adherence to curriculum, was not

critical. "Positive infidelity" led to positive results, meaning outcomes could not primarily be attributed to the program (Century & Cassata, 2016).

Data sharing. Few empirical studies measure FOI (Carroll, Patterson, Wood, Booth, Rick, & Balain, 2007; O'Donnell, 2008; Swanson et al., 2011). A recurring theme in the literature is that FOI data is reported inconsistently or cursorily (Dane & Schneider, 1978; Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Century et al., 2010). This gap in the literature has been attributed to definitional uncertainty, expense, and journal practices. There is no standard measure of fidelity, no standard framework for collecting fidelity data, and no commonly shared fidelity rubric (Berkel et al., 2011; Century & Cassata, 2016; Gould, Dariotis, Greenberg, & Mendleson, 2016; O'Donnell, 2008; Stains & Vickrey, 2017). Some scholars have promoted the idea of a single, standardized fidelity rubric (Gearing et al., 2011) while others claim that a universal rubric would not be possible or meaningful (Century & Cassata, 2016).

Integrating FOI narratives into empirical reports would uncover the affordances and limitations of fidelity in different circumstances. It would bring an uptick in the use of mixed methods (Century et al., 2010; Durlak & DuPre, 2008). But the expectation to tell the implementation story, quantitatively and qualitatively, may not be a norm until funders require implementation data and journal editors require adaptation details, and increase word count limits accordingly (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; O'Donnell, 2008; Century & Cassata, 2016).

Fidelity and Fit

Fit is a description of how an intervention can be adapted to mesh with organizational priorities, practitioners' strengths, and community values (Metz & Louison, 2018). Adaptations are an inevitable part of any intervention (Durlak, 2010; Harn et al., 2013). These planned or in-the-moment changes to an intervention may be viewed as error or enhancement (Century &

Cassata, 2016; Durlak & DuPre, 2008). There is evidence that when practitioners are able and encouraged to adapt a program to suit their context, they are more likely to adopt it (Durlak, 2010). Therein lies the challenge of implementing a community-based intervention from within the experimental paradigm: meeting the demands of fidelity while accommodating real world circumstances to produce the effects obtained during the development the intervention.

Like the caution against equating fidelity with implementation quality, there is a caution against placing fidelity and fit in opposition (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Metz & Louison, 2018; O'Donnell, 2008). That said, the implementation literature tends to fall into "pro-fidelity" and "pro-adaptation" positions (Cho, 1998). The "pro-fidelity" position hews to researcher-oriented values where greater fidelity leads to better outcomes and reliable knowledge claims. Deviations are viewed as threats to validity, as lamented in the subtitle, "Are implementation effects out of control?" (Dane & Schneider, 1998, p. 23). The "pro-adaptation" position views adaptation as a possible source of improvement and a potential indicator of practitioner buy-in (Castro et al., 2004; Century & Cassata, 2016; Durlak, 2010). From an epistemological perspective, the orientations toward fidelity and adaptation align with positivist and constructivist views of implementation respectively (Cho, 1998). Acknowledging that adaptations occur, "pro-fidelity" advocates maintain the positivist stance by advocating for any program changes up front, thereby maintaining the ontological boundaries of the independent variable (Dane & Schneider, 1998). The "pro-adaptation" perspective shifts allegiance from an experimental model to a constructivist model where meaning and outcomes are co-constructed iteratively between research-derived knowledge and local expertise (Cho, 1998).

One way scholars have attempted to resolve the fidelity-adaptation tension is through the idea of "balance" (e.g., "Finding the Balance" guidelines from Backer (2001) as cited by Castro

et al., 2004; Marsh & Willis' "middle position" (1995) as cited by Cho, 1998). Solutions framed in terms of balance, however, belie unresolved epistemological conflicts. The idea of balance implicitly promotes the idea that there is a moderate middle that can split the difference between linear and non-linear models of causality. While intuitively appealing, the balanced approach papers over substantive theoretical differences about the nature of a phenomenon and its mechanisms of change.

FIDELITY IN EDUCATION

There are active epistemological conflicts in educational literature, where views on fidelity follow the age-old complaint that the food is bad and the portions too small. The critical stance is that fidelity is an essentially misguided value (Biesta, 2007; LeMaheiu, 2011), while the conventional stance is that education needs more and better FOI data (O'Donnell, 2008).

Critical View

Critics of fidelity reject it as a guide for educators on several fronts. They see it as epistemologically unsound (LeMaheiu, 2011), practically dysfunctional (Bryk, 2016), and politically problematic (Bailey et al., 2019; Biesta, 2007; Cho, 1998). Regarding assumptions of generalizability, the epistemological claim that an intervention "works" in one context does not mean that it will work in another. A more accurate claim would be that this intervention worked in this environment, for this group individuals, as described by measures of statistical significance (LeMaheiu, 2011). Practically speaking, an undifferentiated pursuit of fidelity neglects different intervention terrains: interventions vary in simplicity and complexity, as do contexts, and the more both increase in complexity, the less realistic FOI becomes (Bryk, 2016). Politically, the emphasis on evidence-based practices and fidelity undermines democratic control of public education (Biesta, 2007). Educators are fluent in community norms, domain

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knowledge, and pedagogy, yet their input tends to be marginalized in conventional, fidelity-oriented implementation models (Biesta, 2007). The focus on fidelity may also create a false dichotomy between rigor and equity (Farley-Ripple, May, Karpyn, Tilley, & McDonough, 2018).[1]

Conventional View

Those advocating for more and better data regarding FOI find a home in the accountability-focused world of education, where fidelity attained a monolithic stature (NCLB, 2003). The concept appears frequently in federal and state documents that guide professional practice. FOI is referenced 358 times in NCLB (2003). Implementation terms such as *fidelity, outcomes* and *delivery* appear on every page of "Georgia's Tiered System of Supports for Students," a checklist designed for educators monitoring student progress, and the state's Student Support Team Manual describes instruction this way: "Interventions must be implemented with fidelity in the way they were designed and researched, following the specific steps of the intervention" (GA DOE, 2011). The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) passed by Congress in 2015 is curiously silent on fidelity, but the legislation retains the emphasis on evidence-based practices (ESSA, 2015; Darling-Hammond et al., 2016). It is an open question whether future teachers are exposed to nuanced or critical interpretations of the construct; a review of curriculum texts found that fidelity and fit tended to be presented as dichotomous (Blanco-Vega, Castro-Olivo, & Merrell, 2008; Castro, Barrera, & Martinez, 2004; Cho, 1998).

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[1] The research-practice dichotomy itself turns on a caricature of both professions. The devaluing of situated practices like teaching is mirrored by the purely technical conception of research. To portray research as a mechanical enterprise neglects its ability to "make problems visible" (Biesta, 2007). Examples from educational research include feminist and critical race theories which examine normative issues around what is important to teach and who benefits.

Despite the push toward evidence-based practices, there is no education journal specifically devoted to implementation (Berkel et al., 2011). A search of *Educational Psychologist, Journal of Educational Psychology*, *American Educational Research Journal,* and *Review of Educational Research* from 2000 to 2018 found four articles that mentioned "implementation integrity" or "fidelity" in the title. The same search of *The Journal of Special Education* and *Exceptional Children* found two and three articles respectively. A search of *Prevention Science* and *Implementation Science* with the same descriptors yielded 37 articles. Of those 37 articles, one was related to academics, and the rest related to health care, clinical psychology, or drug prevention programs. A title search is not exhaustive, but it highlights the academic journals where fidelity and implementation issues appear. Less than half of empirical articles published in top education journals from 2005 to 2009 included information of any kind about fidelity, and less than 10% of those offered supporting data (Swanson et al., 2011). While the latter finding is now dated, a search for a comparable review was not successful.

Summary

This state of affairs, where fidelity is invoked as a value, yet its definition is unclear, and the reporting is thin, sustains the research-practice gap in education. Educational interventions supporting discrete academic skills which depend on paired associative learning may fit more comfortably under an implementation science paradigm (reading fluency, math fact fluency), but it is hard to make the case that learning is best described by linearity (Jacobson et al., 2016). Also, wittingly or not, relying on fidelity as a guiding concept for intervention emphasizes a scientist-teacher hierarchy (Biesta, 2007; Farley-Ripple et al., 2018; LeMahieu, 2011). When teaching is framed as "delivery" or "implementation," teaching is subsumed by, not integrated with, implementation science, undermining the spirit of collaboration. Finally, a focus on FOI

may incur an opportunity cost by distracting researchers and educators from alternative models for partnerships that maximize the expertise of both (Bryk, 2016; Lewis, 2015; Varjas et al., 2006).

THE SHORTCOMINGS OF FIDELITY FOR SEL INTERVENTION RESEARCH

Social-emotional learning itself, as a phenomenon, undermines the conditions on which fidelity depends. Three points of tension illustrate the mismatch between an FOI orientation and what is known about social-emotional development and effective SEL interventions.

"Known Dimensions" vs. Diffuse Boundaries

Social-emotional learning is more cultivated than delivered. Evidence suggests that SEL programs are not as effective when approached as a block and segregated from the rest of the school day (Elbertson, Brackett, & Weissberg, 2010). Effective interventions depend on a surround of conditions: theoretical grounding, institutional commitment, continuity, ongoing support, and iterative evaluation (Elbertson et al., 2010). The boundaries of where the intervention begins and ends, therefore, becomes increasingly diffuse as the intervention is adopted. Also, an adult may deliver an SEL intervention as developers intended, but if s/he otherwise interacts with students in a manner inconsistent with the spirit and style of the intervention, FOI becomes meaningless (Denhman & Brown, 2010; Jones, Bouffard, & Weissbourd, 2013). A hallmark of an effective SEL program is when it becomes an "intravention," where the content appears not just in a stand-alone curriculum, but when it permeates school culture (Elbertson et al., 2010).

Linearity vs. Non-linearity

SEL interventions ascribe to different theories of action. Programs based on a social development model like Raising Healthy Children assumes the child's sense of belonging is the fulcrum for the intervention, while Second Step follows a social cognitive approach that appeals to self-efficacy (Durlak, 2015). Regardless of underlying theory, linearity is a weak claim given that social and emotional development occur within a variety of affect-laden microclimates that operate through reciprocal interactions (family, school, community, culture, media, personal biology). Children give and receive social and emotional feedback across and within the all layers of the social system (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000). When SEL is placed on a unidirectional, input-output model, researchers neglect the back-and-forth that characterizes social and emotional interaction in favor of a specious linear causality.

Portability vs. Site-Specificity

Human sociality is girded by experience-expectant interactions that cut across cultures. For example, infants follow another's gaze between 2- and 6-months-old, and children can imagine the mental state of another person as evidenced by performance on a false belief task by about five-years-old (Callaghan et al., 2005; Rochat, 2009). But communities vary in expectations for child-adult interactions, eye contact, displays of emotion, and approaches to conflict (Bierman et al., 2010; Jones & Kahn, 2017). These experience-dependent differences raise the question: does a site-sensitive, culturally-attuned SEL intervention produce better outcomes than a universal program? When should researchers and educators adapt an intervention, and which elements should be adapted? Intuitively, it makes sense that cultural adaptations would lead to better outcomes. But the answers to these questions are unclear, perhaps an unsurprising artifact of the lack of data surrounding FOI (Durlak, 2015). Data do

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show, however, that successful SEL programs depend on the buy-in of the adults in the school, and that program uptake is more durable when educators feel the intervention reflects their values (Jones & Kahn, 2017). Therefore, claims for the importance of culturally sensitive dissemination may not turn on established correlations between outcomes and the specific content of the adaptations themselves, but on the degree to which educators, individually and as a group, have adopted the implementation as their own. The tension between transferability and site-specificity, therefore, may turn less on actual shifts in content and more on relationship quality.

Summary

Effective SEL depends on diffuse boundaries, is characterized by non-linear interactions, and is sensitive to context (Oberle et al., 2016). Preconditions for fidelity, on the other hand, include bounded interventions with "known dimensions," content that aligns with a linear model of change, and an assumption of transferability from one site to another (Century & Cassata, 2016; Cho, 1998). Using Guba and Lincoln's (1994) framework for comparing research paradigms, one can say that the positivist/post-positivist assumptions on which fidelity rests are contradicted by the constructivist ontology of SEL, making fidelity ill-suited as an implementation guide.

RECIPROCITY AS AN INTERVENTION VALUE

Fidelity's prominence in implementation scholarship speaks to the need for an overarching value for thinking about how schools adopt evidence-based programs. *Reciprocity* offers an alternative. In professional licensure-speak, reciprocity means "a mutual exchange of privileges, dependence, or relationships" (Mosby Medical Dictionary, 2009). It describes an equitable exchange of expertise, in contrast to the one-way road from research to practice

described by FOI. Reciprocity fits as a conceptual guide for implementing SEL programs by virtue of its alignment with a complex systems frameworks for learning (Jacobson et al., 2016), and the growing field of improvement science (Lewis, 2015).

Reciprocity and Complex Systems Frameworks of Learning

The term *complex systems* (CS) is used as an ontological distinction, meaning it describes the "form and nature of a given phenomenon" (Hilpert & Marchand, 2018). *Complexity* describes interactions that do not have prescribed steps (Gomez, 2015). A variety of domains are described as complex systems, such as ecology, linguistics, animal behavior, and the stock market (Freeman & Cameron, 2008). The hallmark of a CS framework, as the name suggests, is to take a systems view of phenomena. The systems are open, not closed. The agents within the system can be individuals or groups. The system self-organizes through a process of co-adaptation among its elements, and individual and collective behavior emerge in ways that are not pre-ordained (Jacobson et al., 2016).

