“RIDDLE ME THIS, BATMAN”: A CRITICALLY VISUAL BRICOLAGE OF THE AGENCY FOR SOCIOCURRICULAR POSITIONS IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOM

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my daughter Zion, who at the very early age of 3 years old, pushes me to be my very best.

How beautiful if nothing more

Than to wait at Zion’s door

I’ve never been in love like this before

Now let me pray to keep you from

The perils that will surely come

See life for you my princess has just begun

And I thank you for choosing me

To come through unto life to be

A beautiful reflection of his grace

See I know that a gift so great

Is only one God could create

And I’m reminded every time I see your face

That the joy of my world is in Zion

Beautiful, beautiful Zion

(Lauryn Hill, 1998)
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study has compelled and pushed everything within my inner soul to stay committed to it and bring it to completion. Despite my personal and philosophical journey of societal understanding, I could not have accomplished this without the unyielding support of my familial network. I would like to thank my husband for being the rock of my support, for all my late nights of studying and mental oblivion when writing, thank you for keeping everything going and keeping me above water. Mom, thank you for your beautiful and thoughtful soul that has guided my disposition to the world in such a way that I have undertaken and embraced this path. Dad, thank you for our long talks on social issues, you were always mentally right there with me as a young radical. Teri and Mark, your constant help with me and baby Zion, I could not have done this at all without you, I am indebted and owe you beyond comprehension. To Zion, Zion you are the pure reason for my perseverance, I love you with all of my heart. I would like to thank my committee for getting me through this tough journey. Dr. Bush, for your critical words on the revolution, I thank you. Dr. Larde, for your steadfast support for the use of my methodology, I thank you also. Dr. Scott-Simmons, I am so honored to have worked in your presence, and humbled to have you lead my investigation with such powerful insight. Above all, thank you God, for ordering my steps and having me constantly uphold the ideology of “whatever you do onto the least of these, you do onto me” (Matthew, 25:45).
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Prescribed norms of standard behavior dictated by ta endoxa (individuals of perceived wise opinions) operate to categorize individuals and align their access to social capital, thereby inducing a stratified social order. The academic field offers a favorable threshold for the reproduction of these dominant norms through the habitus and pedagogic actions of educators. The prevalence of sociocurricular positions are a response to societal perpetuations of legitimacy in the academic field. Oftentimes, the sociocurricular positions dictated by the characteristics of class, gender, knowledge, language, and race hold individuals that are affluent, male, articulate, mainstream linguistic, and of European descent in higher regards, thereby, the representations of legitimacy. Upon a review of the literature, evidence regarding the presence of these positions suggested that students’ placement within the academic field influences their academic success. Students placed in low sociocurricular positions because of their ascriptive characteristics negotiate their habitus in processes that negatively influence their academic progress or impede their individuality. Thus, the incidence of sociocurricular positions can be correlated to achievement disparities. Using a visual
bricolage methodology, this study was conducted to analyze to what degree of agency middle school educators uphold dominant norms of the aforementioned characteristics within their habitus, and how it influences their delivery of the curriculum. It was determined that of the participants analyzed, norms deemed legitimate because of dominant societal influence (ta endoxa) reside significantly within educators’ habitus, and it does translate to their delivery of the curriculum in various and interrelated paths.

INDEX WORDS: Legitimacy, Social Reproduction, Cultural Reproduction, Sociocurricular Positions, Middle Childhood, Habitus, Field, Social Capital, Self-Concept, Ta Endoxa
PROLOGUE

“Believe it or not, I can actually draw”

-Basquiat, 1981

In the purest inclination of his disposition to the world, Jean Michel Basquiat challenged the notion of legitimately good art, and visually expressed his truths of society. He denounced what the classical endoxa of art deemed quality visual expression. In the process, Basquiat liberated his art and unbound his individuality from the shackles of standardization. During an interview in 1981, Basquiat was repeatedly challenged about his revolutionary art talents, viewed by many as primitive. He responded to these challenges with, “Believe it or not, I can actually draw”. That quote represents to me the struggle for the value of difference and divergence in a society of acceptance through conformity. Staying faithful to unique, self-proclaimed legitimacy of thoughts, pathways of knowledge, and conceptions of truth is a constant challenge to artists. As an artist, I have spent much of my life diverging from legitimate behaviors and expressions in search for my unique truth within such pronunciations.

From the youngest age that I can remember, I have enjoyed taking my lived experiences and reproducing them as I accommodated new imagery into my drawings. I used to draw Garfield and Dragon Ball Z back then. For me, visual arts was a natural exploration of my societal perceptions. Shortly after my Garfield drawing days, I began to alter my drawing subjects as my reality shifted under the veil of conformity. As I grew older, drawing became a mode of representing my truths, in a world that seemed to be
blatantly untruthful. I realized as a teenager that artistry is a knowledge that allows for
the identity of leaders and followers, dominance and subordinance, winners and losers,
and happiness and sadness. It is uniquely a struggle for individual certainties.

In an educational, political, and social system of proclaimed democracy, I
observed notions of injustice and inequality as a child and questioned my parents
continuously about fairness. I asked questions like, “Mom, why don’t some people have
money?” or “Mom, why don’t some people like brown skin?” I observed, and I
questioned, and through my art, I expressed my truths. I have always been concerned
with acceptance and equality. Eventually, I came to realize that society functions in ways
that are not necessarily equal but in methods that reproduce stratification, thereby
denoting acceptance and equivalence. Despite this personally derived realization about
the functioning of society, I continued to speculate on how and why the stratifications
have persisted over the years.

I started to understand more about this process when I became an art educator.
My lens for the reproduction of social and cultural truths grew stronger and more
inquisitive, due to my acute awareness that my students’ identities were at stake. I
continued to identify modes of exclusion resulting from reproduction of arbitrary
principals. Being an educator made the experience of acceptance even more daunting as
I witnessed the stunting of the individuality of my students’ academic identities for the
sake of upholding dominant prescribed norms of being. In an effort to subvert instances
of losing their natural inclinations, I challenged my students to analyze societal matters
such as poverty, sexism, standardization, language, and racism issues with divergent
perspectives, and to express them through their art and dialogue. The creation and perception of art allows cultural understanding and reflection. It enables the creator and beholder to “...transcend difficulties, solve problems, and imagine a future when the reality of the world is difficult” (Higgs, 2008, p. 545). Thus, within a society that functions as a system of legitimate and illegitimate characteristics bequeathed to individuals through their access to dominant social capital, artistic creation allows individuals to challenge that structure, as they realize their own positions within the field. However, was challenging my students in class sufficient to disrupt the predominant and dominating structure of reproduction through standardization?

Dialogue, examination, and critique provide avenues of social and cultural interrogation. While I believe my classroom dialogues were purposeful, I also believe I was called to respond to this issue of categorizing students to the detriment of their uniqueness from a macroscopic approach. This call to respond has prompted a deeper investigation of the struggle for individuality and power as impelled and framed by the individual interpretation of art, specifically the art of Jean Michel Basquiat.

After reading as much as I could on the matter of dominance in societal structures, I became specifically interested in how educators reproduce norms of legitimacy for the characteristics of class, gender, knowledge, language, and race. I chose so many categories of power to analyze because all of these characteristics form a larger picture—an in-depth perception and totality of the human experience (Berry, 2004; Kincheloe, 2008; Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011). The matter of dominance in societal structures became the central focus of this study. I chose the school society
because in many ways it is an effective field for reproducing the dominant norms of society at large.

The delivery of a curriculum based in content designed to reproduce societal customs reproduces dominant and legitimated norms in education, promoting a system that influences class difference, achievement gaps, disengagement, and resistance within the schools (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Giroux, 2001). If one realm of knowledge is deemed to be wise and universally true—to have transferable value and social capital (Bourdieu, 1977; Dumais, 2005; Fabiansson, 2015)—how might divergent forms of knowledge be classified? As with forms of art, what forms of academic, curricular, social, gendered, and lingual knowledge exist in the eye of the beholder? Art acts as a personal thread and avenue of expression for individual lived experiences. It is also a vehicle for recognizing one’s existence within a hierarchy of legitimacy.

Therefore, to illustrate more effectively the proponents of society that suspend an individual’s habitus, I chose comments and artistic titles of the late Jean Michel Basquiat as a metaphorical backdrop for this study. Basquiat, an artist of New York City during the 1970s and 1980s, repulsed some because of his artistic inclination to create art under the legitimacy of his own endoxa. Others revered him for calling attention to mainstream ideals that promoted capitalism, hierarchy, and injustice (Rodrigues, 2011). Basquiat’s concepts and art titles embody individuality and challenge perspectives that attempt to overshadow divergent thinking.

Art encapsulates visual and nonverbal communication of realities, especially moments of systematic order that validate, as well as jeopardize, the individualities and
autonomy of others (Amburgy, 2011; Chin, 2013; Greene, 1995; Higgs, 2008; Knoblauch, Baer, Laurier, Petschke, & Schnettler, 2008; Pink, 2013; Rose, 2016). Additionally, the arts are a form of knowledge that functions by accessing individuals’ orientation to societal issues and how they have processed them (Harper, 2002; Higgs, 2008; Pink, 2013). This occurs as the viewer reflects upon the image, and the retraction of previous experiences that relate to the work of art elicits their experiences with reality (Harper, 2002; Pink, 2013). I chose a methodology that highlights visual arts and art elicitation to investigate the perceptions and habitus of middle school educators to ascertain their proclivity to reproduce inculcated norms. Thus, in this study, art knowledge will serve to connect supportive or critical knowledge processes to modes of communication and understanding within the middle school institution.

As socially constructed norms of class, knowledge, language, gender, and race are being reproduced arbitrarily, individuals begin to uphold and respect those norms as legitimate; thus, creating an official knowledge (Apple, 1993, 2014). Consequently, to maintain capital and high social positions within the field, the habitus of educators who are oriented towards the endoxa influence the curriculum of educational institutions to uphold these norms as well. Consequently, the position of the educator is critical in their accommodation and translation of knowledge. Therefore, potential for arbitrary inculcation of the mainstream norms for class, gender, knowledge, language, and races arises, leaving the natural inclinations and the self-identity of students in jeopardy. This investigation delves into how this inculcation of dominant mainstream norms in the U.S. may influence the academic habitus of middle school students in the areas of class,
gender, knowledge, language, and race. My own lived experiences and habitus have led me to this inquisition. The use of art, in particular art that has been deemed critical to counter established norms, presents as the chosen medium to prompt responses, reflections, and analysis of acquiescence or refusal. This study features an exploration of the reproduction of power under the pretense of legitimacy and its implications for the academic identities of our youth. Additionally, this study sought to determine the implications for the conceptualization of academic and personal identities of our youth at the middle school level. The influence and perceptions of teachers who stand as figures of power were analyzed against the backdrop of revolutionary artist Jean Michel Basquiat.
CHAPTER 1

EXU, THE PROBLEM

Exu, a Yoruban God, the divine messenger, is the owner of the roads and doors. His nature is contradictory.

Basquiat’s painting of Exu, the Yoruban God, gatekeeper of roads and doors, visually represents the conceptualization of social and cultural reproduction. Exu exists as the messenger, the connective power that facilitates communication between humans and nature. This spirit-based power provides for translation: the power to state expectations between realms. Conversely, this is the power that some men have co-opted in order to dictate the legitimacy of behavior. In doing so, they have self-bestowed the power of access or denial. These powerful individuals hold access to opportunities and acceptance. Their opinions are known as endoxa, individuals deemed reputable by society to embody conformist wisdom (Aristotle & Barnes, 2014; Fairclough, 2012). These individuals deem all knowledge valuable until specific forms of knowledge subvert the opinions of their very own, and then those forms of knowledge are deemed disreputable. Thus, they are the owner of roads and doors to legitimacy, and their nature is contradictory.