The result of a CS inquiry is the detection of contingent patterns and tendencies in the system, not laws or necessarily predictions, as small changes in a system may produce outsized effects (Freeman & Cameron, 2008). A complex system analysis, therefore, does not fit within in a traditional *hypothesis-test-conclusion* research model, or with statistically controlling for variables of interest that may create conditions that do not exist, like controlling for context (Byrne, 2002; Newcombe, 2003). Nor is taking a CS view post-hoc a way of admitting theoretical complexity into an analysis after conclusions have been drawn based on a linear, component-driven inquiry.

Schools contain multiple systems (Penuel et al., 2010). The researcher-educator relationship is the relevant system here. As a value for a teacher-researcher relationship,

reciprocity attends to one feature of complex systems, *sensitivity to initial conditions* (Jacobson et al., 2016). Examples of the influence of early conditions include findings that a positive first-day experience has a positive and enduring impact on student motivation, and that the intellectual quality of early posts in online classrooms raises or lowers discussion quality for the duration of the discussion (Jacobson et al., 2016; Wilson & Wilson, 2007). Placing an equitable, supportive researcher-educator relationship at the start of an intervention, where targets are jointly created, may motivate higher quality interactions during implementation. *Emergence,* another quality of a complex system, is anticipated in a reciprocal researcher-teacher model, meaning adaptations arise out of the continuous interactions among all agents in the system, whether the agent is an individual or a group. Emerging phenomena are not preordained, but are the result of a *soft assembly* of the agent's capacities and contextual demands (Freeman & Cameron, 2008; Jacobson et al., 2016).

Proposing reciprocity for implementation is motivated by an interest in working with, rather than against, the diffuse, non-linear, place-based complexity that characterizes effective SEL programs. Critics of the professional hierarchies embedded in a fidelity orientation might also find common cause with reciprocity as a value, as trust is fundamental to professional reciprocity, and fuel for the kinds of professional relationships that generate solutions (Bryk & Schneider, 2003).

Reciprocity and Improvement Science

Reciprocity aligns with an *improvement science* paradigm (Bryk, Gomez, Granow, & LeMaheiu, 2015). Improvement science differs from implementation science in its focus on user-identified problems, its interest in identifying sources of variation rather than average outcomes, and its iterative approach to producing change (Lewis, 2015). It rejects the idea that there are

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generalizable blueprints for school improvement because externally developed plans are blind to extant attitudes and systems which are sources of innovation (Bryk et al., 2015).[2]

A description of traditional implementation exposes the intellectual division of labor between researchers and educators. "Researchers, primarily those with PhDs in a cognate or applied discipline, did the intellectual heavy lifting at the front end of the idea pipeline, while practitioners, those with on-the-ground experience, were expected to adapt and implement idealized solutions. Practitioners simultaneously engaged in local problem solving; however their efforts were rarely seen as significant in the infrastructure of educational R&D" (Bryk et al., 2010). Reciprocity offers a contrast. It is the defining characteristic of *adaptive integration,* the principle that describes how researchers and educators work together in a cycle of Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) in an improvement science paradigm (Lewis, 2015). The PDSA cycle typically consists of "rapid tests of change to guide the development, revision and continued fine-tuning of new tools, processes, work roles and relationships" (Bryk et al., 2010). Using a PDSA framework depends on structures and relationships, like protocols and trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). One educator described the researcher-educator relationship within the improvement science paradigm: "In the past, you would wait for this research to shower down on you and then you would do it. Now, the relationship is give and take; teachers share their results with the researchers, who then help the teachers analyze the data, and together, they discuss what to do next" (Baron, 2017).

There are other models for participatory research that do not technically fall under the improvement science umbrella but share the principle of reciprocity. Two models—the

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[2] Improvement science also differs from implementation science in its approach to intellectual property. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching stewards the reports developed through its improvement networks, bypassing academic journal paywalls (Bryk, Gomez, & Granow, 2010).

Participatory, Culture-Specific Intervention Model (PCSIM) and Community-Based

Participatory Research (CBPR)—focus on ecological validity and treatment acceptability over

FOI (Varjas et al., 2006; Vaughn, Jaquez, & Suarez-Cano, 2019). PCSIM offers an 11-step

model for collaboration designed to engage local stakeholders in setting goals, collecting data,

and evaluation. Another perspective, "enactment," focuses on teacher craft, and the reciprocal,

creative interactions that emerge in the classroom (Cho, 1994). In these models, confounds create

school culture, and one size cannot fit all (Cross & Barnes, 2014).

The interactions described above contrast with pre-intervention assessments motivated by

researchers' interest in developing a validated taxonomy. For example, assessments of teacher

"readiness" to deliver SEL curricula have been created based on statistical averages of teachers'

reported comfort with teaching SEL, commitment to teaching it, and perceptions of support

(Brackett et al., 2012; Collie, Shapka, Perry, and Martin, 2015; Graczyk et al., 2006). Validated

survey measures that ask teachers about SEL in general lack practical utility and miss learning

about how individual teachers conceive of their roles. From a complex systems perspective and

an improvement science paradigm, averages hide diversity and intervention opportunities.

Intervention research that begins with place-based inquiry works to uncover tacit beliefs about

intervention content and variability.

Example: A Middle School Sexual Harassment Intervention

A basic finding from cognitive psychology is that prior knowledge influences new

learning across domains and across the lifespan (Glaser, 1983). Reciprocity uncovers local

expertise and prior knowledge. An exploratory study of African American 7th grade boys

provides an example of how prior knowledge is salient to an SEL intervention. Male African

American teachers led discussion groups to learn about the boys' understanding of sexual

harassment (Lindsley, Harris, Kruger, & Meyers, 2019). The male teachers presented sexual

harassment as a crime for which the boys could be arrested. As I present in Chapter 2, the legal

depiction of sexual harassment was not one that the university-based research partners had

included in the discussion prompts for the students. From an FOI perspective, the teachers' move

was unwelcome. From a reciprocity perspective, the move provided insight into how the men

viewed their roles: to remind their group of legal risks facing African American boys. Operating

from a reciprocity principle a priori, the men's sensitivity to possibility of arrest *and* the

researchers' interest in learning about the students' personal experiences in hallways and

bathrooms may have informed each other to create a discussion that integrated the value of

safety and the value of interpersonal attunement.

Summary

Alternatives to fidelity center on re-imagined relationships between researchers and

educators. Adaptive integration, enactment, PCSIM, and CBPR depend on social arrangements

that are bi-directional, center on shared expertise, and are sensitive to the networks that comprise

the system. Reciprocity is the hallmark of these alternatives. Like fidelity, it provides an

overarching principle of implementation integrity. Unlike fidelity, which starts with an externally

developed intervention, reciprocity starts with educators and researchers collaborating around

structured, measurable targets to develop an intervention in real time. These collaborations led

leading SEL scholar Roger Weissberg to a re-imagined professional identity:

> I started my career using a *researcher-practitioner* model in which my university
> colleagues and I took the lead in conceptualizing, designing, implementing,
> evaluating, and disseminating programs to promote the social, emotional, and
> academic competence of young people. . . . Increasingly, I think a *practitioner-
> researcher* model can have greater impact, with more emphasis on how to
> implement ideas in the real world of classrooms, schools, districts, and state
> systems. How does a schoolwide, systemic SEL model actually work? How
> should you reorganize the central office to foster the social, emotional, and

academic learning of all students? . . . My greatest creativity and insights came from being out in the schools and partnering with practitioners. Collaborative community action research produces the most impact when you work with diverse groups of people who are willing to challenge you and co-create best practices and policies. (Weissberg, 2019, p. 69)

MARKERS (AND RISKS) OF RECIPROCITY

What would reciprocity look like as an intervention value for SEL? Lewis (2015, p. 56) offers an improvement science template that can be applied to different content domains. In Figure 1, elements of implementation are matched to markers of reciprocity between educators and researchers. The markers here describe rather than prescribe possible dimensions of a reciprocal researcher-educator partnership.

Table 1

Table 1. Markers of Reciprocity for SEL Intervention

Elements of Implementation	Markers of Reciprocity
Nature of Scale-Up	Identified problems are specific to the school Modifications to the program and the site are expected Local knowledge & priorities appear in the program Shared vocabulary to describe solutions Activities might include: • Protocols including researchers, teachers, administrators, staff • Identifying institutional routines that create opportunities/challenges for SEL (orientation, sports, trips, electives, incentives) • Creating a campus map with SEL hot spots (both positive and negative)
Assumptions	Variability in beliefs about SEL Equitable input is sought from educators and researchers Examples: • Culture-specific goals; school norms; prior knowledge • Theoretical coherence; attachment theory; risks of external rewards
Measurement	Practical targets identified through collaborative protocols (e.g., not theory testing or program validation) Quantitative/qualitative data correspond to local problems rather than externally validated measures/averaging Consider "balancing" measures to account for consequences of the intervention (e.g., removal of a token system) (Lewis, 2015)

Collaborative cycles require structures that capture expertise and differentiate roles. An empirical report from a CBPR study provides an example of risks to implementation integrity in a close, iterative collaboration. Vaughn, Jaquez, & Suarez-Cano (2019) report that the health educators at their sites preferred to be called "co-researchers," a request that speaks to the status afforded scientists. The co-researcher term led to role confusion, however. Roles were sometimes conflated (e.g., the roles of interventionist and data collector), undermining triangulation. The risk of bias in data collection is also addressed in Varjas et al.'s (2006) PC-SIM anti-bullying research (p. 54). There the researchers attempted to minimize bias through traditional qualitative research moves like triangulation and member checks.

New methodological traditions and reporting norms are needed to create sound structures around reciprocity as an intervention guide. Protocols may play an important role. Protocols that elicit diverse insights and support consensus may establish norms for trust and reciprocity (Bryk et al., 2010). As the intervention ramps up, protocols that follow identified targets and reinforce the selected theory of action for SEL are needed. Intensive collaboration would also change the structure of empirical reports. Drawing from Lewis (2015) and Bryk et al. (2010), reports might include: Motivation for Improvement, Scale-Up, Protocols, Targets and Measurement, examples of Learning Cycles (or PDSA), and Current Status. Reciprocity also leads to questions about where empirical reports are published. If reciprocity guides SEL implementation but reporting is limited to traditional academic channels, advancements remain inaccessible to educators.

CONCLUSION

Complex interventions (like SEL) that occur in complex settings (like schools) create practical and theoretical headwinds that reveal the shortcomings of fidelity as a guide. The limits

of fidelity are implied in Harn et al.'s (2013) oft-cited review: "Understanding fidelity within the confines of research is a challenge not fully met; understanding fidelity related to implementing EBPs in schools is almost certainly more bewildering" (p. 184). Bewilderment need not point to the wholesale abandonment of the values of implementation science in educational research, including fidelity. But it begs the question of *where* fidelity serves or falls short as a conceptual guide. We need an implementation value that tacks to content and context. Ninety percent of teachers in the US believe that SEL is important to teach (Weissberg, 2019). This paper does not propose reciprocity instead of fidelity because fidelity is hard, but because it is not the right guide for SEL—ontologically, epistemologically, or methodologically. Educational psychologists, who work at the nexus of research and practice, are invited to imagine how SEL might accelerate under a different paradigm.

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2. RESISTANCE AND ACCOMMODATION: A CASE STUDY OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING FOR ADOLESCENT BLACK BOYS LED BY BLACK MEN

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

Deciding how to resist and accommodate dominant cultural norms is a fundamental part of adolescent social development (Faircloth, 2012). How will I speak, how will I dress, and how will I move my body, in this context, with these people? These questions are relevant to all adolescents as they engage in the cognitive and affective business of forming a stable identity (Erikson, 1968; McLean & Syed, 2015), but they carry particular urgency for adolescent Black boys in the United States whose mere presence can evoke fear and suspicion in pedestrian circumstances.

Research demonstrates a robust, subconscious association between Blackness and criminality. For example, lab-based sequential priming experiments find that White adults more quickly and accurately sort weapons from everyday objects when primed with pictures of Black males. The effect is not mitigated by youth: it holds when the priming images are of faces of Black boys as young as five-years-old (Todd, Thiem, & Neel, 2016). In addition to the risk of physical violence, the harmful psychological effects of racism on children of color are well documented (e.g., Bécares, Nazroo, & Kelly, 2015; Fisher, Wallace & Fenton, 2000; Okeke, Howard, Kurtz-Costes, & Rowley, 2009).

This research finds theoretical coherence in models of human development that place racism "at the core rather than at the periphery of a theoretical formation of children's development" (García Coll et al., 1996, p. 1896). Placing racism in the center of development highlights the adaptive moves required of children color. Skills like code switching, assessments of bias and risk, and frequent decisions about racialized self-presentation are prerequisites for

social competence (Jagers, 2016; Rogers & Way, 2018). During adolescence, these skills coalesce around finding "distinctly pragmatic and expedient ways" for navigating stereotypes (Boykin & Toms, 1985, as cited by García Coll et al., 1996, p. 1896). For teenage Black boys, pragmatism and expedience may be achieved through a strategic process of resisting and accommodating the gendered, racialized scripts that put them at risk (Rogers & Way, 2018).

This case study (Stake, 1995) is animated by the theory proposed by Rogers & Way (2018) that the process of resistance and accommodation to stereotypes is an externally dictated developmental imperative for Black children. It addresses the question: How, where, and from whom do adolescent Black boys learn to resist and accommodate?

> Anecdotally, I have some sense that where you find young people able to resist societal narratives about themselves and/or groups they belong to, it is most often attributable to conversations that they are having with key adult others, perhaps a parent, uncle, or community member. We need to know more about what these conversations look like, how they unfold, and how they take shape in relation to developmental demands. In short, it is key that we begin to understand the importance and role of the multiple local developmental settings that young people participate in, and their relationships with others in those settings (Nasir, 2018, p. 333).