In approximately 300 B.C., Aristotle worked to legitimize knowledge within the philosophical contexts of the soul (Aristotle & Barnes, 2014). His highly complex compilation of writings and theories has led to divergent translations and understandings.
Some view Aristotle’s conceptualization of philosophical understandings of the soul as it inhabits the environment as the foundation for the understanding of the human spirit and the acquisition of knowledge (Dietz, 2012; McLeod, 1995; Smith, 1999). Others conceive his early writings as informers of dominance (Fairclough, 2012; Renon, 1998). Aristotle’s use of \textit{ta endoxa} is not immune to numerous diverging translations. He referred to endoxa in many of his writings.

However, Aristotle’s reference to endoxa as “by all, or by the majority, or by the most notable and reputable of them” (Aristotle & Barnes, 2014, p. 382) garners much scholarly attention. Roughly translated into the “reputable opinions” (Fairclough, 2012; McLeod, 1995), scholars have suggested that Aristotle’s endoxa are essential to philosophical foundations and theories, for they are the starting place for universal truth (McLeod, 1995; Nussbaum, 1986). Therefore, the concept of the endoxa as the holders and beginners of ultimate truths lends to the production of norms and opinions of the wise collective as more valuable than the opinion of the individual. Upon thousands of years of philosophical legitimacy and norms of the endoxa, the social and cultural reproduction of dominant attributes has created the structure of society. Marx (1970) commented, “The weapon of criticism cannot, of course, replace criticism of the weapon, material force be overthrown by material force; but theory also becomes a material force as soon as it has been gripped by the masses” (p. 5). This study sought to analyze the inadvertent influences of the social constructs of the endoxa and their material force as they have been systemically embodied by the school field.
Doctoral pursuits frequently begin with a philosophical quest for the understanding of one’s epistemological, ontological, and axiological stances. Within this arduous quest, I experienced the continuous challenge to search my soul for understanding of my reality, while relentlessly juxtaposing it to the reality of others. I came to find that amongst multiple perspectives and realities, universal truths are a philosophical rarity. Instead, what we have are millions of diverging ideals and concepts ciphered to shape the standards of legitimacy in which we are taught to aspire (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). This process—selecting arbitrary values as legitimate concepts—creates an official knowledge, excluding those that counter it and deeming them uncivilized (Apple, 1993).

Despite the severe differences in our individual dispositions, the ideals and concepts of those who many consider wise or reputable in the field, the endoxa, are upheld as legitimate beliefs, and they are reproduced among the masses (Aristotle & Barnes, 2014; Fairclough, 2012; Haskins, 2004; McLeod, 1995). This is extraordinarily intriguing. The formation and reproduction of knowledge that is of value to some affect an entire society and create a hierarchy of societal positions. This summation serves as the basis of this research investigation.

The maintenance of societal hierarchy as it relates to individual dispositions and inclinations (habitus) exists because of systematic efforts to devalue behavior that diverges from dominantly upheld opinions in order to maintain control (Apple, 1993; Bourdieu, 1969, 1995; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Kincheloe, 2008). This issue has become extremely poignant as a personal rationale for the exploration of inequality and
academic identity in schools. What is of utmost concern about this reproduction of power is the accommodation and inculcation of power by individuals within societal systems, specifically within the educational system. Students of all ages are subject to the influence of those who lead their classrooms. However, middle school students, due to their intricate and developmental complexities, are a unique segment of the academic population. They are highly influenced by a variety of environmental and societal facets that surround their individual spheres. These facets include peers and authority figures alike. It is with the recognition that the middle childhood is such a pivotal timeframe for the development of the self-concept that this research analyzes the educators of this age group and the ways their habitus of dominant norm negotiation influences the self-concept of their students.

As a practicing visual artist, I have always been concerned with the expression of difference and tolerance. Conversely, the reproduction of an official knowledge has always challenged that. The academic institution, a microcosm of society at large, plays a role in the reproduction of official or legitimate norms of class, gender, knowledge, language, and gender. In the school field, students are subject to placement in positions contingent upon their normed capital and disposition to the aforementioned characteristics. These positions, referred to as sociocurricular positions, influence the academic identity of the student and perhaps even their life success (Friedkin & Thomas, 1997; Halliman & Oakes, 1994; Reay, 1995, 2004b; Rubin, 2007).

Art is the manifestation of thoughts and realities. It extends critical thinking and contextualizes perception and existence (Higgs, 2008). Therefore, artistic creation is a
form of knowledge. My personally derived and developed form of knowledge extends
directly from my uniquely framed conceptualizations of artistic expression. My
personally derived connection between the arts and construction of hierarchical power
directed my academic quest toward this inquiry. However, my personal form of
knowledge expression and validation was rarely offered as a course of value or content
pathway that possessed curricular capital. Attending institutions that limited my
inclination to advance these creative skills for the sake of a systematic hyper-deference to
content standardization inculcated by the dominant institutional endoxa led me to resist
the validity of the academic structure. I felt that my natural disposition and position as an
artist within an academic field that reduced art to a hobby was subject to influence out of
my control, ultimately challenging my uniqueness and individualized reality.

As a child, I struggled to understand why schools only offered the visual arts as
elective courses and designated them as an othered, or marginalized, content pathway in
the same vein as a women’s studies, African-American history, or a foreign language
course (Ferrare & Apple, 2015; hooks, 1992; Luke, 2003; Reay, 2006). According to the
institutional endoxa, these content areas qualify as othered. Therefore, they were not
reproduced as legitimately mainstream concepts and forms of study. Conversely,
regulated forms of knowledge, such as mathematics and understandings of the English
vernacular, are upheld and promoted. The othered content are discouraged and relegated
to the margins due to the perception that they propose to initiate individualized critical
thinking and challenge the accepted endoxa.
An examination and interrogation of standardized endoxa, viewed through a critical lens and an in-depth review of the research, has revealed that the strategy to promote certain cultural norms and sustain a hierarchy of capital requires that some forms of knowledge must be othered. My social field position as an African-American female artist has prompted a critical practitioner’s perspective regarding the division of power produced by the reproductive and legitimating measures that serve to uphold the dominant cultural arbitrary. To uphold the validity of legitimated content areas in the classroom, the school field appears to discourage divergent and creative thinking within the context of student dialogue. There is no longer time or the need for complex conversations, situated learning, and social transmission within classrooms (Pinar, 2012). Self-identity, individuality, and acceptance of one’s uniqueness have lost precedence as the need for students to conform thrives. As Pinar (2012) stated:

By silencing subjectivity and ensuring standardization of behavior, the standardized test-making industry and the politicians who fund it stop communication and enforce mimicry, ending reconstruction. The spontaneity of conversation disappears in the replication of memorized answers and the application of cognitive skills to solve conceptual puzzles unrelated to either inner experience or public life. Censored is that self-reflexivity dialogical encounter invites. (p. 224)

In other words, with the emphasis of reproducing mainstream norms, or norms initiated by endoxa, lost is the uniqueness of our individuality.
This study seeks to explore the habitus of middle school educators regarding their advocacy for or against the incidence of social and cultural reproduction in the U.S. school system. For this investigation, I drew upon the theories of social reproduction, cultural reproduction, and resistance as experienced by the agency of middle school educators. I analyzed the agency of educators to uphold mainstream norms of legitimacy through methodology that involved the teachers’ responses to art elicitation. Art imagery served as a medium to analyze how the teachers negotiated their habitus as stewards of perpetuation, or autonomy and insurrection.

This chapter begins with a contextual background explaining the dynamics of social and cultural reproduction, which are the overarching theoretical concepts supporting this study. The introduction of concepts of field, habitus, capital, sociocurricular positions, and resistance provide additional structure and evidenced support for this exploration. Additionally, the research question, purpose, and significance of the study in this chapter afford a guiding framework and rationale for the investigation. Finally, this chapter concludes with a list of definitions of the relevant terminology frequently used throughout the analysis. The following sections provide a brief historical introduction to the influences of social and cultural reproduction within a school field of uniquely individual dispositions (habitus).

Historical Introduction

Aristotle (2014) sometimes referred to the endoxa as those individuals deemed as the legitimators of wisdom. With such power comes the consequence of exclusion and hierarchy. A review of the literature indicates that notions of tracking, standardization,
resistance, and capital relate to the overarching idea that society and culture are sustained in principles that identify certain characteristics and knowledge as desirable and legitimate, deeming all others as abnormal and illegitimate. Therefore, those who naturally uphold characteristics deemed by the endoxa as legitimate also uphold the most social capital, giving them the most mobility within their position in the social realm. This concept is what French philosopher, Pierre Bourdieu (1985), referred to as social and cultural reproduction within fields of habitus (dispositions). Essentially, he suggested that society is a field, and within that field are field positions. Contingent upon an individual’s inherited capital and natural inclinations, their position in the field aligns or misaligns with legitimized standards of ta endoxa (Bourdieu, 1969, 1984, 1985b). Thus, for the sake of gaining social capital, individuals may find themselves being inculcated with the dominant norms and modes of standardization that have been empowered by the framing social field.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1995), as well as Giroux (2001), indicated that one of the largest systems of the inculcation and social reproduction of dominant norms is the school system. There are differences in what we know to be true about education and knowledge and how it manifests in the school structure. Cycles of social and cultural reproduction prevail in many of the school systems to perpetuate capitalistic ideals and the sustainability of dominant norms (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013; Apple, 1993, 2015; Bourdieu, 1977; Brown, 2004; Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004; Drotos, & Cilesiz, 2014, Dumais; 2005; Giroux, 2001; Hatt, 2007; Reay, 2006; Rubin, 2007). Giroux (2001) contended,
Rather than being directly linked to the power of an economic elite, schools are seen as part of a larger universe of symbolic institutions that, rather than impose docility and oppression, reproduce existing power relations subtly via the production and distribution of a dominant culture that tacitly confirms what it means to be educated. (p. 87)

Reproduction and critical theorists challenge the school’s primary function by suggesting that it serves to uphold the status of individuals who already maintain the dominant norms and privileges of society. They suggest that the school operates to reproduce these individuals, and perhaps their descendants, in their dominant and superior positions in society by maintaining their sociocurricular positions and their perceptions of normal, legitimate standards for all.

Sociocurricular positions have significant influence on how learners orient themselves in the school environment (Bourdieu, 1985a; Friedkin & Thomas, 1997; Heck, Price, Thomas, 2004). Arbitrary features have been used to separate individuals into factions due to the call for legitimacy (Bourdieu, 1967). Therefore, all individuals of an environment inculcate values deemed as legitimate, and as a response, lanes of dominance prevail. These levels of legitimacy in the school system are used to categorize students in ways that may be averse to their natural dispositions (Apple, 2015; Bourdieu, 1967; Reay, 2004). The pedagogic actions of educators may uphold the dominant values of legitimacy by ensuring that the curriculum and instruction support those values through structure, standardization, and the promise of academic success (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Hatt, 2012). Such agency prompts students to either alter
their dispositions to learning or resist inculcation (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013; Reay, 2004a). Thus, students will fill sociocurricular positions that dictate their learner identities whether they are naturally oriented to the legitimate standards or not.