In an effort to "know more about what these conversations look like" and "how they unfold," this case study extends the resistance and accommodation literature by focusing on process and on the role of adult mentors. Using archived data, the case explores how ideas about resistance and accommodation were manifest in an unscripted, social-emotional learning (SEL) program led by Black men for Black 7th grade boys. The express purpose of the program was to address concerns about inappropriate sexual behavior between boys and girls at the school. The events leading up to the case, therefore, primed gender-based stereotypes as they apply to adolescent Black boys. The salience of these stereotypes to the case created a serendipitous

opportunity to learn about how the men guided these boys in the process of resistance and accommodation.

RESISTANCE AND ACCOMMODATION

Scholars have used resistance as a conceptual guide to frame both social and individual change. Acts of resistance have been studied in fields as diverse as labor relations (Hogg & Terry, 2014), higher education (Liu & Carney, 2017), the role of data in decision making (Danaher, 2016), and women's hairstyles (Weitz, 2001). It may be an individual act, as in subtle non-compliance through being late, taking up space, or satire (Allen, 2013; Mumby, 2005), or a communal act, as in armed revolution, or non-violent protest (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004). It can be an overt, visible behavior contesting an ideology, or it can be an invisible, "hidden transcript" guiding one's choices (Anyon, 2009). It may be born of historical knoweldge, and it may arise out the lived experience of an inchoate sense of being pre-judged and a yearning for personal dignity (Tuck & Wang, 2014; and Thurman, 1949).

Within the resistance literatures, there are two related but separable strands: one that focuses on resistance as an ontological process, and one that focuses on resistance as a political tactic (Fine, Tuck & Wang, 2014; Rogers & Way, 2018; and Mumby, 2005). This case study relates to the first strand and is concerned with resistance and accommodation as an individual psychological, developmental process. The focus on the individual, though, is a matter of emphasis, as making a clean cut between the strands would betray the theory animating the study, that development takes place in a political context (Rogers & Way, 2018; Vygotsky, 1978).

Resistance depends on two assumptions: the existence of cultural norms and individual agency to respond to them. Scholarly definitions of resistance and accommodation have tended

to emphasize either the cultural side or the agency side. Resistance may "unfold' in the 'palm of accommodation'" (Rogers & Way, 2018, p. 317, citing Anyon)—a description that highlights culture and belonging. Or, accommodation may be framed as a type resistance, highlighting personal agency: "Even non-resistance is a form of resistance, for it may be regarded as an appositive dimension of resistance" (Thurman, 1949, p.15). Resistance is not just a political act reserved for icons; it is tactic that affords everyday agency to any individual or group on the lower end of a social hierarchy (Mumby, 2005). Using an archetypical scenario, a Black man preemptively keeping his hands on the wheel when stopped by police may be accommodating racist assumptions about the criminality of the "Black male" (Carey, 2020), while at the same resisting the tragic police encounter narrative. When and how to resist or accommodate is always "grounded in the historical moment" (Allen, 2013, p. 205).

In order to sharpen the target issue for this particular case, I searched for empirical articles that examined resistance, non-resistance, and accommodation among non-White adolescents in schools. Not all of the studies offered definitions of resistance or accommodation, but those that did emphasized its changeable, dialectical, situated character. Methodologically, studies related to resistance in development have relied primarily on interviews, augmented by observations and surveys (Allen, 2013; Gilligan, Rogers, & Tolman, 2014; Masta, 2014; Robinson-Wood, 2014; Tuck & Wang, 2014; Way, Cressen, Bodian, Preston, Nelson, & Hughes, 2014; Ward, 1996). Adults were included tangentially in Masta's (2014) and Allen's (2013) studies, but otherwise have been absent from the resistance literature, a gap this case study addresses.

Typologies

      Resistance studies bring a context-sensitive concept and (most often) qualitative methods to create a variegated picture of how adolescents navigate race- and gender-based narratives. Studies using interview methods have generated typologies that draw out how young people resist, as reported by the students themselves. For example, in their longitudinal interview study with Black boys attending an all-male charter school, Rogers and Way (2016) identified three identity types: *resisters, accommodators* or *exceptions.* "Resisters" pushed back against both racial and gender stereotypes. They seemed to have an internal rudder guiding their behavior and to have a store of social capital among their peers. "Accommodators" adopted gender and racial stereotypes without any meaningful push back. They expected others to accommodate as well. The "exceptions" presented a mixed profile, and were the most prevalent identity type in the sample. They said they did not conform to racial stereotypes themselves—they said they were an exception—but they applied the stereotypes to *other* Black boys, who were the rule. These boys also endorsed gender stereotypes and expected other boys to endorse them as well.

      Also based on interview data, scholars have differentiated types of resistance. Robinson-Wood (2014), in a caution against valorizing the idea of resistance, makes a distinction between *optimal* and *sub-optimal resistance*. This is akin to the distinction between *resistance for survival* and *resistance for liberation* that Robinson and Ward (1991) make based on their studies of Black girls and young women. Resistance for survival strategies are short-term, "transient," "crisis-oriented" fixes (p. 107) that one may use to adapt to stressful circumstances where they are marginalized. Resistance for liberation strategies, by contrast, serve long term goals by taking an oppositional stance to overt or covert bias. The difference between survival and liberation relates to the individual's intent, which may or may not be apparent, making it difficult to sort. The difference may be between what Allen (2013) calls mere "contestation" through avoidance

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or petty defiance (p. 205) versus an explicit disruption of the dominant narrative. Additionally, Way et al. (2014) describe boys demonstrating *high, low*, and *mixed* levels of resistance. As Allen (2013), states, "not all acts of resistance are counter-hegemonic" (p. 205), and sub-optimal resistance may include self-defeating behavior like dropping out to escape school environments that are blind or hostile to students' cultural ties.

Resistance and wellbeing

Correlational studies that include survey measures and other quantitative data support the value of resistance for personal wellbeing. Compared to those who adopt masculine norms without question, boys who resist hypermasculinity are more likely to have trusting friendships, more likely to experience academic success, and more likely to report overall psychological health than (McLean & Syed, 2015; Rogers & Way, 2018). But the correlation between resistance and psychological wellbeing is not entirely straightforward for adolescent boys. For example, a subset of "resisters" to masculine norms from Way et al.'s longitudinal study were not successful in establishing friendships with other boys; a few, according to the authors, sounded "depressed and isolated" (p. 247). The diverse findings are a reminder that the psychological work of resistance takes place in a context of personal factors and proximal relationships, making strong claims about individual outcomes difficult. For the individual, it may be that the cost or benefit of deviating from gendered norms relates to social capital generally.

Proximal contexts matter

Proximal contexts influence where students direct their energy to resist or accommodate. A comparative case study of two high schools in the southeastern US is illustrative (Mirón, L. F., & Lauria, M. (1998). Student Voice as Agency: Resistance and Accommodation in Inner-City

Schools. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, *29*(2), 189-213& Lauria, 1998). In one school, Black boys were likely to endorse a collective resistance to racism, voicing solidarity against the outside world, and drawing strength from the proximal environment. Resistance was "ideologically organized" (p. 190) and focused outward. School work was described as challenging and that was a point of pride. Black boys attending a different school where student voice was "marginalized" (p. 191) focused their resistance on the school itself by defying teachers' assignments of "busy work," by "clowning," and by doing just enough work to get by. The difference, according to the authors, "turned on student voice" (p. 191), or the degree to which the students were in relationship with the adults at the school. This element, they conclude, was more powerful than grade point average or SES. "The schools themselves had the most explanatory power" (Mirón, L. F., & Lauria, M. (1998). Student Voice as Agency: Resistance and Accommodation in Inner-City Schools. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, *29*(2), pp. 189-213 & Lauria, 1998, p. 194).

Rogers & Way (2018) found a similar pattern when comparing Black boys who attended an all-male, all Black high school with Black boys attending a public high school with a mixed population. In that study, the boys attending the school with mixed enrollment were more likely to lean into racist stereotypes by looking dangerous and acting disaffected when they felt marginalized, while boys attending the single gender, all Black school were more likely to embrace academics and point their resistance outward, to racism beyond the school walls. However, the students at the all-male school were also strong adopters of heterosexist stereotypes, suggesting that they felt the need to defuse questions about their sexuality. Black boys may resist racist narratives and embrace masculine ones in an effort to gain social power (Rogers & Way, 2018).

The "gender intensification hypothesis" posited by Hill & Lynch (1983) predicts that children become more stereotypical in their gendered behavior as they enter adolescence. One question for future research is to what degree resistance and accommodation of gender norms aligns with peer social capital in different school contexts. In their longitudinal study, Way et al. (2014) found that Black boys in their sample were more likely than White and Latino boys to embrace masculine norms like unemotionality as they entered adolescence. The racial differences Way et al. (2014) found may be an artifact of the social composition of the school where the studies were conducted, where Puerto Rican boys were at the top of the social hierarchy and could perhaps afford to be flexible in their performance of gender. While there may be suggestive ethnic-racial patterns related to adopting gender stereotypes, a more reliable take-away may be that resistance has a relationship to one's standing with peers.

Masta's (2018) case study of Native American adolescents in a mainstream school provides examples of accommodation as a strategy within a larger goal of resistance. She describes students' willingness to share information about powwows as an attempt to appear friendly and thereby contest the racial stereotype of aloofness, while at the same time the students may convey misinformation about the pow wows to maintain a sense of cultural integrity. Likewise, parenting literature is rife with examples of accommodation as a long-term strategy. As one Black father reports advising his son (Allen, 2013):

> You shrink your fro and you make yourself, you sanitize yourself
> so you're not a threat. And you know that's not selling out. That's
> wisdom. Until that person gets to know you as a person they're
> gauging you based on what they see and what they see is based
> sometimes on misinformation.

These adaptations do not fit into binary buckets; it is more accurate to think of them as pivoting on a fulcrum that that tilts toward perceived personal benefit. As Mumby (2005) states, the fluid

interactions between norms and personal agency create "complex and often contradictory dynamics of control and resistance" (p. 21). In sum, there is no "ideal" of resistance and accommodation; it is a situated act of personal agency (Tuck & Wang, 2014). Resistance may take the form of a principled stand or a self-sabotaging retreat (Ward, 2018). Accommodation may be wholehearted, or it may be a temporary, strategic necessity (Thurman, 1949). There is no idealized version of resistance, either as a developmental good or a political strategy, and attempts to reify it fall apart (Mumby, 2005; Tuck & Wang, 2014). "Resistance doesn't care what our models want from it. Resistance does what it does" (Tuck & Wang, 2014, p. 8).

Definitions for the case study

  Resistance. I marked tilts toward *resistance* when the men's talk seemed guided by an interest in survival or liberation (Ward, 2018). *Resistance for survival* might be in play when external threats to personal safety or freedom were salient. Relationships that evoked resistance for survival might include threat-heavy scenarios (e.g., facing the police, a judge). These threats were met with "transient, crisis-oriented, short-term solutions" designed to defuse threat (Ward, 2018). *Resistance for liberation* might be in play when self-cultivation was salient, in order to oppose oppression and "affirm the self and one's cultural group" (Ward, 2018, p. 110). The relationships that evoked resistance for liberation were likely relationships of relative safety (e.g., with parents, friends). Regarding masculine norms, resistance for liberation might involve expressing feelings of vulnerability, openly challenging stereotypes, valuing interdependence, or disliking aggression (Way et al., 2014). Regarding racial norms for Black males, resistance for liberation might look like pushing against stereotypes of hypersexuality by emphasizing fidelity, or disinterest in academics by embracing the importance of literacy (Ladson-Billings, 2011).

Accommodation. I marked tilts toward *accommodation* when the men seemed to make a "decision to adopt some [mainstream] practices or values for the benefit it provides" (Masta, 2014, p. 32), or to "endorse" a script or a norm (Rogers & Way, 2018). For example, accommodation of masculine norms might include emotional stoicism, and/or valuing the role of protector (Santos, Galligan, Pahlke, & Fabes, 2013). Accommodation of gendered racial stereotypes might involve embracing a view of Black men as lazy or criminals, or conversely, but problematically, as saviors (Carey, 2016).

Biases and norms. Biases and norms were activated in the context of different relationships the group discussed. I define biases as social constructed narratives that feed racism and sexism (Nasir & Shah, 2011; Rogers & Way, 2018). I define norms as cultural ideologies that carry social expectations. Unlike biases, norms may carry a mix potentially healthy and unhealthy consequences (i.e., to be masculine is to provide for family, but also to be unemotional) (Rogers & Way, 2018).

Summary

The case study extends the resistance and accommodation literature in two ways. First, outcomes rest on processes, and a case study approach compliments the literature on outcomes by offering contextual, process-oriented data. Second, internal psychological processes—like resistance and accommodation—originate in relationships (Vygotsky, 1978), and the case offers a view into how Black men translated norm-laden events for Black adolescent boys. The racial socialization literature is closely related to this effort in asking Black parents what they teach their sons and daughters about navigating bias. However, like resistance studies, racial socialization research has largely relied on interviews and surveys (Howard, Rose, & Barbarin, 2013; Hughes, Smith, Stevenson, Rodriguez, Johnson, & Spicer, 2006; Doyle, Magan, Cryer-

Coupet, Goldston, & Estroff, 2016). The present case complements the socialization literature by providing a naturalistic example of racial and gender socialization from elders who are not parents.

To introduce the case, I situate it theoretically. I then describe the original study from which the data are drawn, and the events that led up to it. I share my methodology, my positionality as a White female researcher, and my use of Gilligan and Eddy's (2017) Listening Guide to analyze the data. The results and discussion sections are organized around the identifiable stereotypes and norms that the men challenged or endorsed. Finally, I consider how the case might inform future studies of resistance and accommodation as a developmental, socially mandated process for Black boys, and how cultural biases form an implicit dimension of social-emotional teaching and learning.

SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY AND PRACTICES

The case, primarily positioned in resistance literature, also pulls from sociocultural theory and social emotional learning studies. There is a fork in the road early on when studying how social norms affect social-emotional development. The fork points to two long-standing metaphors in social science (Reese & Overton, as cited in Bidell, 1988, p. 334). One fork points to a mechanistic view where culture is like a variable, residing outside the teaching and learning activity. In this view, students, teachers, and culture are bounded components that operate in concert, but in separable ways (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). This view aligns with a curriculum-driven approach to SEL, where broadly defined goals like "self-management" focus less on the non-shared contexts that create unique challenges for children of color. The other fork points to an organic view where culture and pedagogy are seen as unified. In this view, students, teachers, and culture operate around dynamic tensions that sustain a holistic system. The tensions may

exist between individuals, or between individuals and ideas, but culture is an inseparable overlay of the system because it sets the terms of the interaction in the first place. The tensions manifest and change over the course of development because the system is an evolving, self-changing whole (Jacobson, Kapur, & Reimann, 2016). The organic metaphor has more in common with a dialectical logic of how the world works than it does with a mechanistic logic, where stable components interact in manipulatable ways (Bidell, 1988; Guba & Lincoln, 1982). The organic view uncovers the political context of pedagogy, thereby clarifying and complexifying what it means to be, or to cultivate, a socially competent adolescent.

In research, when one chooses a methodology one is also choosing a metaphor for the phenomenon of interest. I propose that the organic metaphor best captures the underlying ontology of social-emotional education, which has implications for theory, methodology, and analysis.

Lev Vygotsky

The tension between human agency and culture animates sociocultural theory. Social order is produced and reproduced by human actors who enact scripts that support or challenge the order, but agency always takes place within an existing cultural frame (Cooren, 2012). Related to education and development, Vygotskian theory claims that culture and pedagogy are inseparable (Vygotsky, 1978; Daniels, 2016). Borrowing the grammar of Gruber and Fineran (2016), pedagogy is the technology of culture.

Lev Vygotsky's description of pedagogy offers a multi-layered approach to examining how cultural messages (like racism, sexism, and their contestations) appear in development. The theory can be used to describe development across four levels of a pedagogical system: (1) the *phylogenetic* level, where pedagogy transmits cultural know-how from person to person, and

generation to generation; (2) the *cultural* level, where understandings of social competence determine learning goals; (3) the *interpersonal* level, where the *more knowledgeable other* (MKO) guides learning in an affect-laden zone of proximal development (ZPD); and (4) the *within-the-individual* level, where development which occurs interpersonally first is then adopted internally.

These levels operate as part of a cultural system. For example, at the level of the individual, Vygotsky posits that higher mental functions (like language, memory, and conscious attention) begin "outside" the child, and the child internalizes these functions through interactions with others (Vygotsky, 1978). The goal of the process is to become a socially competent member of the culture (Cole, Steiner, Scriber, & Souberman, 1978). Individual development is driven by the tension between the child's current way of thinking and an as-yet-to-be-recognized way of thinking. The tension is brought about by social interaction (with peers and elders) and by the individual's inability to synthesize new information into an existing framework (Bidell, 1988).

The learning process is never solely located within the individual. It exists as an interaction and depends on the guidance of an MKO who steers the interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). The MKO, in turn, is influenced by how the child interprets their instruction. Vygotsky calls this mutually transforming, interactive process *obucheneyie,* a Russian word that has no direct correlate in English. It is translated as "teaching-learning." The dynamic process within *obucheneyie* results in new thinking, or *novo-obrazovaniye* ("new formations"), and the dialectic continues (Daniels, 2016). The dialectical process, ontologically and phylogenetically, is never disembodied or de-contextualized from time or place. It is always mediated by cultural artifacts and tools. Of these tools, Vygotsky viewed language as primary (Tappan, 1998). While a

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treatment of the linguistic markers of culture is outside the scope of the case at hand, examples of how our "racial grammar" (Bonilla-Silver, 2011) reinforces white hegemony are close at hand For example, when HBCUs are labeled as black but historically white institutions are not, a social center and a social margin are set.

At the cultural level, Vygotsky offered a straightforward assessment of how political power influences what is taught in schools. His professional life was shaped by concerns analogous to those shared by educators currently interested in culturally relevant SEL (Ladson-Billings, 2009; and Jagers, 2016). In tsarist Russia before the revolution, a peasant, homeless class had been long undereducated, and students with disabilities were often not educated at all. Charged with revamping the Russian educational system, Vygotsky directly addressed the relationship between schooling and political power:

> Pedagogics is never and was never politically indifferent, since, willingly or unwillingly, through its own work on the psyche, it has always adopted a particular social pattern, political line, in accordance with the dominant social class that has guided its interests. (Vygotsky, 1997; as cited by Daniels, 2016, p.5)

A Vygotskian approach to pedagogy, and therefore to SEL, anticipates the dynamic tension between dominant and non-dominant narratives. If one thinks about pedagogical systems as originating in and mirroring political interests within an organic system, then analysis involves a search for agency around the social patterns (like resistance and accommodation) that energize the system.

SEL and social-emotional learning

SEL is defined as "the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (Weissberg, Durlak,

Domitrovich, & Gullotta, 2015, p. 6). While SEL programs have shown durable positive impact

for many students, the gains have not been as reliable for students of color (Durlak, 2015; Graves

et al., 2016; Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017). Reasons for the discrepancies are

unknown, but cultural mismatches at both the curriculum and classroom levels may contribute.

Off-the-shelf curricula may undermine engagement by not deliberately taking into account how

identity creates the unique social-emotional tasks for minority students (Hoffman, 2009; Jagers,

2016). Also, despite the inclusion of "adults" in the definition of SEL, the role that teachers play

in SEL tends to be underexamined. By virtue of neglect, teachers are implicitly viewed as

conduits for external content rather than cultural agents who bring their own habits and beliefs to

the content and to the students (Schonert-Reichl, Kitil, & Hanson-Peterson, 2017). Absent a

conceptual framework for the developmental pressures facing non-White children, adults may

reinforce an assimilationist agenda that disregards their experiences (Gregory & Fergus, 2017).

Without sorting ideas of human wellbeing to identity silos, bringing an identity-oriented mindset

to the tenets of SEL may complement findings related to regulation and perspective-taking, and

open doors to connection that color- and culture-blind approaches leave unopened (Gregory &

Fergus, 2017; Faircloth, 2012; Way, Ali, Gilligan, & Noguera, 2018).

Obviously not all social learning happens in schools. "Any learning a child encounters in

school always has a previous history" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 84). Separate and well apart from

school-based SEL, all children undergo extended apprenticeships in culturally valued practices.

Instruction in self-presentation, manners, and how to speak to elders is sustained and deliberate,

like instruction in other culturally valuable skills like numeracy and literacy (Hecht & Shin,

2015). Instruction in social practices may occur spontaneously, but it is decidedly not casual.

From a sociocultural point of view, this is called *designed learning*, to contrast it with other

kinds of skill attainment where adults scaffold but lightly or assume that maturation is more or less up to the task (Kruger & Tomasello, 1996). For this paper, I use "social-emotional learning" to indicate community-based, out-of-school learning in social practices, and the acronym "SEL" to indicate school-based programs. Given the thorough-going enculturation that children receive in and out of school, it is fair to call SEL a subset of lifelong social-emotional learning.

Designed learning includes learning social norms, both benign and malignant. Pernicious lessons of social hierarchy become clearer as adolescents are increasingly able to think abstractly (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958). Identity develops in tandem with adolescents' ability to perceive how others evaluate "people like them" (Erikson, 1968). Related to this case, adolescent Black boys are subject to increasing prejudice by aging into the narrative of suspicion that targets them (Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006). Elders—MKOs, in Vygotskian terms—point children of color toward particular themes and techniques for survival and self-realization. The socialization "curriculum" for children of color includes cultural pride, egalitarianism, promotion of mistrust, and preparation for bias (Hughes et al., 2006). Preparation for bias messages are emphasized to Black boys, cueing them to the harsh punishment historically meted out to Black men and boys (Doyle, Magan, Goldston, Cryer-Coupet, & Estroff, 2016; Reynolds, 2010). Without essentializing socialization practices, there is wide agreement that, for parents of Black boys in particular, "the talk" about how to interact safely with police is mandatory *(*Dow, 2016). Code switching, the least of it, is taught by example and direct instruction. As one father reported saying to his son, "You can have your fun, you can talk slang or Ebonics, but there's a time and place for it" (Doyle, Magan, Goldston, Cryer-Coupet, & Estroff, 2016, p. 313).

Long-standing narratives about being a Black man in America create a generational imperative to teach ways of maneuvering around stereotypical narratives, and learning is not left

to chance (Doyle et al., 2016; Dow, 2016; Hughes et al., 2006). African American boys receive confusing messages on how to operate in a world that views them through a "love-hate" lens (Howard, Rose, & Barbarin, 2013; Love, 2014), where they might be seen as cultural trendsetters, while, at the same time, mundane interactions can escalate into matters of life or death (Shollenberger, 2015; Yancy, 2013). Social-emotional learning about race and gender may be sharpened in homogeneous settings where shared identities can bring cultural messages into clearer focus. For example, for Black men, the barbershop is "a place that is theirs" (Jones, 2012) where masculine ideals are honed. It is a site for intergenerational teaching and learning: younger clients are encouraged and scolded, fathers share joys and trials, and patrons reprimand each other for bad choices in romance and fashion. While men may share an ethos of care and friendship in the barbershop, it can also be a site of harsh instruction in masculinity, as relayed by one father whose four-year-old child was deemed "a pussy" by the barber for crying (Kimmel, 2018). Perhaps not surprisingly, adolescent Black boys come to school-based SEL, therefore, with a richly informed set of narratives about hierarchies and expected behaviors that predate concepts like "self-management" or "responsible decision-making."

With a sociocultural approach in mind, scholars have theorized about how SEL might expand its original mission to include an acknowledgement and critique of injustices that create unique developmental challenges for young people of color (Jagers, Rivas-Drake & Borowski, 2018). Equity extensions re-frame SEL as an transformative force for activism in schools (Jagers, 2016). Here the advocacy strands of SEL, racial socialization, and resistance converge. For example, there are five general goals of SEL as proposed by the Center for Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning (CASEL): *self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills,* and *responsible decision-making* (Schonert-Reichl, Kitil, &

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Hanson-Peterson, 2017). Each goal entails certain skills. *Self-management* entails regulating

emotions, managing stress, and goal-setting. The equity elaboration of this tenet includes coping

with acculturative stress and bias (Jagers, Rivas-Drake, & Williams, 2019). Related to adolescent

Black boys, resistance and accommodation to stereotypes are fundamental elements of self-

management (Rogers & Way, 2018). But there are caveats. For teachers, if the idea of resistance

is limited to a focus on refusal skills related to, say, drug use or gang involvement, SEL may

simply reinforce a deficit view of Black culture, and teach a "conformist resistance," especially if

these directives lack a creative aspect (Jagers, 2016; Watts, Williams, & Jagers, 2003). At the

same time, proximal risks may create short-term agendas that push avoidance strategies to the

fore.

Culturally relevant education

The concept of *culturally relevant education* (CRE) offers a bridge between SEL and the

social-emotional learning that happens outside of school. CRE has variants within educational

and anthropological literature (see Ladson-Billings, 1995, for anthropological citations), but it is

centrally concerned with maximizing the connection between the students' home culture and the

school. The concept grows out of Ladson-Billings' (2009) studies of the relationships that

exemplary teachers, Black and non-Black, cultivate with their Black students. Like

transformative SEL, it shares an activist agenda, and it pulls the adult to the fore. Ladson-

Billings (1995) defines CRE as an approach to education that expects and develops *academic*

excellence, cultural competence, and *critical consciousness*. It is characterized not by essential

teacher traits, or by content add-ons, but by authentic interactions based on curiosity and

inclusion that draw intellectual resources from within the students' community.

CRE is not a technique in service of assimilation, and it defies the crisis-oriented approach to Black education (Dumas & Nelson, 2016). It is a mindset and a teaching practice that depends on re-ordering the relationship between school culture and home culture to put the latter first. Re-ordering the relationship between culture and school requires a "a pedagogy of opposition" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 160) toward the tendency toward social reproduction in schooling (Gregory & Fergus, 2017; Jagers, 2016). Developing cultural competence among teachers would require sensitivity to not only historical injustices, or to styles of interaction (Delpit, 1995), but to the internal psychological processes that a pedagogy of opposition requires. The "lesson plans" that emerge from a pedagogy of opposition would naturally focus on strategic resistance and strategic accommodation.

The direction that any curriculum takes toward cultural norms is never certain, and, on its face, cultural relevance may or may not entail criticality. Whether implicitly or explicitly, teachers and learners vary in their beliefs and patterns of resistance, as the empirical literature describes (Starck, Riddle, Sinclair, & Warikoo, 2020).

CASE BACKGROUND

Original study

The case is drawn from a larger study conducted at a middle school. The original study was designed to respond to administrators' concern about an increase in sexualized behavior among 7th graders. In close consultation with the school, the research team designed and implemented a study that included (1) faculty interviews, and (2) single gender discussion groups for the students led by adult volunteers from the university and the school.

The Wesley School (a pseudonym) is an Afrocentric public charter school located in a mixed-income neighborhood in a large southeastern city. At the time of the project, the middle

school enrolled a total of 93 students, 90% of whom were Black, and 70% of all students received free or reduced lunch. The school adheres to the concept of a "family-sized classroom" and during the year of the project, the teacher-student ratio was 1:6-8.