Theoretical Framework

This section introduces and delineates the theoretical framework of this study. The purpose of this investigation is to investigate the agency of legitimated norms in the school system. Therefore, the theoretical underpinnings of social and cultural reproduction in addition to resistance in the school field is appropriate to support this study. Furthermore, the use of ta endoxa and its influential implications on middle school students will be discussed to provide a brief holistic view of the occurrence and intersectionality of societal reproductions and their implied consequences on students of the middle childhood.

Social and Cultural Reproduction

Sociologists and psychologists, Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, made a significant contribution to the field of education by making a connection between the agenda of many public schools and social reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Bourdieu and Passeron understood and presented the school system as an extremely sophisticated and multilayered force that, under the pretenses of equality, perpetuates the success of individuals with cultural capital. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) stated,

Thus, we now know that, in America no less than in Europe, credentials contribute to ensuring the reproduction of social inequality by safeguarding the preservation of the structure of the distribution of powers through a constant re-
distribution of people and titles characterized, behind the impeccable appearance of equity and meritocracy, by a systematic bias in favor of the possessors of inherited cultural capital. (p. xi)

These individuals are usually representative of the dominant culture, which in the case of the U.S. society, are individuals of European ancestry, male gender, knowledgeable of Eurocentric standards, fluent speakers of the national language, and qualified members of the middle and upper class (Apple, 1993; Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Handsfield, 2006; Ispa-Landa, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2000; McMahon, 2003; Morris, 2007; Orr, 2011; Reay, 2004b; Reay, 2006). The idea that some cultures or experiences of certain individuals are both dominant and dominating features of the American curriculum is the basic premise of critical theory and hegemony, thus the reproduction of legitimated social capital.

Field Theory

Briefly, field theory is a psychological theory that examines patterns of interaction between individuals and the various environments in which they inhabit or function. This theory, rooted in Gestalt psychology, is a mind-based theory historically developed in the Berlin School of experimental psychology. The underlying premise of this Gestalt-based theory highlights the pursuit to identify, understand, and internalize an ability to acquire and maintain meaningful insights in an ever-morphing chaotic world. The central principle of Gestalt psychology and the derivative field theory is that the mind constantly seeks to produce a comprehensive whole through self-organizing predispositions—the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Koffka, 1955). Field theory is the belief that
systems of thought such as the school operate as a space, or field, in which individuals play certain roles in upholding its structure. Multiple fields for multiple systems of thought exist, such as sports, medical practices, and sanctuaries (Bourdieu, 1967, 1969, 1985b). Each field has a distinct set of norms and self-ascribed standards of legitimacy. The school field holds norms for the legitimacy of knowledge and behavior for a set of students from a variety of background experiences and dispositions. Thus, the school field encompasses the whole with multiple parts that form different sociocurricular positions.

Resistance

The theory of resistance is a concept expounded upon by critical theorist, Henry Giroux (2001). Caused by a state of cognitive dissonancy (Giroux, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Riley, 2010), resistance is the incidence that occurs when a learner is not able to, or refuses to assimilate or accommodate new knowledge (Giroux, 2001). Giroux and other cognitive theorists explained that this resistance is likely the result of the learner feeling devalued, inferior, misunderstood, or personally disconnected from the novel content because the new information is incompatible with his or her preexisting knowledge and schemas (Fox & Riconscente, 2008; Giroux, 2001). In 2001, Giroux presented the notion that because the education system is reproducing dominant cultures and statuses through a hierarchy of value-laden norms supported by standardized testing, some students may not possess the requisite knowledge base to assimilate presented information. Ultimately, the result is a resistance to the type of learning model, as well as the information conveyed within the field, classified as school.
Giroux (1994) stated, “Here, the dominant pedagogical model is said to be a ‘banking system’ which introduces students to the ‘correct’ ways to understand the world, and rewards those who re-present these understandings in examinations, coursework, and so on” (p. 337). Students who are not representative of the dominant culture suffer from a misrepresentation in curriculum and instruction (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Ispa-Landa, 2013; McMahon, 2003; Morris, 2007). Therefore, these particular students may find it more difficult to process information because of its nonsensical connection to their own realities. After repeated exposure of being unable to attain equilibration cognitively, a student may resist learning (Cohen & Kim, 1999; Giroux, 2001). Resistance may be self-defeating, silence, or transformative (Giroux, 2001). Giroux (2001) encouraged transformative resistance, because these students are potential agents of change who recognize needs for improvements and make suggestions of how to make the curriculum more diversely engaging.

Habitus

The theory of the habitus is that a set of embodied dispositions form in response to an individual’s reality (Bourdieu, 1985b, 2002). The habitus is a state of being that involves the individual’s natural orientations—how individuals think, move, speak, and behave (Bourdieu, 1967)—toward an environment. Formed in relation to an individual’s social field and the social capital they bring to said field (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013; Bourdieu, 1967, 1985b; Davey, 2009; Reay, 2004a), the habitus influences the sociocurricular placement, yet it is also influenced through societal expectations.
Capital

Bourdieu (1997) also speculated on the theory of capital as a valuable resource to possess for social mobility as to its correlation to the field and habitus. Social capital is a symbolic form of currency that passes between individuals that maintain the desired norms and behaviors of a specific field (Bourdieu, 1977; Dumais, 2002, 2005; Kisida, Greene, & Bowen, 2014). Therefore, having social capital in the school field can influence the placement of the sociocurricular position, and consequently the academic identity and success of a student (Bourdieu, 1977; Dumais, 2005; Fabiansson, 2015; Kisida et al., 2014; Mohr & DiMaggio, 1995; Vorhaus, 2014).

Middle Childhood

According to Eccles (1999), children between the ages of 6-14 undergo a critical process of social development known as the middle childhood, which is highly marked by social connections that work to mold the child’s self-identity. Social connections such as peer and educator acceptance foster the child’s state of being, as the child discovers aspects of him or herself that are acceptable or desired within the social field. Research suggests that societal expectations of legitimately normal behavior have a significant influence on the self-concept of children within this age range (Eccles, 1999; Harter, 2006; Kurtz-Costes, Rowley, Harris-Britt, & Woods, 2008; Rosenberg, Schooler, & Schoenbach, 1989). Furthermore, Blakely-McClure (2016) found links between the highly influential self-concept of the middle childhood and negative self-evaluations and
aggression when development transpired without positive support. This age range is unique in that it serves as the threshold for individuality. The birth of epistemological, ontological, and axiological thinking lies here. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, educators of students in their middle childhood have a heightened amount of influence on the students’ self-concepts through their pedagogic action to uphold or resist reproducing norms deemed legitimate. Educators of middle school students may nourish a self-concept that upholds individuality and critical awareness, or a self-concept that serves as a social functionary within a prescribed curricular position. To investigate the happenstance of social and cultural reproduction, it is critical to analyze the age group in which the norms of endoxa may be the most susceptible to embodiment.

Critical and Functionary Educators

Critical educators work to enrich the characters of students while challenging them to seek critical inquiry regarding issues in everyday life in order to become social agents of change (Kincheloe, 2008). They offer challenges to learners that promote the consideration, examination, and analysis of divergent and varied concepts through multiple lenses. Critical learning holds the objective to encourage learners to identify themselves and their unique habitus in the new learned ideas, which results in promotion of their individualities.

Contrarily, field functionaries in education work to merely deposit mainstream theories and concepts upon the recipient learners. This term and the resultant responsibilities of the position date back to the days of Napoleon as a conquering despot. Functionaries were enlisted to uphold the duties, or functions, of the king’s centralized
Functionaries view knowledge formation and validation with immutable obedience and follow administrative mandates that have separated “conceptualization of professional task from its execution” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 121). These divergent educational practitioners operate in differing educational realms, and this study seeks to explore their influence on students’ academic identities.

Statement of the Problem

The high emphasis on conformity constrains the ability of a learner to reach true equilibration if the curriculum does not allow for complex questioning, cultural relevance, and critical inquiry (Aydeniz & Southerland, 2012; Donegan & Trepanier-Street, 1998; Pinar, 2012). Brooks and Brooks (2001) advised, “Robbing students of the opportunity to discern for themselves importance from trivia can evoke the conditions of a well-managed classroom at the expense of a transformation-seeking classroom” (sect. 1). With the incidence of high-stakes testing, the room for individuality and justice-oriented speculation decreases (Pinar, 2012). The 2016 *Condition of Education* data indicated that African-American and Hispanic-American students possessed lower reading and mathematics levels than their European-American peers (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2016). While opponents of critical theory may argue that this disparity is attributable to a number of reasons, critical theorists present the argument that this achievement disparity is due to years of the systematic reproduction of the dominant social and cultural norms that limit some individuals from receiving an appropriate and free education (Apple, 2015; Ferrare & Apple, 2015; Giroux, 2001;
Kinzeloe, 2008; McLaren, 2015). Giroux (2013a) described social issues in education and their systemic effects as follows:

The struggle over public education is inextricably connected to a struggle against poverty, racism, violence, war, bloated defense budgets, a permanent warfare state, state sanctioned assassinations, torture, inequality, and a range of other injustices that reveal a shocking glimpse of what America has become and why it can no longer recognize itself through the moral and political visions and promises of a substantive democracy. (para. 26)

One’s ability to reason, and to absorb new knowledge, requires a dialectical critique that is solely contingent upon the individual regulating new information as it relates to their own identity (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013; Bourdieu, 2000; Fairclough, 2010; Giroux, 2001). The self-identity is crucial to this process as it allows or disallows the accommodation of new information. Contradictory to this learning process is the absence of culturally relevant lessons that oblige students of varying background experiences and habitus (Ayers, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1997). Education as it exists in the U.S. includes emphasis on the strength of memorization and attention (Skinner, 1984). While these are both important aspects of learning, educators must provide them via methods that include and balance the other needs of the learner (Schunk, 2012).

Lack of individuality and cognitive thinking that requires considering notions of society, justice, democracy, cultural relevance, and the student’s role as an agent of change restricts the student’s learning and habitus. In the context of this study, Francisco de Goya’s (1799) *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* illustrates the concept of
teaching to conform, for it is a loss of reason to educate individuals without reference to their individuality. Educating young minds without creative critical thinking is unreasonable, for it merely sustains aspects of social reproduction that do not benefit the knowledge and freedom of all.

The incidence of prescribed norms and behaviors of legitimacy derives from the social reproduction of dominant cultural arbitraries in specific fields. In the academic field, this occurrence manifests in the form of sociocurricular positions. These positions, deemed by ascriptive characteristics such as the students’ race and gender, confine the learner’s potential by categorizing them in factions that limit their access to social capital. Educators have the option of acting on the occurrence of sociocurricular positions through their agency to deliver the curriculum, combined with their natural dispositions to societal legitimacy. Students who do not possess the norms and capital of legitimacy may be discouraged to learn and react through self-defeating resistance. Alternatively, these students may experience self-fulfilling prophecies, since their educators have deemed their habitus illegitimate (Riley, 2010). Thus, the self-concept of the student is at jeopardy contingent upon the educator’s agency to uphold norms of legitimacy. The power of the educator resides within their embodied orientation to society. The self-concept and academic success of the student relates directly to the use of this power.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the agency that middle school educators hold regarding the perpetuation or resistance to social and cultural reproduction. To achieve greater acknowledgement of the self-concept and habitus of middle school
students, it was necessary to analyze the ideas and perceptions that educators hold regarding mainstream cultural norms. The findings of this study were used to draw implications regarding the degree of agency for dominant cultural norms and the tendency to influence the student’s advocacy of self.

Rationale and Significance

This study was conducted for the understanding of social and cultural reproduction from the middle school educators’ perspective in relation to the following subjects: class, gender, knowledge, language, and race. The rationale for this research came from the need to acknowledge the experiences and perceptions of teachers as agents of social and cultural reproduction. The theories of social and cultural reproduction essentially regard the incidence of one cultural arbitrary promoted as the dominant standard for all others to aspire (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Through systematic and pedagogic action, the dominant culture remains dominant because of its perpetuation and valuation over all others for generations.

The school system provides one of the largest fields to reproduce social and cultural standards (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Giroux, 2001). However, within the school system this perpetuation is subtle, so subtle that many teachers would not even recognize that through their pedagogic action, hegemony is at play (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Tracy (2013) maintained, “Hegemony is at work when people accept, consent, and reproduce practices that are not in their own interest” (p. 43). In the case of education in the U.S., the dominant culture, or those individuals who typically sustain the greatest cultural capital, comprises those of European descent and male, heterosexual
orientation (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Ispa-Landa, 2013; McMahon, 2003; Morris, 2007). Through centuries of power and dominance, these individuals have become the endoxa for the societal norms of legitimacy for the United States (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Ispa-Landa, 2013; McMahon, 2003; Morris, 2007).

Therefore, the European-American norms such as class, speech, dress, and expression are often the models for legitimate human performance (Apple, 1993; Handsfield, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Orr, 2011; Reay, 2004b, 2006). This becomes problematic because it conflicts with the establishment of those individuals without cultural capital, or individuals that maintain the capital, but the model norms go against their uniqueness. As a result, students may respond to the inculcation of another culture with resistance, thereby limiting their academic potential (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Giroux, 2001; Morris, 2007).

The school’s role in perpetuating dominant norms lies in those individuals in direct communication with the students. Although board members, administrators, and school counselors influence student learning, research reveals that, outside of the student’s family, educators have the most influence on the perception of the student’s self-concept (Scott, Murray, Mertens, Dustin, 1996). The degree of the educator’s advocacy for or against the perpetuation of the dominant culture and its norms has implications on that educator’s delivery of the curriculum and the development of the students’ ideas of self-concept. Self-acceptance is greater than any other acceptance (VanKoughnett & Smith, 1969), thus, it is essential to have self-acceptance so that one can learn to accept others and enhance potential social and academic features of one’s
life. Therefore, it is critical to promote the concept of self within students, instead of implementing the importance of the dominant culture.

This research study was necessary to indicate the prevalence of educators promoting the self-concept within their students despite inculcated cultures. Although research exists to entail the presence of social and cultural reproduction within American society, limited research exists regarding the lived experiences of teachers that both support and resist its agency in the middle school setting. This study is significant in that it addresses the gap in the literature regarding teacher’s pedagogic action when considering social and cultural reproduction; the intersectionality of it within class, gender, knowledge, language, and race; and its curricular implications for the growth of the students as individuals in the middle school environment.

The emphasis of standardized testing propels the importance of standardization and conformity (Drotos & Cilesiz, 2014; Pinar, 2012; Reay, 2006). With such emphasis placed on standardization within a socially and culturally reproductive society, students lose the ability to develop their own notion of self. Each student brings both unique background experiences and personality preferences (their habitus) to the classroom that educators should foster so that they are able to develop into their best possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Owens & Patterson, 2013). Propelling the dominant norms and cultures within the classroom may oppose that natural uniqueness that every student possesses. As a result, some students may experience feelings of inadequacy because their cultural understanding of society may not be the culture reproduced and perpetuated throughout the education system as legitimate (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013; Apple, 1993;
The significance of this study is to help identify the need to address all cultures for their individual strengths to promote the habitus of all students and subsequently their academic and post academic success.

Research Questions

Visual bricolage serves as the methodology to gather and analyze the responses of middle school educators to artwork. The purpose was to determine if the responses indicated a promotion or demotion of social and cultural reproduction in the field, designated as the middle school setting. The research questions focused on how educators perceive artwork that contained conformity and resistance to dominantly reproduced norms. Hypotheses, based on the reaction to the artwork, were made regarding the teachers’ habitus to cultural norms and how they manifest through their curriculum and instruction within sociocurricular positions. The guiding research questions for this study are as follows:

1. To what degree of agency do middle school educators uphold mainstream norms of legitimacy in the sociocurricular positions of class, gender, knowledge, language, and race?
   a. How do teachers respond to images that appear to resist the dominant cultural norms?
   b. How do teachers respond to images that appear to uphold the dominant cultural norms?
2. How does the cultural habitus of middle school educators influence the delivery of their curriculum and instruction?

Research Methodology: Visual Bricolage

My role in this study was to explore the cultural dynamics and habitus of middle school educators. I presented visual artwork that presented conformity or resistance to social and cultural reproduction. I then analyzed the responses of these educators to theories of social reproduction, cultural reproduction, and resistance by assessing if the educator was a critical educator or a social functionary.

The interview process included showing each participant 10 images concerning social and cultural reproduction of five specific categories: class, gender, knowledge, language, and race. For each category, two pictures were shown; one upholding mainstream legitimacy, and one resisting it. I asked each participant to respond to the images and express how it related to them, followed by how it related to their students. The participants’ responses were audio-recorded and transcribed. I then critically analyzed the discourse to identify coding categories and later interpretive repertoires.

Following this, I analyzed the repertoires using critical discourse analysis for language that indicated the teachers’ negotiation and reality of sociocurricular positions.

Researcher Assumptions

Based on my educational career as a student and my six years as an educator, I made the following assumptions about this research. First, teachers are in need of more efficient teacher preparation programs that address their intrinsic feelings and the nature of individual roles within a functioning society. Teachers need to be aware of their biases.
and the reasons for their beliefs about dominance and difference. This assumption stems from the framework of several philosophers regarding social reproduction, cultural reproduction, the role of the teacher, and critical theory (Bartolome, 2004; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Freire, 1970/2000; Giroux, 2001; Yosso, 2005).

My second assumption was that regardless of race, age, or cultural background, all the participants would have preconceived notions of how they viewed the dominant culture and how they maintained or resisted its reproduction. Being of one race or culture does not dictate the expectations of one’s view of hegemony. This assumption comes from both life experiences and the research provided by Lilia Bartolome (2004) and Joyce King (1991).

My third assumption was that teachers should receive routine pedagogical developmental training to address methods that propel creative resistance and individuality to help foster the growth of the student’s self-concept. This assumption stems from the research of Patricia Amburgy (2011), David Darts (2004), Brenda McMahon (2003), and Cynthia Scott, Gerald Murray, Carol Mertens, and Richard Dustin (1996).

**Delimitations**

A delimitation of this study was my decision to limit the participants to educators who had a minimum of five years of experience in education, excluding all novice teachers from sharing their dispositions of social and cultural reproduction. Novice teachers may have received coursework during their teaching preparation programs that included different curriculum regarding cultural relevance and critical pedagogy.
However, because they are beginning teachers their natural dispositions in the classroom may be restricted. An additional delimitation was choosing to conduct the study in two schools located in one region of the U.S., which potentially limited the ability to make generalizations about the results.

Limitation

A limitation of this study was my habitus, for my background and orientation towards not only education, but also various aspects of life, might have influenced the responses of the participants, as well as my perception of their responses. I am an African American female, raised in the southeastern region of the United States. I have experienced the effects of social and cultural reproduction as dominant and dominated field positions. However, although my habitus may be seen as a limiting factor to my study, it can also be viewed as a strength in lieu of both emic and etic perspectives of certain participants.

Terminology

Acculturated means an individual has taken on the dominant culture (Mezzich, Ruiperez, Yoon, Liu, & Zapata-Vega, 2009).

Bicultural refers to individuals that have taken on both cultures (Mezzich et al., 2009).

Capital, in the form of social and cultural, are “instruments for the appropriation of symbolic wealth socially designated as worthy of being sought and possessed” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 488).
Conscientização, according to Freire (1970/2000), “refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (p. 35).

Critical hermeneutics “alerts us to the ways power helps construct the social, cultural, and economic conditions under which meaning is made and research processes are constructed” (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004, p. 11).

Critical pedagogy is the practice of teaching for a more just society (Breunig, 2009).

Critical theory “addresses the discrepancies that students encounter by challenging social structures and exposing inequities and inconsistencies between the stated intentions and realized commitments of existing social institutions such as schools” (McMahon, 2003, p. 262).

Cultural arbitrary is a group of individuals that have received dominance in society based on speculation of legitimacy and actions of chance (Bourdieu, 1990b).

Culturally traditional refers to those who have maintained their original cultural identity (Mezzich et al., 2009).

Culturally marginalized represents those who have accepted neither their dominant culture or historically ethnic culture (Mezzich et al., 2009).

Cultural reproduction is the process of dominant cultural groups passing down their norms and dispositions of their culture throughout inhabitants of a field as legitimate, thereby, continuously reproducing the status quo (Bourdieu, 1977).
Endoxa refer to borrowed and imbibed premises and beliefs from those viewed as authoritative and wise in society (Aristotle & Barnes, 2014; Fairclough, 2010).

Equilibration is the process of assimilating new information and accommodating it to fit into one’s reality and psychological schemata (Piaget, 1952).

Field is a structured environment or space in which individuals are organized into different positions of hierarchy dependent upon their dispositions and inherited social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1969, 1985a, 1993).

Habitus is a state of being that involves the individual’s embodied orientations (Bourdieu, 1985b).

Hegemony “occurs when people see hierarchical relationships as normal, natural, and unchangeable and therefore accept, consent, internalize, and are complicit in reproducing norms that are not in their own best interests” (Tracy, 2013, p. 61).

Inculcation is an imposition of cultural values upon individuals of different cultural backgrounds (Bourdieu, 1990b).

Interpretive repertoire is a term that represents bounded language units that construct a cognitive process of a phenomenon (Wetherell & Potter, 1988).

Mainstream refers to the features of a field that are reproduced, popular, and commonly upheld as the norm (Mezzich et al., 2009).

Pedagogic action “is objectively, symbolic violence insofar as it is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 5).

Photo elicitation is a concept that involves interpreting the participants’ meaning of the visual art, and connecting it to their realities of society (Harper, 2002).
Resistance means to not accommodate information into an individual’s psychological schemata (Giroux, 2001).

Self-Concept involves the perceptions and evaluations of self, self-esteem (Demaray, Malecki, Rueger, Brown, & Summers, 2009).

Self-Reflexivity “refers to the conscious turning of the individual toward himself, simultaneously being the observing subject and the observer object, a process that includes both self-knowledge and self-monitoring” (Pagis, 2009, p. 266).

Social reproduction is the process of the dominant social group passing down its norms and dispositions to inhabitants of a field as legitimate, thereby, continuously reproducing the status quo (Bourdieu, 1977).

Sociocurricular positions refer to the levels of status and degree of social capital an individual student holds because of the freedoms, norms, constraints, and curricular structure of a school system (Heck et al., 2004).