In the fall of 2015, a female student came to the Principal concerned about sexualized conduct among 7th grade boys and girls at school. Crude drawings on school property, inappropriate and aggressive touching, and rumor spreading led the Principal to separate half of the 7th grade students by gender for the school year. The most involved students comprised half of the 7th grade class, or 21 students.

Based on faculty interviews, the original research team created a project to uncover students' frame of reference for the concept of "sexual harassment" and hear directly from them about their experiences. The intention was to develop a site-specific intervention to promote more respectful peer interactions.

Researchers interviewed six faculty to gain a better understanding of the events leading up to the intervention. The faculty interviews were one-on-one, semi-structured sessions led by a researcher. After an opening prompt—What led to the decision to separate the boys and girls?— the interviewers had flexibility thereafter to learn as much as possible about the behavior that led to segregating the students.

Then single-gender discussion groups were led by facilitators who identified as same-gender, same-race as the students. Participation in the discussion groups was voluntary. The groups were not a "detention," by design or implication. Sessions took place in classrooms after school. The curriculum was loosely organized around (1) defining sexual harassment, (2) respectful peer interactions, (3) discussion of an ambiguous scenario, and (4) boundaries. The

facilitators were given autonomy to adjust the curriculum to suit the needs of the students and their own interests.

Ecological validity and treatment acceptability were the team's foremost considerations when designing the groups. The team adopted a participatory, culture-specific intervention model, or PC-SIM, which seeks a productive tension between researcher goals and community fit (Castro, Barrera & Martinez, 2004; Varjas, Meyers, Henrich, Graybill, Dew, Marshall, Williamson, Skoczylas & Avant, 2006). The result was a lightly structured, discussion group format. The groups met four times after school for approximately one hour each time.

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Six faculty members were interviewed, including the Principal and Assistant Principal. Each interview lasted between 10-15 minutes. Of the teachers, three were Black women, and one was a Black man. Of the two administrators, the Principal was a Black woman, and the Assistant Principal was a White woman. The group discussion participants included (1) ten 7th grade boys led by two men and (2) eleven 7th grade girls led by two women. All group participants were Black. The facilitators were either researchers from the university or volunteers from the school.

Events preceding the original study

Faculty described numerous examples of sexualized activity:

> Boys were touching girls inappropriately, and the girls were welcoming that interaction… hitting girls on the butt, grabbing girls on the butt, touching them in the chest area, putting their hands around their waists, touching them on their stomachs, and the girls sitting in the boys' laps and girls putting their hands in the

laps of other boys when they're sitting at desks next to each other or in the cafeteria, things like that. *(Principal)*

The boys would slap the girls' butts. The girls were sayin' inappropriate things to the boys and what they would wanna do, so a lot of attention-seeking on both ends. *(Assistant Principal)*

The interactions would occur in hallways, the lunchroom, and at dismissal, but one classroom afforded unique opportunities:

The way [one teacher's] classroom used to be set up is he had a little relax area for them to read and stuff. They had blankets and pillows. He was forced to get rid of the blankets, because the blankets were masking the inappropriate touching. *(Teacher B)*

More than one faculty member made a point of mentioning that the girls were actively participating:

Girls [were] saying what they would do to a guy…A couple of students saw another lady's hands on a young man's private area underneath a book bag. *(Assistant Principal)*

They [the girls] definitely tolerated it. They engaged. *(Teacher A)*

While faculty portrayed seemingly consensual incidents, some of the behavior coming from the boys was aggressive: "hitting butts" or "kneeing them [girls] in the butt," or "slapping butts" in the hallway. The Assistant Principal described one incident in menacing terms.

There was a situation where there was one girl in a room and four boys by themselves with the lights off. She was trying to get to the trashcan, and the guys blocked her. Nothing happened, thank goodness, but those are threatening and scary situations to be in.

While all six adults interviewed expressed concern about the behavior being "disrespectful," they also viewed the impulses behind the behavior as developmentally predictable:

[They're in] middle school now so they're starting to hit puberty. *(Teacher B)*

It's a lot of estrogen in the room. *(Principal)*

I would say also knowing the fact that we are also dealing with middle schoolers, so you also got the hormones and all that other good stuff coming into play, and relationships. *(Teacher A)*

The decision to segregate students by gender was precipitated by a female student who was new to the school. She complained to the Principal, and her mother became involved:

Interviewer: Did the new girl make the difference?

Principal: Mm-hmm. [Yes.]

Interviewer: Why do you think she complained versus the old girls, or the kids who had already been here?

Principal: Personality difference between her and the other girls. She didn't know the boys as well as the other girls had. I think some home life stuff going on. I've gotten to know her mom really well since then and my understanding of how her mom is raising her— there's a zero tolerance for that type of stuff. Her mom has communicated to me that she tells her whenever you see something inappropriate going on, whether it's directly related to you or indirectly, if you know it could cause somebody else to be hurt, you need to tell an adult. That's what happened.

Teachers seemed unclear about exactly what the student reported, but there was agreement that her complaint led to the changes.

Teacher B: From what I understand, I don't know the entire story, but from what I understand I believe something happened to her or somebody made a comment to her or something to that affect and she went and told the principal what had happened. After that the principal did a full out investigation to start finding out things that were going on. I don't

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know if it was a comment or—I'm thinking it's a comment but I'm not 100 percent sure. It was something that made her feel uncomfortable to the point where she went, I believe, and told—another story that I heard was honestly that something had happened to a friend of hers. I guess the friend was cool with it or the friend did not want to tell but she told them her friend's [inaudible]. I heard two different stories so I don't know which one [is true]…

Interviewer: Before that girl, had any other girls complained about similar things?

Teacher B: No.

After the first girl complained to the Principal, other girls came forward to share their experiences. One teacher wondered about their motivations:

Interviewer: Did they [the girls] ever eventually complain about it to you guys?

Assistant Principal: A couple of them did, when the alarm was already—it was already brought to our attention, so I felt like in order to cover their bases.

Interviewer: Did any of the boys complain?

Assistant Principal: No.

The discussion groups were formed the semester after the students were segregated by gender. Participation was voluntary. Because the research team had led student groups for two years leading up to the events, and because three of the four facilitators were already known to the students, the groups started from a foundation of existing rapport.

Using transcripts of audiotaped group discussions to study resistance and accommodation was not the original intent of the project, but the data invite comparison to recent empirical and

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theoretical literature that identify resistance and accommodation to stereotypes as a requirement for social competence for children of color (Rogers & Way, 2018).

THE CASE STUDY

Methodology

Qualitative instrumental case study

As Vygotsky (1978) states, "It is only in movement that a body reveals what it is." Case studies are useful when the researcher wants a naturalistic understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context (Crowe, Cresswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery, & Sheikh, 2011). Vygotsky's conception of pedagogy and culture as unified and historically bound fits with a case study approach. Case studies do not attempt to "control" for context; context is part of the investigation. By studying situations from real life, the case study approach retains the complexity of the phenomenon in ways that surveys, self-reports, and experimental research cannot. The purpose of describing how the men scaffolded resistance and accommodation for the boys is not to simply sort their talk into categories, but to describe how the men advised navigating dominant ideologies. The case is presented descriptively, not prescriptively.

There are different categories of case studies—single cases, multiple cases, exploratory, descriptive—designed to address different types of questions (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In an *instrumental* case study, the case is used to address an external issue. Aspects of the case are explored based on their utility in addressing an issue of interest to the researcher. In this way, instrumental cases bring an etic sensibility to the study. As my interest is an issue external to the case – how the developmental imperative of resisting and adapting to stereotype is supported by adults – the case study would be classified as instrumental.

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Epistemological framework

Case study is a constructivist methodology (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Constructivism, as a theory of knowledge and a theory of the nature of reality, rejects the idea of the existence of knowable, essential truths. For constructivists, knowledge is provisional, a best-we-can-do proposition until newly constructed knowledge proves to be a more useful way for us to organize the world. It is constructed through value-laden inquiries that carry the subjective imprint of the researcher who set the question and the method (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Reality is similarly constituted; it has no being outside of our own actions. It is a concept we use.

When framed in opposition to realism—which assumes that reality exists independent of any observer—constructivism can be oversimplified as a slide down the slope of relativism, unmoored from commitments, and useless when applied to the material world. But one's epistemology and ontology do not have to walk in lock step. I find Willig's (2016) reasoning sensible:

> It seems to me that epistemological relativism constitutes a form of
> intellectual self-awareness and concomitant humility, and ought to
> characterise all research endeavours whilst ontological relativism
> is probably not actually compatible with doing research in the first
> place. (pp. 1-2)

This leads me to adopt a critical realist position. For the purpose of conducting a case study to investigate a construct like resistance and accommodation, from an etic position, I find that a critical realist epistemology addresses charges of relativism and invigorates a commitment to values-driven inquiry (Tanesini, 2018). Critical realism involves an *ontologically realist* position which acknowledges the enabling and constraining conditions that participants operate in, alongside an *epistemologically constructivist* position which asserts that meaning is created (Sims-Shouten, Riley, & Willig, 2007).

Subjectivities

       I am etic by multiple measures to the participants in the study. My "outsider" perspective shapes my analysis. Because the data are archived, I am etic to the original data collection process. Because I am a White female and all the participants were Black males, I am etic by positionality. Because I am conducting an instrumental case study, I bring an external interest to the case. My positionality required methodological moves to address issues of rigor, trustworthiness, and ethics (Tracey, 2010). From a Vygotskian standpoint, the inner landscape of the individual—in this case, the researcher—reflects cultural narratives writ small. A narrative of my experience with the case serves transparency.

       I joined a research team with an established, years-long relationship with a charter middle school that was the site of the case. Reviewing the transcripts of the boys' groups, I was struck by the degree to which the men talked, compared to the boys. As the students were the focus of our research, the men's "floor holding" in the sessions was initially disappointing because we wanted to explore the boys' talk about their interactions with the girls. But as a researcher interested in implementation values in education (Biesta, 2007), I was intrigued by how the facilitators shaped the intervention to serve their own agenda. It was plain from the transcripts that they were driven to sound warnings about specific risks facing African American boys ("You willing to do 25 years for a touch?"). I conducted a thematic analysis of the men's talk for a poster at the annual conference of the American Psychological Association. My analysis organized their talk according to four themes: risk, respect, gender, and generativity (Lindsley et al., 2018). Then I put down the data because I had misgivings about whether my position as a White, female researcher disqualified me from a deeper analysis of the data.

Research proceeds in linear and non-linear ways (Firestein, 2012). I remained intrigued by the emotional core of the transcripts. The men's urgent care for the boys created a unique data set that also raised larger issues related to intervention science and SEL, and race, issues that have energized my academic, professional, and personal life. The framework of resistance and accommodation created a conceptual framework that offered a new way to bring meaning to the boys' groups. My decision to take up the data again was supported in three ways.

First, I embraced the implications of my etic positionality. All case studies are driven by the researcher's creation of meaning from the data (Stake, 1995), but a researcher-researched relationship that replicates racial power structures creates ethical and intellectual risks (Milner, 2007). I diversified my advisory committee. This move on its own guaranteed nothing, but it established a degree of scholarly and ethical accountability. I kept a reflective journal over the course of the study, then reported my progress and brought questions to weekly lab meetings with colleagues. I also clarified the kind of role I was taking as a case study researcher. Stake (1995) distinguishes between the case researcher as *advocate, evaluator, biographer,* or *interpreter*. I am not presenting the case as an exemplar, or as a cautionary tale, nor am I attempting to create a portrait of the participants. I identify as an interpreter, intending to "find new connections and make them comprehensible to others" (p. 97).

Positionality is also time bound. The groups occurred in early 2016. Michael Brown was killed by police in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014, a fact that one of the facilitators referred to twice in the sessions. In the summer of 2020, while writing up the case, the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd rocked the conscience of thousands across the country. Public outrage overwhelmed concerns regarding transmission of the novel coronavirus, and

widespread demonstrations were termed by one commentator as an "American Spring" (Cobb, 2020). Resistance became the top story on newscasts and social media.

Second, while meaning-making is an integrated, constructive process that makes separating one's own position impossible, there are analytical structures that help researchers surface the biases they bring to data (Milner, 2007). Using Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater's (2012) rubric for making subjectivities transparent, I systematically tracked my assumptions, positionality, and beliefs. I added subjectivities monitoring into my analysis of the target issue.

Third, Janie Ward (2018), a scholar of resistance and development, challenges the intellectual segregation that would result from a *like-studies-like* approach to scholarship on race. She writes, "I have argued that this work is not limited to black parents, nor can it be the sole responsibility of black adults. White (and other non-black) adults too must become acutely attuned to the sociopolitical context of gender and race in America" (p. 126).

Defining the case

The case data are the pre-recorded audio and professional transcriptions from the four group sessions that the men led for the boys. Each session lasted between 40-60 minutes. The events that occurred within the group itself, combined with events that the men and boys discuss, provide the units of analysis for the study (Watts, Williams, & Jagers, 2003).

As the case study relies on archived, de-identified data, it was approved by the IRB as not-human subjects research. I use pseudonyms for all the participants.

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Analysis: The Listening Guide

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Gilligan and Eddy's (2017) Listening Guide offers a combination of deductive and inductive processes similar to approaches like qualitative directed content analysis (Assarroudi et al., 2018) or grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). The listening guide differs from other qualitative

approaches by addressing the research question after a prescribed series of "listenings."
Transcripts at hand, the researcher conducts three listens:

- Listening for plot

- Listening for I-statements

- Listening for contrapuntal voices

Listening for plot

Identifying plots created units of analysis (Watts, Williams, & Jagers, 2003). Listening for plot involves asking: Who is speaking, telling what stories about which relationships? Who is missing? Where are the emotional hotspots, and what themes are in play? When is a topic taken up, then dropped? (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017).