Symbolic violence, according to Bourdieu (1990b), “is the gentle, disguised form which violence takes when overt violence is impossible, it is understandable that symbolic forms of domination should have progressively withered away as objective mechanisms came to be constituted which, in rendering the work of euphemization superfluous, tended to produce the ‘disenchanted’ disposition that their development demanded. (p. 133)

Summary

This chapter introduced the historical context, rationale, and purpose for this study. The intention of this study was to analyze the agency of middle school educators
to uphold norms that have been reproduced in society because certain opinions (the endoxa) have deemed them legitimate. Research suggests that societies exist as fields, and within these fields are cultural norms and positions of hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1985). The school field, as it exists in the U.S., also holds positions of hierarchy, known as sociocurricular positions, which are the lanes of areas of hierarchy in which students have been situated considering their habitus to uphold the field’s legitimated ideologies and ways to behave. These dominant norms are the upheld opinions of heterosexual males with European ancestry, speakers of the standard English vernacular of high class status and possessors of dominantly legitimated knowledge. Students who possess inclinations that are not of the norms of endoxa may experience difficulty accommodating new knowledge. Consequently, they lose the willingness to learn, resist through silence or disengagement, and likely limit their academic success (Apple, 1993; Eisner, 2008; Evans-Winter & Esposito, 2010; Morris, 2007; Riley, 2010; Valentine & Collins, 2011).

For the purposes of this study, I analyzed the sociocurricular norms of class, gender, knowledge, language, and race. The rationale for choosing multiple lenses to observe the problem is due to the incidence of social and cultural reproduction being intertwined within single sets of dispositions. No one is singularly affected by social and cultural reproduction as the positions of class, gender, knowledge, language, and race are intersected by all individuals. Therefore, the problem is macroscopic, and to analyze only one sociocurricular position would not yield a full understanding of the reproduction and influence of dominant norms.
For this investigation, I used a critically visual bricolage approach to analyze the degree of agency to uphold mainstream norms as they are negotiated within the middle school educator’s habitus. I explored the participants’ habitus and the ways they affect social and cultural reproduction in the classroom. As a critical bricoleur, the examination of power and the reproduction of power is essential to the investigation of a study. Therefore, I used critical discourse analysis to analyze the interviews for indications of how the educators accommodated the norms of endoxa.

This study was designed to explore the dynamical underpinnings of social and cultural reproduction as they transcend through academic institutions. Since some opinions and standards have been legitimated, these notions of society support hierarchy and dominance (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Giroux, 2001; Valentine & Collins, 2011). I intended to use the findings of this study to gain a better comprehension of the subtleties and negotiations of socially reproduced norms of class, gender, knowledge, language, within the academic institution. The learner’s prior experiences and cultural aspects condition their habitus, which in turn influences the acquisition of knowledge (Bourdieu, 2002; Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004; Dumais, 2005; Nash, 1999; Reay, 2004a). Teaching for maintaining truths of endoxa does not consider the individuality and frailty of the habitus. Therefore, research suggests that the knowledge established by endoxa may hinder the academic potential of some students. I believe this hindrance may offer an explanation and understanding of the school achievement gap as it exists in the United States. Furthermore, I believe that this issue may jeopardize students’ natural inclinations and self-concept, thereby restricting their mental freedoms.
This chapter introduced and outlined the essential premise for this study. Brief descriptions of field theory, habitus, capital, sociocurricular positions, and resistance provided background knowledge of the framework. Additionally, featured were the statement of the problem, purpose, research questions, research methodology, assumptions, rationale, terminology, and limitations of the study. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature on social and cultural reproduction. The research questions directed this literature review, which uses a wide range of conceptual, theoretical, and empirical studies to identify, correlate, and support the rationale for this study.
SAMO, an acronym for “Same old shit” and “Same old same old” was Basquiat’s tag name in his early years as a graffiti artist. He would often tag walls with phrases that served to expose the contradictory and unjust nature of aspects of society and sign them with his signature, SAMO. One of his notable New York City tags, “Which of the following political symbols is omnipresent? A. Television, B. Church, C. McDonald’s, D. SAMO (1978)” represented his conceptualization of societal priorities. To pose television, church, McDonald’s, and himself as omnipresent challenges the prioritization of elements among the nation’s society. It also poses each of the entities as political or repetitive symbols of society used to influence the masses—thus, SAMO as in SAMO societal monotonous attempts to reproduce normed behavior that do not necessarily appeal to the unique dispositions of the individual.

Social and cultural reproductions are age-old practices and repetitive in nature, as they are recycled through well-developed, voluntary and involuntary systemic efforts. Therefore, individuals embody legitimated norms in various ways that ultimately influence the habitus of those who occupy the field. Such an occurrence restricts the individuality, since it exemplifies prescribed positions of hierarchy. Furthermore, when
the prescribed norms of legitimacy are upheld by educators, the implications for their
delivery of the curriculum can be significant. This section of the investigation provides a
review of the literature on sociocurricular positions for historical context, a presentation
of the social phenomena, and an address of significant gaps that this exploration sought to
fill.

Literature Review Method

The intent of a literature review is to provide readers with significant threads of
knowledge on the research inquiry of interest. It presents historical context for the major
themes included in the study. The literature familiarizes readers with the leading
philosophers and theories of the inquiry. It also serves to offer the researcher a
foundation or premise for the investigation by enhancing the researcher’s knowledge of
the topic (Boote & Beile, 2005). Additionally, a literature review identifies implications
for future studies with inquiries that have yet to be addressed (Boote & Beile, 2005;
Lichtman, 2013; Randolph, 2009). For the purposes of this study, Randolph’s (2009)
literature review guide was used to organize the literature on the topic of sociocurricular
positions using a focused style of inquiry. The review emphasizes historical content of
the issue with a focus on the outcomes, theories and methodologies of the literature
gathered (Randolph, 2009).

The path and direction of this literature review was chosen to provide conceptual
and theoretical understanding for the inquiry of legitimated norms being socially and
culturally reproduced and upheld with agency that influences the academic identities of
middle school students. An evaluation of multiple scholarly and peer-reviewed articles and documents that compiled a relevant understanding of the problem identified a gap in the literature. It was determined that the degree of agency for legitimated norms in the areas of class, gender, knowledge, language, and race have yet to be analyzed for their intersectionality and reproduced embodiments of the middle school educator. The following sections provide the organization and significance of this review of the literature.

Three overarching theoretical categories guided the review of the literature relevant to this research study. After several topic iterations on the incidence of social and reproduction, the fundamental theories of this investigation became clear. The pursuit of appropriate literature to investigate the underpinnings of the inquiry revealed the theory of social reproduction, cultural reproduction, and resistance. These three areas of study were identified after much research was conducted into the fields of art education, democratic education, and critical pedagogy. During my review of the literature, I read to identify gaps within the research of issues regarding the achievement gap in education and to find information relevant to my overarching research question. After searching feverishly for information regarding my interest of democratic education, I began to realize that the true essence of my research problem and concern was the incidence of social behavior and attributes acting as prerequisites for dominance. I became enthralled with identifying how legitimate forms of knowledge are upheld in education. I thought this was done through tracking. Conversely, I found that more specific to my research problem, social and cultural reproductions underlie the incidence
of sociocurricular positions. The term of sociocurricular positions was originally used to suggest attributes that were used to track students. However, for the purposes of this investigation, it was determined that the term appropriately expresses the placement of students in sites of capital attainment. Thus, sociocurricular positions were the gateway to understanding more about social capital, dominant groups, and legitimacy. The quest for literature relevant to the identified gap steered and guided this literature review, as well as structure to determine the most pressing inquiries into guiding research questions.

**Overarching Questions:**

1. To what degree of agency do middle school educators uphold mainstream norms of legitimacy in the sociocurricular positions of class, gender, knowledge, language, and race?

2. How does the cultural habitus of middle school educators influence the delivery of their curriculum and instruction?

The sources used for this literature review were scholarly and peer-reviewed journal articles, as well as necessary seminal works of philosophers, such as Pierre Bourdieu, Jean Piaget, and Paulo Freire, to frame this body of work. I conducted several searches using the Mercer University online educational databases on the university’s library website. Specifically, many of the studies used were found under Journal Storage (JSTOR), National Center for Biotechnology (NCBI), ProQuest, ResearchGate, and Sage Journals educational databases. After discovering the term *sociocurricular positions* in an Apple (1993) study, further research led me to its influences on the habitus, which were investigated in Reay’s studies (1995, 2004a, 2004b, 2006). Initially, I used the
following descriptors to start my search on sociocurricular positions: sociocurricular positions in education, and sociocurricular positions in middle school education. These search descriptors did not lead me to any direct results regarding sociocurricular positions. When I realized I did not get any direct leads in the educational database, I went to the Google search engine on the World Wide Web to see what, if any, literature was available on sociocurricular positions, and under that exact terminology. Upon typing the term in the Google search engine, I was directed to two peer-reviewed articles, “Tracks Emergent Structures” and “Field Theory and Educational Practice”. From this search, I realized that it would be necessary for me to search under the descriptor, field theory in education, in the educational databases. When I keyed that descriptor into the databases, I received many results. While reading some of these articles I noticed that certain “buzz” words kept coming up. The words social capital and habitus continuously appeared in conjunction with field theory and sociocurricular positions. Additionally, I did not exclude articles based on publishing dates or educational settings at first because I needed to get a general sense of what literature existed on my topic. Therefore, using the correct descriptors and few limitations on my search of the databases, yielded many useful results in the beginning stages.

The search for literature relevant to the research questions of this study revealed numerous avenues of topics that were useful in providing historical context and supporting the argument of the identified gap. Topics such as metacognition, equilibration, self-concept, and adolescent development were necessary to build my framework, as well as offer insight into the chosen methodology. Therefore, this chapter
highlights significant studies that feature learning as a *whole* process. *Figure 1* displays an outline of the literature review process.

*Figure 1. Outline of the literature review process*

To understand the habitus of educational stakeholders and the reproduction of sociocurricular positions in the school field, it was imperative to include literature on the dynamics of learning for a student, the ability to accommodate knowledge that does not agree with their psychological schema and stereotypes, teacher expectations and pedagogic action, and the reproduction of capital. The following sections present the literature to support these theories.
Equilibration

The process of acquiring knowledge requires the learner to assimilate and accommodate new concepts as they relate to the learner’s preexisting experiences and ability to reason (Fox & Riconscente, 2008; Piaget, 1952; Schunk, 2012). As the learner receives new knowledge, he or she adjusts it so that it makes sense to his or her own realities (Fox & Riconscente, 2008; Schunk, 2012). Jean Piaget (1952) called this learning theory *equilibration* and described it as the push of the mind to achieve cognitive equilibrium, like the theory of a body’s need for homeostasis (Schunk, 2012). Achieving mental equilibration could involve altering reality so that new knowledge connects realistically to prior knowledge (Cohen & Kim, 1999; Flavell, 1979; Schunk, 2012).

Constructivist learning theorist Jean Piaget contributed much to the educational field regarding the understanding of metacognitive habits in child learners. Through observational analysis of young children (Fox & Riconscente, 2008), Piaget developed his theories of metacognition as a cognitive developmental process that involves biology, environmental experiences, and the need to assimilate and accommodate to make sense of reality (Cohen & Kim, 1999; Piaget, 1952; Schunk, 2012). Piaget described this process as continuous and evolving stages starting in very early childhood. Each of the four stages of development — sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational — marked a timeframe of years in a child’s life (Cohen & Kim, 1999; Piaget, 1952; Schunk, 2012). He emphasized the role of random speech in cognition (Fox & Riconscente, 2008; Piaget, 1952).
Theorists Zakin and Flavell advanced Piaget’s research by applying their own notions of metacognition. Both Zakin and Flavell provided descriptions of the use and importance of a person’s ability to self-regulate the input of knowledge. However, they differed in their presentation of metacognition and its use in the classroom and everyday life circumstances.