The central plot in the case was about how to interact with girls. Events within that plot included introducing the term "sexual harassment," discussing a hypothetical scenario, talking about celebrities, and the men's personal stories. Stories about relationships directed me to social expectations, norms, and power differences. In talking about girls, several relationships came into play: boys with girls, with parents, with the law, and men with wives. How the men reasoned within each relationship cued up the dynamic of resistance and accommodation.

Research itself is an event, and listening for plot includes attending to the researcher's role in the study. Gilligan and Eddy (2017) are silent on how to approach this element of plot. I augmented the Listening Guide by using three questions to track my subjectivities (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2012, p. 87):

- What surprised me? (to track assumptions)

- What intrigued me? (to track positionality)

- What disturbed me? (to track values, beliefs)

I brought the affective highlights from the subjectivities process to weekly lab meetings, and to one of my committee members. For example, I was disturbed when the facilitators compared the boys to each other, explicitly ranking them by their apparent maturity. It seemed like the facilitators played favorites, a teaching move I have been told to avoid lest it lead to a climate of resentment. I was etic to two strands of meaning in play. First, the facilitators' use of comparison and direct personal challenge aligns with Ladson-Billings (2009) description of effective teachers of Black students as "conductors" and "coaches," with high expectations and frank assessments. The more directive, no-nonsense approach to teaching is also well-regarded among Black parents and teachers (Delpit, 1995; McLoyd, 1998). Second, the competitive scene Mr. Astead evoked aligned with the "combat aesthetic" of hip hop and likely resonated with boys (White, 2011).

Listening for the "I"

Separating the facilitators' I-statements from the rest of the data created a blacklight effect on the psychology of the speaker**.** The rules of listening for the "I" are as follows: to (1) separate all of the facilitators' I-statements (I plus verb) from the rest of the transcripts, (2) maintain the order in which the statements appear, and (3) include the object of the verb where appropriate. The statements are then used to create prose poems that point to the speaker's "associative logic" around the topic at hand, a logic that more authentically reflects the often mixed motives and feelings we have toward psychologically rich topics than a top-down coding scheme might capture (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017).

I created I-poems for all four sessions for both men. I provide one example. The lead facilitator (Mr. Astead) was a teacher at the school, and already well known to the boys. The boys mention his Saturday mentoring group, and during housekeeping talk at the end of a

session, Mr. Astead arranges to give one of the boys a ride home. The boys frequently address

him by name, and they quiet when he speaks. He led the first session alone. His I-poem from the

first session best clarifies his modus operandi as a passionate MKO: by recalling his own youth,

by alluding to misdeeds of his own, and by inviting them to trust him: "I want you all to feel like

y'all are comfortable."

I wish

I really wish

I wouldn't a been out there

I need you all

I'm glad

I wish

I pray.

I was in seventh grade

I heard something

I really wanna hear from you

I need two people

I know you anxious bro

I'm curious to hear

I was in sixth grade

I wanna see you

I want you all

I done been there

I done been with the worst

The outside facilitator (Mr. Herndon) joined the group in the second session. He introduces himself as a husband and a father, as part of tight family clan ("41 cousins," meaning, "you don't wanna come into the wrong project"). He alludes to a childhood with hard lessons: "I was ghetto;" "I come from the bottom;" and "One of my best friends was shot and killed when I was in sixth grade." The impact of his I-poem was to highlight the pull of his external responsibilities ("I kinda came late" and "I'm gonna go back"), and his tentative standing as a newcomer to the group ("I appreciate you all listening").

Listening for contrapuntal voices

Contrapuntal describes contrasting melodic lines within a piece of music. In the Listening Guide, listening for contrapuntal voices involves listening for differences in tone or manner of speaking (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017). Separate from 'themes' relating to content, voices are "textured, nuanced, and embodied" descriptions of speakers" (Raider-Roth, 2005, p. 511). The men's two voices provide primary contrapuntal lines. They took long turns addressing the boys, so there were not many moments of overlap. Dipping into the tapes at any time, the staccato, debate-style voice would belong to Mr. Herndon. He corralled their attention, twice, with, "I was there the day after Michael Brown was killed." He would bring them back forcefully with "Wait, wait, wait!" To jump start a debate he might say, "Disagree with me. Go," or, "Tell me quick." The slower, narrative voice would belong to Mr. Astead who sometimes actually lowered his voice to get the boys' attention. When he raised his voice it would be a crescendo in a longer story, sometimes calling attention to himself ("See, I'm about to go there!"), while telling stories often about his own misdeeds and close calls with fate.

The listen clarified the facilitators' relationship. Both men built on their insider status with the boys (Mr. Astead: "When I see you, I see myself;" Mr. Herndon: "I know how brilliant

you are"), but within the social ecology of the group, Mr. Herndon seemed to recognize that was an outsider. Periodically he pays respect to the claim Mr. Astead already has on the boys, commenting on how Mr. Astead is "pouring into" them, or, after Mr. Astead speaks saying, "That was great. That was power."

Summary

The listens brought new order and new complexity to the data. First and foremost, listening for plot brought units of analysis into focus. Plot directed me toward events that were norm-laden, and therefore power-laden. It is in relationships that certain norms are activated, which then evoke resistance and/or accommodation (Mumby, 2005; Rogers & Way, 2018). Listening for subplot focused me on the participants' relationships, and was enriched by pulling out the men's I-statements and identifying contrapuntal voices. Taken together, the listens corralled some of my subjectivities, clarified units of analysis, and sharpened boundaries around where norms were in play, spotlighting where resistance and accommodation were relevant.

RESULTS

> This [group] is better than his silver and gold, 'cause you'll never forget this. Words you'll never forget. Money comes, goes, get some more. Ain't nothin' but knowledge sticks with you forever. Y'all gotta know how to operate. I told you how it's gonna be next year. You're not gonna have two male teachers, two strong male teachers, so y'all gotta start learning how to operate.

According to Mr. Astead, "learning how to operate" around girls was the primary purpose of the groups. The talk that centered on girls provides the central plot for analysis, but the men covered a wide array of norm-laden events and relationships.

Resisting the stereotype of criminality

Framing the groups around "sexual harassment" activated an array of cultural scripts related to Black masculinity and criminality. Mr. Astead addressed the script related to criminality first. Unrelated to the prompts provided by the curriculum, he brought a legal definition of sexual harassment to the group, and created the image of being "pulled over by a police officer." He asked one of the boys, Jordan, to read the definition out loud. This moved the boys' in-school conduct onto a high stakes, judicial terrain, a terrain of risk that is particularly resonant for Black men and boys. From a sociocultural perspective, by asking Jordan to read the statute out loud, by correcting Jordan's pronunciation along the way and coaxing him to be fluent, Mr. Astead supports Jordan (and the other boys by proxy) "internalizing" the law. He attaches a legal meaning to the boys' behavior (Daniels, 2016; Vygotsky, 1978). In an example of how autonomy exists in tension with cultural scripts, Jordan stops his recitation to push back: "That's a misdemeanor?! What?" Reading Mr. Astead's intent, one of Jordan's classmates affirms, "You could go to jail." In communication studies, the reading of the statute is an example of ventriloquism, where an ideology is mobilized by articulating the structures that support it (Cooren, 2012).

> *Mr. Astead:* Alright. Now, once again, this is just talkin' about sexual harassment and the law. Jordan, will you read this for us real quick, brother?
>
> *Jordan:* Indiana Code 35 to 45 to 2.
>
> *Mr. Astead:* It say 35 dash, 45 dash, 2 dash, 2. That's how if you would've get pulled over by a police officer, that's how they will say it to you. We're gonna speak in they terminology.
>
> *Jordan:* Alright. Indiana Code 35-45-2-2.

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Mr. Astead:	Okay.
Jordan:	A person with an intent to harass, annoy, or alarm another person but with no intent of ligament—
Mr. Astead:	Legitimate.
Jordan:	- legitimate communication, makes a telephone call whether or not the conversation insures—
Mr. Astead:	Ensues.
Jordan:	- communication with a person by mail or other written communication and transmits an obskeen message...
Mr. Astead:	Pause right there. That's an obscene message.
Jordan:	Obscene.
Mr. Astead:	Now, you know in seventh grade, this is the age where y'all like [whispers], "Send me a pic. I'll send you a pic. Send me a pic." Am I talking to some people in here?

[Low chatter. Jordan continues.]

Jordan:	- or an electronic communication to communicate with a person or transmit an obscene message or incident of profane words to a person, I mean, commits harassment, a Class B misdemeanor.

[High pitched.] That's a Class B misdemeanor?! What?

Mr. Astead:	Pause right there.
Marcus:	You could go to jail.
Mr. Astead:	All that sendin' pictures, all that so forth and so on, once again, that is a misdemeanor.

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Much of the ensuing advice for the boys focused on staying out of trouble, as missteps could move a boy onto criminal ground. Caution—what not to do—can be difficult to describe because it looks like absence, but the men called out a few specific behaviors to avoid. Moves like "cat calling," "being huggers," and "getting all up on em," were ways of "making her feel uncomfortable." The men described a steep and uncertain drop-off between a hug, or a comment, and being charged with a misdemeanor. Mr. Herndon warned, "A lotta young brothers [when they] start talking to women," they might "start doing sexual harassment" by going "for the cheap laugh."

Placing the boys' relationships with girls on legal ground created some confusion. In conversations about specific interactions with girls, the men acknowledged consent as a potentially grey area, but by presenting it as a firm legal construct it became a matter of guilt or innocence. As a legal construct, according to Mr. Herndon, consent was outside of any adolescent's control, a claim he later qualified by saying perhaps some boys were "almost responsible," creating a puzzle the boys could not solve.

> *Mr. Herndon:* If someone hasn't given consent, which y'all technically can't give consent—
>
> *Shane:* How come we can't give consent?
>
> *Mr. Herndon:* Cuz y'all not old enough to give consent.
>
> *William:* Wait, what's consent?
>
> *Mr. Herndon:* Good question. Consent means permission to do something to my body…Technically, the law doesn't think you're responsible enough to give consent. Now, I'm gonna go with the law, but I would say that some of you all are almost responsible, not quite yet. You don't understand the outcome of that, right?

One of the boys summarized the bind they were in:

Marcus:	When we talked about it you said, well, the ladies that we talk to are too young to give their own consent but women that's grown, you have to get consent to them before you touch or talk to them or whatever because then it will be sexual harassment.
Mr. Herndon:	Absolutely.
Jamal:	We don't have consent to touch a girl or something?
Marcus:	No, we're not allowed.

Sexual accusations could emerge from different channels. The men shared stories about how girls might lie after seemingly mutual encounters. The stories surfaced during a discussion of "Myths vs. Facts" regarding sexual harassment. The prompt—"Girls ask to be sexually harassed by the way they dress"—was met with loud agreement ("FACT!") by most (but not all) the boys. While the men clarified that dress was not an invitation for harassment, they reinforced the idea that authorities will believe girls before boys. For example, when one boy stated that girls can also harass boys, "but boys get in trouble more often," Mr. Astead interjects to agree:

> Oh, pause right there. I'm gonna play on what you said. If you haven't noticed that we usually get together and be like, "Man, did you see that—we usually talk amongst ourselves, right— [but] it's usually the girls who are harassing more than the boys, but the boys, they're the ones who get caught. When you tell [on] the girls, they're like *[in a high voice],* "What? What you sayin'?" The same thing that they do these days like walk around like grab your butt and so forth, the same thing they doin' right now is the same thing they did back in my day.

This "flipped" girl-as-instigator scenario was seconded by Mr. Herndon: "Most of the time, when I take groups [on trips], I'm gonna be honest with you. Most of the time, it's not the fellows. It's the sisters that end up doing too much, right?" The idea that girls might laugh when

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they were feeling uncomfortable, and then "tell an authority" was shared several times over. One

boy lamented: "How am I supposed to know what you're feeling when you're over there

laughing? Then that's when you go and tell somebody. That don't make sense." Other boys

talked about girls who come on to you, then lie to save their own reputations. Mr. Astead

warned, "Y'all may find yourselves in a situation like that." There was an animated exchange

between the boys about how a girl wearing "booty shorts" might want the attention, then "still

tell on you." To which another boy added: "You don't got no way to prove you didn't rape." One

boy's mother instructed him in how to avoid being betrayed:

> Hey, my mom told me, well, she said, "Choose the right girl that
> you wanna be with cuz some of these girls are quick to say that
> you raped them," or somethin' like that and then you don't got no
> way to say that you didn't.

Parents of daughters were also potential sources of danger. Mr. Astead warned: "If they parents

wanna press charges, they can do that." When a student disputed that parents would actually

"take it out of their time and track the person down," Mr. Astead held firm: "You *know* you got

some parents like that." One boy added, "My mom will." In an extreme example of parental

control, Mr. Herndon shared a story about a father who commanded his daughter to lie in order

to snare a boy in a rape charge. The boy, a childhood friend of Mr. Herndon's, spent decades in

prison as a result.

> *Mr. Herndon:* The point is that the father said that something more
> happened than what really happened. Because that's
> his daughter, he told her, "You're gonna say exactly
> what I told you."

> *[Boys object.]*

> Wait, wait, wait. How many of you all are willing to
> do 25 years for a touch?

> *Jamal:*   I ain't doing no 25 years for no girl.

Events like these attuned the boys to their vulnerability, and Mr. Herndon called on an extreme version of the patriarchal script to heighten the stakes. Even though several of the boys objected to the tale, it offered another example of a "rumor or fact that somewhere, under some similar circumstances, violence [like unjust punishment] was used" (Thurman, 1949, p. 29). By emphasizing romance as a high-culpability, low-autonomy event space that Black boys operate within (Dumas & Nelson, 2016), the men reinforced the necessity of resistance for survival (Ward, 2018).