In Zakin’s (2007) article, “Metacognition and the Use of Inner Speech in Children’s Thinking: A Tool Teachers Can Use”, she discussed the benefits of students using inner speech to enhance their metacognition. Zakin described inner speech as the act of a learner talking him- or herself through solving a problem using inquiry, prior knowledge, and critical thinking. Zakin’s (2007) inner speech theory is similar to Piaget’s experience of random speech, only she additionally discussed how to go about controlling inner speech and using it for complex problem solving.

Like Zakin, Flavell acknowledged metacognition as a self-regulatory process that allows learners to check themselves for understanding of a content area. However, Flavell elaborated his description of metacognition by including two subunits of metacognition known as metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive experience. In his 1979 article, “Metacognitive and Cognitive Monitoring: A New Era of Cognitive-Developmental Inquiry”, Flavell described metacognitive knowledge as an individual being able to use deductive reasoning for choosing appropriate tasks and strategies for learning. Additionally, Flavell (1979) referred to the metacognitive experience as an individual being cognizant about his or her feelings and estimates of the learning processes.
Although, Flavell (1979) and Zakin (2007) shared foundational reasoning of metacognition with Piaget, they differed in their application of such theories. Unlike Flavell, who provided a detailed description of metacognition, Zakin provided methods to cultivate inner speech directly in the classroom. By addressing inner speech as a cost-efficient tool readily available to teachers, Zakin offered realistic and effective methods of enhancing a student’s ability to use inner speech as a metacognitive tool. She described the use of inner speech in three academic disciplines: visual arts, mathematics, and literacy because inner speech is useful in courses that require inquiry and self-reflection. For instance, she provided examples for a mathematics course by describing how a learner can use inner speech to activate prior knowledge concerning a math problem and use prior knowledge to make inquiries. She proposed that eventually the learner would think of divergent paths to go about solving a problem. For a visual arts course, Zakin included examples of how students can view a piece of art and activate prior knowledge regarding the art and its representation. They would then inquire about the artistic choices of the artist followed by an evaluation of the work. Zakin (2007) referred to this method of cognitively acting, reflecting, and evaluating a problem as ARE, a metacognitive technique that helps the learner make connections to new knowledge. Zakin also provided a chart that described the steps and questions that students could use to guide their inner speeches. However, Zakin’s use of inner speech may prove difficult for educators of students in the early sensorimotor and preoperational stages of development.
Whereas Zakin emphasized the use of inner speech in the classroom and provided sample lessons of contextual application, Flavell presented metacognitive practices in a more theoretical manner by describing its potential outside of educational environments. Flavell (1979) offered very insightful knowledge into the mechanisms of metacognitive knowledge and experiences. He described metacognitive experiences by including where such experiences may take place and how they feel to the learner. He stated that individuals typically have metacognitive experiences in intellectually stimulating environments, where thinking and decision-making are imperative to the effectiveness of a task (Flavell, 1979). Thus, there will arise many instances where learners will have to reflect on their thoughts and their confidence in their thoughts. Flavell, similar to Piaget, described these metacognitive experiences as a means of understanding the knowledge of self and preparing the learner to consider adjustments (accommodation and assimilation) in their perceptions to achieve equilibration and prepare for future experiences (Cohen & Kim, 1999; Flavell, 1979; Schunk, 2012).

In conclusion, both Flavell (1979) and Zakin (2007) shared views on the importance of metacognitive functions, which are branches of Piaget’s thoughts on equilibration. However, each researcher provided an individual perspective of how metacognition works. Flavell described metacognition as a combination of knowledge and experiences that a learner uses and adjusts to absorb new knowledge. Zakin emphasized that inner speech is a metacognitive tool that can readily be applied in the classroom. Flavell’s research was theoretical, while Zakin’s was methodological. Flavell’s theories of metacognition are useful in thought, but they do not translate well
into ways a teacher might implement the research in a classroom. Flavell spoke on how the mind shifts and adjusts knowledge in general as it receives new information, without providing means of how to channel such functioning from an educator’s perspective. On the other hand, Zakin provided very structured methods detailing both the importance of inner speech as a metacognitive process and ways to apply it in a lesson plan. Flavell was more concerned with the influence one’s metacognitive functioning has on life decisions, like marriage or career choice, whereas Zakin was concerned with metacognitive functioning to solve classroom problems. Both researchers provide reflective implications of the work of Jean Piaget and the idea that learners are in a constant state of self-talk to strive for equilibration.

Middle Childhood

The phase of development commonly referred to as “storm & stress” (Hall, 1904; Freud, 1969) marks a high incidence of the self, coming into being. Through the exploration of skills and social interactions, the middle childhood marks a critical time for identity formation. The process involves the intertwining of sincere moments of rebellion and experimentation (Akos, 2005). Not all students experience the said storm and stress to the same degree (Arnett, 1999; Eccles et al., 1993). However, research suggests that students of this age are undergoing hormonal changes, moral cognitive processes, and social networking that make this an intricate and influential time of child development, which has significantly lasting effects into adulthood (Akos, 2005; Eccles, 1999; Freud, 1969; Simmons & Blythe, 1987). This time period in development has been
pondered upon for thousands of years. Arnett (1999) briefly addressed the perceptions of a few notable philosophers on the dynamics of young adolescence:

Aristotle stated that youth “are heated by nature as drunken men by wine”.

Rousseau (1762) relied on a stormy metaphor in describing adolescence: “As the roaring of the waves precedes the tempest, so the murmur of rising passions announces the tumultuous change. . . . Keep your hand upon the helm”, he advised parents, “or all is lost”. (p. 317)

In other words, in this period of life, one is undergoing a storm of emotions and experimenting with multiple identities to discover the right match and place within reality.

Middle childhood includes children between the ages of 6 and 14 years of age. This developmental stage is marked by social connections, competition and comparisons, and the growth of the self-concept (Eccles, 1999; Eccles et al., 1993; Freud, 1969). Additionally, during this developmental stage, students experience challenges with new information that they will assimilate or resist, contingent upon its deliverance and structural values. The habitus and sociocurricular position of the student will affect their ability to consume new knowledge. Eccles (1999) stated, “When adolescents are in settings that are not attuned to their needs and emerging independence, they can lose confidence in themselves and slip into negative behavior patterns such as truancy and school dropout” (p. 30). Therefore, the structure of the curriculum and the learning environment is critical to the student’s academic success.
Evidence shows that there is a steep decline in students’ self-esteem during the middle school years (Rhodes, Roffman, Reddy, & Fredriksen, 2004). In a three-year study of 1804 diverse students in 23 middle schools, Rhodes et al. (2004) reported, “. . . it is not only race, social class, or the material advantages of the school or community per se that influence developing self-esteem among adolescents, but also the students’ congruence with the racial or socioeconomic environment of their schools (p. 256).

Eccles et al. (1993) also suggested that if the environment-fit (as in the environment-fit theory) is defunct, then the implications for the growth of the early adolescence are significant because an unsupportive environment is negatively challenging its reality.

Sociocurricular positions, influenced by class, gender, knowledge, language, and race affect students across the spectrum of age and culture. Research indicates that specific subgroups of youth experience the development of self-concepts under varying constraints because of societal expectations. For instance, lower-income European-American youth experience a specific difficulty when undergoing middle childhood developmental processes. Rhodes and colleagues (2004) provided an example:

By contrast, lower-income European-American youth consistently experienced the lowest self-esteem levels and the sharpest declines. This may be due, in part, to cultural differences in the effects of poverty on self-esteem. Among European Americans, for whom the mainstream “American dream” of wealth and status has historically been more relevant and for whom opportunities remain more freely available, poverty may be a proxy for deeper family pathology, carry a greater stigma, and/or result in heightened social isolation. (p. 256)
Conversely, multiple studies have been conducted to analyze the effects of race, class, knowledge, language, and gender implications on various groups of students of the middle childhood age group (Evans-Winter & Esposito, 2010; Giroux, 2001; Handsfield, 2006; Handsfield & Jimenez, 2009; Morris, 2007; Reay, 1995, 2004a, 2004b; Townsend, 2000). Research indicates that the shaping of the habitus of young adolescents is contingent upon expectations and reproduced norms of the environment. Thus, environments that uphold norms of European-American, high-class, English speaking, heterosexual dominance as legitimate dispositions and orientations to behold, individuals that are othered receive less academic and societal support. Hence, mainstream norms of legitimacy ultimately influence all students’ identities in various multitudes, thus their self-concepts and academic prowess. This is particularly significant to students in their middle childhood because their self-concepts are highly susceptible to the acceptance and tolerance of their inclinations within the environment (Eccles, 1999; Eccles et al., 1993).

Middle School

Teachers of the middle school field are an important element in middle childhood because the academic support and environment of middle school students is important to their self-identity formation (Akos, 2005; Buehler, Fletcher, Johnston, & Weymouth, 2015; Eccles et al., 1993; Holas & Huston, 2012; Niehaus, Rudasill, & Rakes, 2012; Simmons & Blythe, 1987). From the 1940s in the U.S., the junior high school model, which included grades seven through nine, was initiated and analyzed for its achievement rates with children undergoing middle childhood. Prior to its initiation, school officials recognized that only having elementary and high school models was insufficient to
address the specifically complex growth period of children in their early adolescence (Holas & Huston, 2012; Simmons & Blythe, 1987). The intent of the creation of the junior high school model was to provide a focal support to young adolescents during their unique phase of development. In the 1960s, the model shifted to the current middle school model, which includes grades six through eight.

The middle school model maintained the premise of greater focus on the developmental aspects of middle childhood with the addition of the exploration of the self-concept (Akos, 2005). In 1973, the National Middle School Association was established. Its philosophy was “This We Believe”. In 1995, the philosophy became “This We Believe: Successful Schools for Young Adolescents”, a philosophy aimed at instilling cultural relevance and creativity into the academic environment of students in the middle childhood transition (Akos, 2005; Simmons & Blythe, 1987). Hence, many middle schools have developed positive environments for the cognitive development of adolescents by supporting sexual orientations, gender affiliations, the nature of the self-esteem, and linguistic and cultural differences; promoting collaboration and trust; improving teacher-student relationships; blending learning models; enhancing teacher confidence; using positive behavioral supports and a career-relevant curriculum; and providing direct instruction to subgroups (Akos, Charles, Orthner, & Cooley, 2011; Eccles et al., 1993; Hester, Gable, & Manning, 2003; Longo, 2016; Meece, 2003; Nelson, Young, Young, & Cox, 2010; Nocera, Whitebread, & Nocera, 2014; Parker, 2009).

However, despite the rigorous and culturally relevant successes of some middle school fields, research also suggest that aspects of the middle school model are inadvertently
producing environments that are unconducive to this age of development (Eccles et al., 1993; Simmons & Blythe, 1987).

The environment of academic acquisition is of critical importance to the middle-aged child as this age group undergoes dramatic development. The self is tested for its resilience and malleability under moments of soul-seeking definition (Simmons & Blythe, 1987). During this transition of the self, the environment of the transition has significance (Alspaugh, 1998; Eccles et al., 1993; Holas & Huston; 2012; Simmons & Blythe, 1987). The household in which the child resides represents an environment of support and foundation as the primary level of influence. Larger fields, such as the school structure, represent the secondary level (Simmons & Blythe, 1987), which is critical because the authoritative figures act as the dominant legitimators of knowledge and skills, and their pedagogic action has significant influence on the child during this complex phase of growth. The school field plays such a critical role in the development of the students’ self-concept that it comes only second to the primary home environment (Simmons & Blythe, 1987).

Recent studies have revealed that the middle school model may produce negligent and unproductive support to students of the middle childhood (Cook, MacCoun, Muschkin, & Vigdor, 2008; Holas & Huston, 2011). A review and comparison of the achievement ratings of middle schools to the elementary and high school models indicate that students transitioning into middle school experience lower quality classes and classroom engagement than fifth-grade students (Akos & Galassi, 2004; Alspaugh, 1998; Eccles et al., 1993; Holas & Huston, 2011). Multiple variables, such as school size, the
effectiveness of the educators, and general differences in response to transition, can atone for this disparity.

To account for the variables and gaps of understanding more effectively than in previous studies, researchers Holas and Huston (2001) analyzed the effectiveness of the middle school model on students’ achievement by conducting a longitudinal study. The researchers identified participants at nine months of age, then tested and tracked them through third, fifth, and sixth grades to analyze the fluctuations in their learner engagement, if any. Trained individuals observed the classrooms of the students and scored the socioemotional and instructional quality of the classrooms. The educators received an efficacy scale to determine their confidence in implementing effective instruction. The findings for this study indicated that students of the sixth grade did possess lower achievement and engagement, which directly correlated to lower teacher effectiveness scores from the initial observations (Holas & Huston, 2001).

Additionally, the lower achievement and engagement directly correlated to the size of the school. Holas and Huston (2001) reported that students enrolled in the larger middle schools had lower achievement and engagement. This study posed implications regarding features of middle school that might negatively influence the self-concept of students. However, it left gaps for future research, such as analyzing the educators’ specific pedagogic action, resulting in failure to identify the influence of orientations to societal norms and the agency of it within the curriculum.

Numerous studies address the specific notions of the middle environment that induce a positive learning environment, or lack thereof. The environment of the middle
school has been linked to achievement, satisfaction, and feelings of belonging, and engagement (Alspaugh, 1998; Eccles et al., 1993; Niehaus et al., 2012; Buehler et al., 2015). However, the lack of decision-making and autonomy in middle school has also been correlated with low student motivation and engagement (Eccles et al., 1993). Research suggests that the middle school environment provides a field in which symbolic interactionism may take place (Buehler et al., 2015). Symbolic interactionism happens when the perceptions of others towards the skill sets and habitus of the individual significantly influences the identity of an individual (Buehler et al., 2015; Espinoza & Juvoven, 2011). Therefore, some studies have detailed that the lack of autonomy among middle school educators specifically and the tendency to glean the curriculum as social functionaries with little to no resistance elicit a learning environment that does not foster the development of the middle school child (Alspaugh, 1998; Buehler et al., 2015; Eccles, 1999; Eccles et al., 1993; Espinoza & Juvoven, 2011; Niehaus et al., 2012).

Moreover, sociopolitical pressures have consequently resulted in a shift to prioritize standardization of the curriculum in schools (English, 2010; Gonzalez & Firestone, 2013; Ingersoll, 2003; Pinar, 2012; Prichard & Moore, 2006). This incidence occurs with particularly high significance in the middle school setting, as this environment holds students of the most complex period of the development of their self-concept (Akos, 2005; Eccles, 1999; Pruitt, 2000). Standardized testing measures, spurred by the incidence of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, have shifted the academic paradigm of many schools in the United States (Gonzalez & Firestone, 2013; Prichard & Moore, 2006; Ylimaki, 2012). This is influential for the middle school environment
because in the midst of students developing their concepts of self, they are inundated by standardized testing measures on a frequent basis (Apple, 2015; Aydeniz & Southerland, 2012; Donegan & Trepanier, 1998; Kennedy-Lewis, 2015; Musoleno & White, 2010). Furthermore, these tests do not serve to promote the individuality of students, but to standardize knowledge and reality into a narrow scope with the result of devaluing some content areas and skills (Apple, 2015; Aydeniz & Southerland, 2012; Donegan & Trepanier, 1998; Kennedy-Lewis, 2015; Musoleno & White, 2010; Skerrett, Alliso, Hargreaves, & Andy, 2008).

Testing that leads to tracking influences the growth mindsets of students (Dweck, 2007, 2008; Kitsantas, Bland, & Chirinos, 2017; Moon, Brighton, & Callahan, 2003; Park, Callahan, & Ryoo, & 2016, Peters, 2016) and educators (English, 2010; Ingersoll, 2003; Prichard & Moore, 2016). Dweck (2007, 2008) found students who are led to believe that they are gifted, or simply basic in intelligence, develop a fixed mindset that essentially binds them into upholding their labels. Educators often experience the effects of the standardized testing pressure in terms of professional concerns, such as evaluation, retention, and promotion that hinge upon their students’ test results (English, 2010; Ingersoll, 2003; Prichard & Moore, 2016). Consequently, the severe challenging of their autonomy often leads them to uphold the dominant norms of standardization being inculcated upon their school field or to resist and risk career change (English, 2010; Ingersoll, 2003; Fataar & Feldman, 2016; Feldman, 2007; Prichard & Moore, 2016).

Fataar and Feldman (2016) discussed the consequences of high-stakes test taking: “Many schools have become focused on producing measurable outputs and performances
with constant pressure on teachers to improve on these outputs, which discourage authentic and purposeful pedagogical processes in schools” (p. 100). Additionally, the pressures of testing correlate with high exclusionary discipline usage. These measures occur at especially high and inequitable rates within middle school populations, which has specific consequence for African-American and Hispanic-American students, as they are suspended at disproportionate rates compared to their European-American peers (Fabelo et al., 2010; Kennedy-Lewis, 2015; Townsend, 2000). In conclusion, as test-taking pressures influence many schools in the U.S., the middle school environment has undergone a unique experience in that a loss in educator autonomy to standardized pressures has resulted in the standardization of learning for students at an age when the self-concept is undergoing critical development.

If the model of the middle school environment features diminished levels of autonomy because of testing measures and strict curriculum compliance, educators may feel compelled to uphold the field’s norms and inevitably embody them as a part as their habitus. This incidence leaves little room for pedagogic change without intervention (Edgerton, Roberts, & Peter, 2013; Fataar & Feldman, 2016; Feldman, 2016; Ramatlapana, & Makonye, 2012). Consequently, educators inhabit and maintain the rules and norms of the endoxa for acceptable and perceived scholarly behavior, forming and maintaining sociocurricular positions to the detriment of the individuality of students. The next section details the significant influence of the educator’s pedagogic action on the knowledge acquisition of the students.
Reproduction

Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron (1990) used the concept of reproduction to describe the incidence of norms deemed legitimate and inculcated upon all individuals of a given field. Bourdieu and Passeron’s theory of reproduction analyzes the systemic nature of an arbitrarily chosen value as it transforms and shapes the doctrine and normed behavior of any given system of thought. As elements and characteristics are legitimated, other inclinations are naturally subordinated. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) insisted that ideas, concepts, and orientations to reality receive arbitrary precedence and consequently receive and uphold dominance. This arbitrary annunciation of an orientation is then considered normal, and it is upheld in a society until it is perceived as the legitimate action (Bourdieu, 1977, 1993; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Consequently, the idea moves from an arbitrary stance to a dominant stance, since individuals within the field believe and uphold it, it receives power in that it has the ability to exclude other individuals who attempt to disregard it as legitimate (Bourdieu, 1977; 1993; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Kincheloe, 2008). Thus, to gain social capital, the masses inculcate and accept the arbitrarily chosen orientation to reality, even as it preludes the development of stratification and dominance within a society.

If one considers reality from another perspective that contrasts that of the legitimated, they are othered, outcast, or linked to low forms of social capital that induce a subordinate position in the field (Bourdieu, 1977; 1993; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Kincheloe, 2008). Ergo, the habitus of the individual may be compelled to shift towards the dominant doxa and inevitably reproduce its validity in search of accessing social
capital, resources, and belonging (Bourdieu, 1977; 1993; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Dumais, 2005; Kincheloe, 2008, Nash, 1999; Reay, 2004a; Riley, 2010). Eventually, the individuals of a society embody the once arbitrary value, even if the nature of the value juxtaposes the true and natural inclinations of the individual (Bourdieu, 1977; 1993; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Fataar & Feldman, 2016). Thus, individuals may be compelled to act as agents of the established dominant traits even as they work to divide and stratify individuals into levels of hierarchy. To illustrate this concept, Bourdieu and Passeron stated, “. . . the outlaw who objectively grants the force of law to the law he transgresses in the mere fact that, by hiding in order to transgress it, he adapts his conduct to the sanctions which the law has the force to impose on him” (p. 14). Therefore, once those with the perceived reputable opinions of excellent inclinations establish the legitimated norms (which Bourdieu and Passeron call arbitrary), the norms are reproduced because they are upheld as legitimate.

The reproduction of norms within the society at large are infused within the school society, as the academic field represents a microcosm of norms and issues. Additionally, the school field operates as a reproducer of legitimated norms through the pedagogic action of the leaders and educators. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) explained:

In any given social formation, the system of [pedagogic actions], insofar as it is subject to the effect of domination by the dominant [pedagogic action], tends to reproduce, both in the dominant and in the dominated classes, misrecognition of the truth of the legitimate culture as the dominant cultural arbitrary, whose reproduction contributes towards reproducing the power relations. (p. 31)
As the authoritative figures of the school field embody the legitimated norms of society, they intertwine their personal disposition to these norms within the delivery and priorities of the curriculum and instruction. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) contended:

Given that it must produce the institutional conditions enabling interchangeable agents to carry on continuously, i.e. daily and over the widest possible territorial area, [work of schooling] reproducing the culture it is mandated to reproduce, the educational system tends to ensure that the corps of agents recruited and trained to carry out inculcation operate within institutional conditions capable of both dispensing and preventing them from performing heterogeneous or heterodox [work of schooling], i.e. those conditions most likely to exclude, without explicitly forbidding, any practice incompatible with the function of reproducing the intellectual and moral integration of the legitimate addresses. (p. 57)

In other words, reproduction theorists challenge the schools’ primary function by suggesting that it serves to uphold the status of individuals who already maintain the dominant norms and privileges of society through the unconscious and conscious agency for inculcated norms.

The following section highlights the underpinnings of reproduction as a societal occurrence and its intersectionality within the academic field. Provided is a review on the literature concerning the theories of field, habitus, capital, and endoxa, as well as correlations to introduce the concept of sociocurricular positions. The section begins with a discussion of culture.
The word culture derives from coulter, which is a plow used for farming or cultivation (Ferrare & Apple, 2015). Raymond Williams (1958) stated that culture is simply an ordinary distinguisher of individuals. By this, he meant that culture is in everyone, even the poor and the marginalized, and that it would be dangerous to limit culture to only the intellectual and upper classes (Ferrare & Apple, 2015; Williams, 1958). Williams was worried that people would view culture as something that needs to be tweaked and refined in order to be appreciated by those who came to define culture—the elite and intellectual. For instance, Ferrare and Apple (2015) wrote:

Culture then is what is found in the more pristine appreciations and values of those above the rest of us. Those lower can be taught such appreciations, but it is very hard and at times expensive work on the part of those who seek to impart this to society’s Others and even harder work for those not yet worthy people who are to be taught such refined dispositions, values and appreciations. (p. 43)

It is interesting to ponder how one group gets to both define and maintain a personal desired culture while imposing it on groups of different cultures. In addition, what happens when one takes it upon him or herself to resist this incidence?