Male friendships could be a source of danger, if one wasn't careful about maintain one's "L." The "L" is the space that a boy, or a man, maintains around himself. All of Mr. Astead's cautionary tales about being "off" his "L" involved getting in trouble with other boys in college. One's " L" was not only a physical space but a mental attitude that an individual adopts to keep their options open. The media wants to "take you off your L."

> Think about when you turn on V-103 what you hear. You hear
> nothing but people *not* teaching you about yo L . They're trying to
> take you off your L; drugs, sex, killing, so forth and so on. Why
> are we trying to get off our L?

Mr. Astead demonstrated the "L" very specifically, by having the boys stand up, mark off physical space and move back and forth within it. Resisting activities that might take one off of one's "L" protected flexibility and personal autonomy.

Resisting the stereotype of hypersexuality

Describing what *not* to do superseded ideas about how to engage positively with girls. A couple of boys pitched their own approaches: "I always ask, "Can I have a hug?" before I hug her." In a calculation that other boys' crassness could be played to one's own advantage, Mr.

Herndon advised saying, "Hey, look. I'm sorry. They're disrespectful. Let me talk to you." The advice was not entirely calculating; his point being that respect involved acknowledging boundaries that "you can't cross." By advocating safe distance, "manners," and respectful language, the men offered the boys a resistant strategy that kept them away from "commit[ting] sexual harassment," with the potential benefit of making a connection. Mr. Astead claimed of the girls, "They'll keep that. They'll remember that way longer." The focus on ideas for how to interact positively with girls, however, was less concentrated than the focus on how to avoid trouble with them.

Both men described the value of being in long term relationships, and Mr. Astead elevated celebrities who countered the stereotype of hypersexuality. Stories about fidelity were offered as counterweights to the stereotype of promiscuity: "Kendrick Lamar's been with the same chick since high school," and "LeBron [James], too. If you've got you a good one—if you find you a good one who willin' to work through stuff and communicate," then you should stay together. The kind of girls the men elevated—Eryka Badu, and a girl from Mr. Herndon's childhood, who "was so bad, she was so far ahead of everybody because her dad was a jazz singer"—exuded "brains" and cool sophistication. By esteeming girls and women for substance over appearance, the men both elevated Black cultural prowess and resisted objectifying girls and women for their physiques.

Resisting the stereotype of intellectual indifference

Mr. Astead viewed teaching verbal mastery as critical to the men's roles as MKOs: "If you don't use it [language] right, it's our fault for not cultivating that." Verbal fluency was one of the most enriched resistance strategies advocated by the men. They resisted the script of Black male intellectual indifference by pushing vocabulary and embracing the alternative narrative

supplied by celebrity lyricists. An extended excerpt demonstrates the men promoting fluency as resistance for liberation and as resistance for survival, in close succession. Mr. Astead promoted fluency using rappers as exemplars. He elevates the *performance* of criminality, a deft skimming of accommodating the criminal stereotype for the purpose of resistance (as he does again when referring to the boys as "dangerous" because they are "intelligent"). As was his wont, Mr. Herndon followed it with a cautionary tale:

Mr. Astead:	What do all rappers do when—
William:	Communicate.
Mr. Astead:	They read the dictionary.
Jaden:	Not all.
Marcus:	Lil' Wayne.
Mr. Astead:	If you were good with—If you're a good one, you read the—you get more words and more words and more words and you find out how to put 'em together. If you—
William:	Read the dictionary.
Mr. Astead:	You read the whole dictionary front and back? Tupac read the dictionary front and back.
Miles:	I'm gonna do that.
Mr. Astead:	He wasn't just that thug that everybody—he was poetic. He was a movie star.
Miles:	Ice Cube basically 'cuz he said he was a poet.
Mr. Herndon:	I even will be more real. I got here about seven minutes late. You know why? I just came from a probation hearing.

Marcus:	A probation hearing?
Mr. Herndon:	This brother was 14—he's 14. I went to go vouch for him. Do you know how many years he just got just now?
Several:	How many?
Jaden:	Ten.
Mr. Herndon:	Adult sentence. 12 years.
Students:	Dang.
Mr. Herndon:	Let me tell you the reason why. The judge asked him today asked him, "What are you gonna do? If I'm lenient on you, what are you gonna do? If I let you get out by 18, what are you gonna do?" You know what he said?
Miles:	Go to school?
Mr. Herndon:	He didn't communicate well.

Building on the foundation of celebrity exemplars, Mr. Astead created a vivid image of putting the boys on stage to point out who had "that kind of power." Speaking to a boy that Mr. Herndon had complimented for showing "the most maturity," Mr. Astead said,

> I can put you on the stage and you speak to 2,000 people, and people will listen. Do you know what I mean? I can put you on stage right now, talk about anything you want to, and people will at least listen to you for three minutes. If they figure out that you [don't] know what you're talkin' about, then they'll tune out. If you know what you're talkin' about, they're gonna tune in… That's a real quality.

He expands the idea into a frank comparison of the boys:

> I can tell you this. Jaden, with all due respect—Jaden, compared to Marcus or Deonte right here, you're like right here. You've got

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> power, but at the same time, if you always recluse—meaning that
> you're not adding to the conversation, you're always gonna remain
> down here. We put you in front of a crowd, you'd probably walk
> off the stage. You're probably a fool. If we put Deonte—if we put
> both of them on a stage, it's over.

Building on earlier stories about Tupac, Ice Cube, and Kendrick Lamar, Mr. Astead called on

scripts related to Black cultural prowess and performative masculinity (White, 2011). In the

fictive, somewhat unforgiving competition he created, however, the verdict was not final. He

softened:

> Once again, that's why we're here. That's why we have these
> sessions. I used to be in that position. I used to be 13, 14. I used to
> be in that position. I used to be real confused.

Vocabulary building was offered as a concrete step to personal power. In between the

binaries of fluency and fame or dysfluency and prison, the men pulled the boys into elevating

their everyday talk. Comments like, "You have power in your words," and, "Y'all gotta learn to

communicate" were common, along with explicit support for verbal mastery:

> *Mr. Astead:* [My father would ask], "Are you studying? Are you
> growing?" That's why my vocabulary's like—let
> me ask you all this. Do you all know what the word
> *idiosyncratic* means?

And:

> I put three words up on the board, *ethos, logos* and *pathos.* I want
> you all to write these three words down. I want you all to tell me
> what these three words mean tomorrow, all right?

Compared to hypersexuality and criminality, where both men relied on instilling a degree

of fear, Mr. Astead's resistance to intellectual indifference emphasized the emancipatory

potential of verbal mastery. By calling up the lyrical power that has led (some) Black men to

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extraordinary success, he replaced the stereotype of intellectual indifference with performances

of Black masculinity that both called on and transcended racist assumptions of Black male

criminality.

Resisting the stereotype of male unemotionality, sometimes

  Masculinity is a multi-dimensional norm with culturally specific interpretations (hooks,

2004; Kim, 2014). Separating "masculinity" as a unified, free-standing norm in the group would

belie the unity of the layered social markers that make up personal identity (Cole, 2009). The

men navigated the tangle of masculine norms like stoicism by a combination of overt

endorsements ("As a man, I can be so unmoved") and implied rejections ("I love you all").

Mr. Astead's numerous expressions of affection for the boys resisted the unemotional, go-it-

alone school of masculinity. After a damaging storm ripped through the city, Mr. Astead said to

the boys, "You know what I'm very thankful for? I'm thankful for 'cuz you know this past week,

we had a storm. It was an intense storm. I'm glad that none of y'all got hurt. Seriously." It was

one of several examples where Mr. Astead claimed the boys. He called them "my boys." His

commitment to them was a central part of his identity.

> *Mr. Astead:* Let me tell you all something. I'm not supposed to be here right now— I'm supposed to be in a meeting. Every time they calling in the intercom saying we've got a class, a staff meeting or something and who I'm with?
>
> *Boys:* Us.
>
> *Mr. Astead:* Y'all because I'm trying to show y'all—I'm trying to make sure you're […] strong. I told you I got this session. I got another session at the end of this and then when I get done with that session I gotta go and tutor but at the same time I'm planting seeds everywhere.

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And:

> *Mr. Astead:* Everything I tell you all, I love you all to death. I
> love you all like little brothers. When I see each and
> every one of you all, I see myself at some point in
> my life. I just want you all to be great.

The men accommodated the script of fathers and men as providers and protectors. One of

the first things Mr. Herndon says the boys when he enters the groups is: "I was always very

protective of the—of my female cousins. Especially my sister," a stance Mr. Astead reinforces

with: "You know as a man you want to protect and you—It's like natural instinct to say, "Oh

man, I wanna do this and I wanna do that."" Protection, while positive in intent, also pulled from

the gender hierarchies embedded in patriarchy (hooks, 2004). The boys readily drafted off of

protective patriarchy with stories of their own duty as sons: "At the mall…a man tryin' to talk to

my mama. I stood up there in front of him, and I say, "Hey, buddy, you can't talk to Mama.""

One boy scorned men "getting locked up [who] can't provide for their kids." To which Mr.

Astead, replied, "I'm glad you think that way. I'm glad you think that way but that's a whole

different playing field right there. I'm glad you think that way."

Extending the image of the male provider, Mr. Astead and Mr. Herndon shared stories of

everyday good deeds and philanthropy. Mr. Herndon shared a story about accompanying a teen

to court ("I'm gonna vouch for him"), and about sharing refined experiences with another

("Once a month, we go catch up. He'll holler at me, 'Hey, let's go somewhere.' I'll take him to a

great restaurant. I want to develop that side of him, too"). When one of the boys contested the

idea that a homeless person deserved generosity—"While I ain't got nothing against them, I ain't

really got no respect for homeless people 'cause they had the same chance of being successful as

everybody else did"—Mr. Astead stepped in:

Hold it right there. About two weeks ago, I had to go the Family Dollar for something. There was a man outside. He was a brother. He looked just like me. He looked just like you all. Bleed the same blood, breathe the same air, go through the same body processes as us. You know we're all extensions of each other. That's why we're not better than anyone else. I already knew how it was gonna go down. I was walking in Family Dollar, he said something different. He didn't ask for money. He said, "Man, I'm hungry." He like, "Please, give me some food." This was a—I was like, "Man." This is how Mr. V's mind work. I'm like, "Okay, I'm going to the store, I'm gonna get him some good food. Then I'm gonna come out and give him some food for thought." Do you see that? […] I was like, "Why you out here? Why you choose to be here?" Then he went in. He was like, "Man." He was like, "A lot of people ask me that." He was like, "When you in a system that only lets you get so far— "He was like, "What's the point?" He done got trapped in the world.

Mr. Astead went on to share similar encounters, including one with a "Caucasian lady," setting off a chain reaction, with the boys chiming in with redemptive stories from movies or hearsay.

William: I know a person. I forget their name.

Mr. Astead: Hold on, let him say what he gotta say.

William: They were homeless for the longest time, for like 10 years and then this person gave him a job. Then he started working for about three years saving up for some money. Then he created his own company.

Mr. Astead: Keep going, keep going.

William: He saved up. He created his own business.

One of the boys concluded:

Miles: You don't never know who you're talking to.

Jaden: You don't know their life story, bro.

> *Mr. Astead:* Exactly, you don't know. You know what? I should
> treat everybody with respect because you never
> know. That homeless person could be an angel.

Mr. Astead's emotional generosity toward vulnerable individuals, and toward the boys, contrasted with the way he described his emotional stance in the context of his marriage. "Emotions, that's one thing that I respect [in women] because as a male, I can be so unmoved. I can be so unmoved. The world would be falling apart outside, I can be so unmoved." For both men, in these discussions, the stereotype of the emotional distance seemed reserved to the context of relationships with women.

Accommodating the adultification of Black boys

The first question Mr. Astead asked the boys was,

> What's your average age? We'll say from 12 to 14. We're gonna
> talk about somethin' that I really wish somebody would've talked
> about with me at an early age… I'm glad that I have seventh grade
> cuz that's that grade.

Recognizing the boys' age as special ("that's that grade"), Mr. Astead also expected them to be "young men." When calling the group to order, Mr. Herndon would say, "We all **young men** here." Mr. Astead used the term to encourage the boys:

> I want you all to be mindful of the message that you all are getting
> from this because we're really trying to prepare you all to make
> you all young men at a very early age. I wish I had somebody who
> was telling me this stuff. I promise you this is like gold.

Later:

> Once again, don't think of this as work. Think of this as bettering
> myself. I tell myself, I tell my wife all the time that you all are
> gonna be some dangerous—you all are gonna be some very sharp
> and intelligent young men. **I didn't say boys. I said young men.**

By calling them "dangerous," Mr. Astead co-opts the idea of Black male threat: the real threat to society, the real power, is to defy social expectations for failure by becoming "sharp and intelligent young men" (Dow, 2016; White, 2011).

The men oriented the group toward mature topics, as was evident in the conversations that were dropped or dismissed. Certainly the stated purpose of the groups, to address what was termed sexual harassment at school, pointed the sessions up and out of childhood. But adolescence is a cusp-y time, and when Marcus brought a question about whether his interaction with the school nurse qualified as sexual harassment, his question was put off in favor of reciting the legal code.

Marcus:	Mr. Astead, I have a question about sexual harassment, about a situation that happened with me today.
Mr. Astead:	Let's hear it. This is a safe place right here. Anytime something happened, y'all can always, I mean, it's never gonna leave this room right here.
Marcus:	I got bit on my shoulder, and it was right here. I went to the office and got some alcohol pads. I pulled down my shirt right here to wipe 'cuz it was—and I was trying to clean it out. [The nurse] she said, "May you please pull up your shirt?" I gave her a look and didn't pull it up. Did that still count?
Mr. Astead:	I think she was just trying to—I think she was just—What we're doing right now, and I'll go in further elaboration. I'll further address that when we done with this, okay?

The push-pull is evident in Mr. Astead's response. He starts to address it—"I think she was just trying to"—and then pivots to "what we're doing right now." He may have addressed it outside of the group, but he did not address it during the taped session.

When one of the boys admitted to feeling nervous about talking to a girl, Mr. Herndon dismissed the concern about getting rejected. The moment provided another example of the men leaning toward maturity ("girls" vs. "that woman") and toward accommodating the stereotype of emotional invulnerability in the context of romantic relationships:

> *Mr. Herndon:* Now, wait, wait, so when you're nervous, why are
> you nervous?
>
> *Deonte:* 'Cuz you know some girls, they'll turn you down.
>
> *Mr. Herndon:* Real quick, why are you nervous? Is that woman
> gonna hurt you?
>
> *Deonte:* No.
>
> *Mr. Herndon:* Wait, wait, wait, how is she gonna break your
> heart? Are you in love with her?
>
> *Deonte:* Because she turned you down.

Mr. Herndon then pivoted to consent, saying that being underage meant "they shouldn't be touching on each other." This set up created confusion for all. The boys are underage, but also somehow "young men," making it difficult to make a coherent case around how consent related to underage interactions. Mr. Herndon tussled with the contradiction with limited success:

> The thing about it is, so therefore, consent, technically, the law
> doesn't think you're responsible enough to give consent. Now, I'm
> gonna go with the law, but I would say that some of you all are
> almost responsible, not quite yet. You don't understand the
> outcome of that, right?

The orientation toward adulthood was evident when the men encouraged the boys to speak respectfully to girls. The rationale was rooted in the idea that, one day, the girls would be mothers:

I always go here with my boys: Think about your mama. Would you want somebody to inappropriately say something to your mama, say something sexually explicit to your mama? At the same time, that girl, she gonna grow up and be a woman one day.

Summary

In a group ostensibly focused on how to relate respectfully to girls, the main message was to stay out of trouble. The degree to which the men focused on relationships *outside* the focal one was striking: potential conflicts with parents and police were prominent when discussing girls. The goal was to resist the stereotype of delinquency. So while the men resisted stereotypes related to criminality and hypersexuality, they did so by calling on fear of reprisals from different authorities, and supplied relatively less in the way of alternatives when interacting with girls.

An exception to the resist-to-survive message was the focus on developing one's skill with language, which Mr. Astead termed being a "lyricist." Verbal mastery was the Swiss army knife of resistance tactics, both for survival and personal cultivation. Broadly speaking, it was the tactical centerpiece of the sessions. To be literate in risk and fluent in self-expression was to know "how to operate." Citing celebrity exemplars in music pointed toward a path that has led (some) Black men to success, and resisted the stereotype of intellectual indifference, but may have also reinforced a narrow conception of Black male success.

Regarding sex roles, the men accommodated the ideology that places women on a pedestal: strong, emotional, maternal, and ideally brainy. This contrasted with the men's stories about girls, who tended to be framed as sources of risk, especially if they might lie about consensual interactions. The men also accommodated the ideology of males as aloof providers and protectors, reinforcing how masculine norms are increasingly adopted by Black boys as they age (Way et al., 2014). The moments when the men endorsed traditional masculinity were few, but telling in their lack of ambiguity: "as a male," being "unmoved" is the norm, and the man's

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role is to "counsel" his wife. But the boys were outside these images developmentally. Aside from moments when the boys were advised to "Ask her, How you doin?" there was little guidance how to positively relate to girls. The psychological distance between genders was reinforced by the aloofness the men explicitly and implicitly adopted with women.

Calling the boys "young men" served as a compliment and a challenge. It served up a tangle of contradictory scripts regarding how Black boyhood is constructed (Carey, 2020; Dumas & Nelson, 2016). The call to manhood "at a very early age" aligns with a pattern of adultification of Black boys where they are viewed as more threatening and less innocent than non-Black peers (Goff, Jackson, Di Leone, Culotta, & DiTomasso, 2014). The term captures the contradiction that Black adolescent boys (and girls) face. As children, they lack full agency, but as Black, they are assumed culpable and dangerous (Dumas & Nelson, 2016). The boys and girls, aside from being in "that grade," were also in a blind spot where they are "scripted out of childhood" (Dumas & Nelson, 2016). Practically speaking, the men's push toward adult topics left some of the boys' current concerns unaddressed—like Marcus' interaction with the school nurse—raising questions about the psychological cost of pressing the "young man" narrative. Maturity was both a badge and a target. It was as if the men were complimenting the boys in advance for mastering the paradox and warning them if they did not.

DISCUSSION

To address the question posed by Nasir (2018) of what conversations about resistance look like, I identified two approaches in the men's talk: a technical approach, and a devotional approach. The focus on skill and care is not a new pedagogical concept (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). An ethic of care is a fundamental aspect of CRE (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

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The men's technical approach centered on "pragmatic and expedient ways" to navigate gendered racial scripts (García Coll, et al., 1996; Rogers & Way, 2018). The men, as MKOs, focused on the skills one needed in order "to operate." "That's how if you would've get pulled over by a police officer, that's how they will say it to you. We're gonna speak in they terminology." Or, "This is how it is sometimes. Once again, that's the code switch." Skill talk relied on a didactic style that aligned with Black pedagogical traditions (Howard, Rose & Barbarin, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2011; Ware, 2006). The technical approach also generated periodic appraisals of the boys. Those moments created expectation within the group, with the boys sometimes asking for clarification (*Mr. Astead.:* "I'd say there's probably three in here who are on another level. Some of y'all gotta catch up." *Boys:* "Who was he pointing to?"). The introduction of a competitive element is unfamiliar to most social-emotional learning curricula. It was a small but potent moment in the groups, one that rested within a specific cultural on the image of verbal combat and accepted by virtue of Mr. Astead's acknowledged status as an MKO and his indiscriminate affection for the boys.

The devotional approach focused on care, and on finding meaning in relationships (Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Roderick, 2020). While Vygotsky himself may not directly address rapport, Vygotskian scholars view the zone of proximal development is an affective as well as cognitive space (Levykh, 2008). It is telling that the most direct appraisal of the boys by Mr. Astead, where he ranked boys by verbal ability, was immediately followed by "I love you all like little brothers. I just want you all to be great." While the technical approach was frankly evaluative, the affection apparent in the devotional approach not selective. It was directed equally, toward all the boys. It was in evidence after a storm came through the city and Mr. Astead went around the room to check in on their families, then said, "I'm glad that none of y'all got hurt. Seriously." The devotional

approach was also apparent in Mr. Astead's stories of his street level philanthropy. If the technical approach was characterized by marking boundaries, the devotional approach focused on connecting across them.

The case demonstrates the costs of devoting energy to resistance and accommodation of biases. To the extent the men focused on resisting stereotypes, they may have also reinforced them by not offering an explicit critique of the social conditions that, in their opinion, required short-term resistance. In addition, a casualty of the men's focus on resisting criminality was the opportunity to re-imagine the boy-girl relationship itself outside of a guilt-innocence frame. Interpersonal issues between the boys and girls were dialed back, and potential legal issues dialed up. Even in the hypothetical scenario between a peer-age boy and girl, which was designed to be ambiguous, Mr. Herndon focused the boys on determining the guilt or innocence of the boy in the encounter. So while the men scaffolded resisting delinquency and hypersexuality, the opening to explore more nuanced connections between the students strained under the weight of a judicial frame that was not explicitly challenged.

The men's focus on risk was likely reinforced by how the groups were conceived. As resistance scholars have claimed, context is a key determinant of resistance (Allen, 2013; Fine, 2006; Masta, 2014; Mumby, 2005). The particular context of this case—an after-school group designed to address incidents termed "sexual harassment"—conjured up vivid risks for Black males. The men used the discussion prompts they were provided, but they expanded the range of actors to include the state. The men acted as emissaries of the larger world the boys must reckon with: where adolescent Black boys can go from being in school to a courtroom for unpredictable reasons. Caring for them "like little brothers," they chose to amplify the threat of being deemed a threat.

Limitations

That I am White and female is part of the plot of the case. Listening for resistance and accommodation from my position means I missed or misinterpreted moments that another researcher may have heard more clearly. The groups occurred in 2016, and the men who led the groups were not available for member checking. Given the passage of time, the check they might have provided would have its own limitations, but my analysis would have benefited. For example, hearing from Mr. Astead about what knowing "how to operate" meant to him would enrich my understanding of his purpose.

The case was based on transcripts and audio from the discussion groups. The men's talk dominated, and had the groups been videotaped, I would have been able to see the boys' reactions. There were moments in the tape where movement was central: for example, at one point they practiced different handshake greetings, and Mr. Astead demonstrated how to maintain personal space in the form of one's "L," or the distance when one holds an arm to the front and an arm to one side. Video would have opened these sections to analysis. Given my instrumental purpose, the audio and transcripts nonetheless offered a platform to explore using the resistance/accommodation lens.

Implications

Case studies can address process. Interviews tell us about typologies and outcomes, but it is "an important concern of psychological research to show *how* external knowledge and abilities in children become internalized" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 91, emphasis added). Instrumental, comparative, and intrinsic case studies may add to pedagogical insights for scholars and educators interested in transformative SEL (Jagers, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2011; Love, 2013). They may offer empirical support to scholarship about cultural learning more broadly (Nasir,

Rosebery, Warren, & Lee, 2006). For researchers interested new methods to explore resistance and accommodation, events become an inescapable unit of analysis (Watts, Williams & Jagers, 2003).

Culturally relevant teaching literature, more so than SEL, has brought adults to the fore of discussions about race (Ladson-Billing, 2009; Paris, 2016). As more research is conducted with Black men who teach Black boys (Ross et al., 2016), qualitative descriptions of the range of approaches that support Black boys' social and emotional learning around bias and power will matter. Not because the approaches will be replicable in the traditional sense, but because they may point to the individualized ways that MKOs reason with adolescents about resisting and accommodating deliberately, with autonomy and personal cultivation in mind. If "resistance does what resistance does" (Mumby, 2005), qualitative depictions of tone and style may enrich our understanding of the process, and steer away from the tendency in education to pursue an ideal curriculum at the expense of understanding context. Resistance and accommodation, as a kind of implicit, cultural curriculum (Eisner, 1993), comprise a foundational skill for Black boys that, in some ways, can be thought of as too important to be relegated to formal SEL. The take-away for educators is not necessarily to "teach" resistance and accommodation formally, but to recognize that the social pressures facing Black boys create additional social-emotional demands. that adults in their lives are addressing.

CONCLUSION

For educators interested in SEL, this case study brings the racialized, gendered context of social-emotional learning and teaching to the surface (Jagers, 2016; Smith & Hope, 2020; Vygotsky, 1978; Watts, Williams, & Jagers, 2003). It speaks to recent calls for SEL to be more informed by how bias impacts the psychological wellbeing of non-White children (Jagers, 2016;

Jagers, Randall-Gardner, & Ausdal, 2018; Jagers, Rivas-Drake & Borowski, 2018). While "transformative" SEL and resistance literature share a progressive, liberationist agenda, that agenda may not be embraced by educators who bring their own identity and processes for navigating stereotypes to students (Starck, Riddle, Sinclair, & Warikoo, 2020; Watts, Williams, & Jagers, 2003). However one might judge what norms the men resisted or accommodated, there is care in the men claiming the boys—in their warnings, confessions, and entreaties. The data here offer a foretaste of questions that may arise when university-driven research interacts with event-sensitive, community-generated goals. Resistance and accommodation may offer a framework for naming the obligations that can emerge in community partner research.

In analyzing social interactions, the political plane is not always in plain sight (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). We need instruments, like a viewfinder for resistance and accommodation, to see. W.E.B. DuBois imagined such a lens in his fantastical story, The Princess Steel. There he described a "megascope" through which one could view what he called "the Great Near." The Great Near was the political plane. It was the landscape of beliefs designed to sustain economic production and social divisions—patterns familiar to all, but largely invisible to the naked eye. Resistance and accommodation provide a scope through which one could view how adults approach social and emotional learning and teaching for adolescent Black boys.

For Black boys, boyhood is often infringed on by outsiders who imagine them as culpable by virtue of growing up. Their boyhood may be cut short by insiders who want them to wise up to the risks of outsiders' imaginations. There is some loss in that learning, because in between the imaginations of outsiders and the worries of insiders are the boys themselves (Carey, 2020). If that in-between place of Black boyhood feels like a place that is not allowed to exist, then that feeling instructs us in the political ways the we construct identity—from the

outside in. To the extent the boys are indistinct in adolescence, unmoored from a social marker to hold them, they are outside our imaginations (Dumas & Nelson, 2016). The case points to a similar loss in how meaning is "fixed" to the girls. They are primarily future mothers, rendering them indistinct as persons now. For Black adolescent boys and girls, the present may feel missing (Dumas & Nelson, 2016). Connecting to the present may itself be an act of resistance.

But the losses exist alongside the connection between the men and the boys that can be heard on the tapes. The boys were made to feel they belonged to the men, to one of the men in particular, who claimed them individually by name and as a group. Social and emotional learning, not the acronym, but the ineffable part, is not just content. It is the flourishing that happens under the care of someone to whom we belong, and who sees us, outside of the stories that strangers might tell. Adults who are curious about social-emotional learning of Black boys and who see it as a developmental, historical, and cultural phenomenon, not just a curricular one, are positioned to point them toward a personal process of resistance and accommodation that is agentic, deliberate, and humane.

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