Cultural arbitraries move up and down the social hierarchical scale, facilitated by a very powerful and systematic institution: the school (Bourdieu, 1996; Ferrare & Apple, 2015). Teachers, known as the intellectuals, carry the torch of defining appropriate culture by inculcating their students with the beliefs and values of the dominant cultural arbitrary (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). The educators face the difficult choice of
adopting and teaching the dominant doctrine or acknowledging the prosopography of the system and resisting it. It is difficult to accomplish this; however, to resist reproduction one would have to go against the masses that work to legitimize it. The task of reproducing dominance is an immense power struggle because individuals are already ingrained and programmed to see individuals for their perceived cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1996). In the following quote, Bourdieu (1996) stated the complexities of such a system that works vigorously to uphold dominance through the agency of its many unaware educators:

No power can be satisfied with existing just as power, that is, as brute force, entirely devoid of justification—in a word, arbitrary and it must thus justify its existence, as well as the form it takes, or at least ensure that the arbitrary nature of its foundation will be misrecognized and thus that it will be recognized as legitimate. (p. 265)

Bourdieu explained here that the dominant power is unjustifiable and arbitrary. Its own recognition of such causes the need for individuals to be made to think otherwise, to be trained to reproduce and practice the power of the dominance, and to do so willingly.

The occurrence of reproduction of a culture’s dominance requires practice and perpetuation to the extent that it becomes a habit among the imposed people. Bourdieu (1996) compared the habit of cultural reproduction to writing. Children hear consistently what letters should look like: their style, shape, and configuration. With consistent practice, children learn to write letters so that they are instantly recognizable by those who dictated and learned the practice. This is “the product of the implementation in
different fields of the same schema of perception, thought, and action (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 273).

Field

Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory has significantly influenced both sociological and educational researchers by challenging them to analyze the characteristics of the school system as a field of curricular positions. The field and its structure play a pivotal role in the students’ academic success and dispositions (Bourdieu, 1985; Ferrare & Apple, 2015; Martin, 2003). Bourdieu described the field as a structured environment in which people are organized into different positions of hierarchy contingent upon their natural dispositions and inherited social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1969, 1985a, 1993). In other words, the field is like a sports arena, and the positions on the field are like the team’s positions. Field theory is relevant to sociocurricular positions because the students’ habitus (orientation) towards the academic field (school setting) may influence the student’s agency of their position (Ferrare & Apple, 2014; Heck, Price, & Thomas, 2004). The field’s dominant cultural group determines the field’s norms and values that individuals are to possess for success. Therefore, one’s culture and natural dispositions play a role in their placement of the position they will play in the field.

Schools, with their norms and customs, are good examples of the intellectual field and have been grounds for field theory and habitus via the structure of their curricula (Ferrare & Apple, 2015). Hence, considering the ideology of Bourdieu’s field theory, many sociologists and educational researchers have applied this theory to the field of education. The school consists of a structure that allows for the existence of
sociocurricular positions that offer some students fewer opportunities to learn than others (Ferrare & Apple, 2015). Therefore, disparities in education cannot always be blamed on the students, but perhaps the structure of the field (Ferrare & Apple, 2015). Essentially, the structure of the field has crucial influence on the academic careers of students because of the allowance of dominant groups to impose their standards of legitimacy.

Ferrare (2013) analyzed Bourdieu’s field theory in the educational context by exploring the social relationships and positions dictated by the curricular decisions made in a high school in the Midwestern region of the United States. Ferrare (2013) began the study by analyzing the curriculum field of the high school and connecting it to the social hierarchy of the students. Ferrare proposed that the structure of a school’s curriculum determines, or at least influences, the social positioning of the students, thereby shaping their academic successes and identities. This study is unique in that it not only addressed typical areas of educational research such as tracking, but it also thoroughly connected the space (field) to the positions of the curricular structure. Ferrare (2013) explained, “The social organization of secondary school curriculum is thus conceptualized as courses—and the curriculum discourses they contain—occupying positions in a multidimensional space” (p. 140). Therefore, the school field, constructed through aspects of the curriculum, houses high positions and low positions within its structure.

Although research (Heck et al., 2004) supports the notion that many schools in the U.S. have abandoned the strict tracking structure, many philosophers such as Ferrare (2012) and Apple (2015) contend that there still exists a less rigid form of course selection that influences students’ success. In Ferrare’s (2013) study, he observed the
curricular structure of a high school, referred to as Cascade High School, by analyzing the duality of the courses. Between the years of 2005 and 2009, Cascade High School had approximately 1,900 students, the majority of whom were of European American descent and from middle to high-income households. The school offered a wide variety of courses, including the option to receive International Baccalaureate (IB) credit. To graduate, the students needed 48 total credits, and the options for obtaining these credits were numerous. The sample of students analyzed for this study included 494 students. Ferrare analyzed the quantitative data of the students’ course-taking practices, the students’ relationships with other students on similar or divergent tracks, and their predilection for postsecondary education.

While, research suggests that schools are no longer differentiating their curriculum by offering certain courses and levels of rigor to students, contingent upon their social capital, Ferrare’s (2013) study showed the contrary. Strict tracking may be gone, but the positions that students hold and the courses that schools offer imply a social hierarchy (Heck et al., 2004; Ferrare, 2013). Ferrare (2013) found that a social structure existed in Cascade High School, where certain types of knowledge were of more value and represented types of capital:

At Cascade High School, this social organization of courses is not only differentiated by vertical positions of status, prestige, discursive forms, and course sequences, but also horizontal positions that oppose symbolic, artistic, and intrinsic knowledge to material, technical, and extrinsic knowledge. We also say that at Cascade High School the organization of course-taking corresponds to
divisions of academic labor across racial, class, and sexual categories. Each
student is positioned within these divisions in a way that makes certain course and
student affiliations probable and improbable. (p. 153)

Therefore, this study implies that the curricular field holds a duality of how course
options differentiate and categorize students (Ferrare, 2013). Thus, Ferrare’s research
may be extended to show the prevalence and intersection of field, habitus, social capital,
sociocurricular positions, and academic success.

It follows, then that Bourdieu’s (1969, 1985) concept of the field is that it is an
area of space defined by its agents, in which they struggle to define legitimacy and
dominance. As specific norms and cultures come to be defined as legitimate, the
dominance of the agents that possess these norms prevails. Research has been conducted
to analyze the agency possessed by both the teachers and students in the school field.
Curriculum stakeholders and administrators greatly influence the norms and cultures
considered legitimate in school. These individuals use their agency and authority to
employ teachers with similar values and agency. Then, the teachers, with their cultural
dispositions, inculcate their students with the deemed legitimate culture and knowledge.
Although the teachers may have been employed for their supportive agency in the school
field, the students are from very diverse sets of dispositions. Usually, students are not
chosen or selected—they enter the school field with all their orientations and cultural
heritage. The field then influences this diversity as students are inculcated with the
dominant norms and customs through the agency of their teachers (intentionally or
unintentionally).
The structure of the school field is upheld through notions of tracking, assessing, and generally the curriculum and instruction (Ferrare, 2013; Ferrare & Apple, 2015; Heck et al., 2004). The structure of this field becomes concerning as the potential for inequality and the struggle for legitimacy cultivate. Ferrare (2013, 2015), Apple (2015), and Heck, Price, and Thomas (2004) investigated the structure of schools’ fields and observed correlations to achievement gaps. As teachers perpetuate legitimate and mainstream norms, the students are obliged to uphold them or experience little academic success. The reproduction of the inculcated norms is reproduced then from stakeholders to teachers to students and into society, and the reproduction continues, thus giving or maintaining the field until enough resistance generates to shift it (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Therefore, the school field and its organization play a critical role in the academic and individual growth of its students, and the agency of its teachers.

Habitus

Bourdieu (1967) held the notion that the habitus is a mental space that an individual occupies under circumstances formed by their social field. Bourdieu (1985) stated that the habitus “. . . is an experience and also a possession, a capital—or in the idealist tradition of a transcendental subject—habitus, hexis, means the incorporated and quasi-postural disposition—, but that of an acting agent . . .” (p. 14). Fundamentally, the habitus is the essence of the individual’s thoughts, speech, patterns, movements, and it is basically their embodied state of being. Determined by familial norms, this state of being is then further shaped by the inhabitant’s field (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013; Bourdieu, 1967, 1985; Davey, 2009; Reay, 2004a). Many researchers agree on what the habitus is,
yet some disagreement exists regarding how the habitus can be influenced. Bourdieu, the leading philosopher in the concepts of habitus, social reproduction, and cultural reproduction, contended that the habitus is a fixed state of being, thus it allows little movement or room for change. However, critics such as Davey (2009) challenged Bourdieu by claiming that the habitus is a flexible state of being that can be shifted for an improved sociocurricular position. A review of the literature revealed significant evidence that suggests that the habitus is flexible, but its flexibility is not necessarily a positive attribute, as Davey suggested, because it leans and shifts to fit into certain sociocurricular positions.

In Davey’s (2009) research study, “Using Bourdieu’s Concept of Habitus to Explore Narratives of Transition”, she studied the transitional experiences of three high school students in the United Kingdom. These three students, two females and one male, had transitioned from a state school to an independent school that maintained high expectations and strong norms. Davey used a narrative method to gauge the students’ negotiations as they transitioned into their new school (field). The students related their experiences in their new school setting, and the results both supported and disputed Davey’s (2009) claim that the habitus is a flexible state of being that allows for easy transformation.

After interviewing the students, Davey (2009) found that the two students did adapt their habitus to their new field by accommodating the school’s culture and expectations. One student, whose pseudonym was Louise, explained that she felt happy
to be in a new school with higher expectations so that she could be successful, even though the consequence might have been losing her old friends. Louise stated,

When I came here it felt . . . like . . . something I could be proud of myself again . . . and I thought this is a new start, I can change. I still find it difficult to keep up with the work, but I feel I have definitely made progress. (Davey, 2009, p. 279)

Here Louise’s habitus had collided with features of this new field. Louise accommodated and adjusted to the field, and even found reasoning as to why the new field and new habitus may be more beneficial for her. The male student, Stephen, shared similar experiences of success and accommodation to the new norms.

Conversely, the third student, Pam, experienced modes of the new field that disagreed with her original habitus; therefore, she experienced slight resistance in accommodating the new field and its new dominant cultural norms. Pam stated,

Excelling at everything, sport, music, grades . . . . The headmaster goes on about all this stuff . . . every assembly . . . it’s always Saturday match results, tours to this place and that, how we’re top of this league . . . and I end up thinking what about those who just want to go out with friends at the weekend? (Davey, 2009, p. 282)

Therefore, while Louise and Stephen accommodated and cooperated with the new field by shifting their own habitus, Pam resisted.

Thus, Davey (2009) found that the habitus is reflexive, thereby not as fixed and certain as Bourdieu may have intended. However, some individuals may possess the
ability to shift their habitus willingly, while others will actively resist new norms. This research is significant in that it indicates the school’s ability to enforce its dominant norms throughout the curriculum, yet it may not be conducive to the success of all students and their habitus.

Critics complain that Bourdieu mainly relied on the focus of the subconscious; they argue that Bourdieu acted as though humans disregard metacognitive processes such as inner speech (Farnell, 2000). Additionally, while Bourdieu claimed that individuals may only resist their habitus when they are introduced to new fields, critics proclaim that resistance may occur through the individuals’ reflective processes within the same field (Farnell, 2000). Furthermore, Bourdieu received criticism for not giving much attention to the roles habitus may play in fields like race and gender (Reay, 2004a). Despite these counterarguments to Bourdieu’s theories, many lack any empirical data as supporting grounds, while numerous experimental and observed studies have been done to add to his theories. Nash (1999) challenged critics of Bourdieu in his study, “Habitus, and Educational Research: Is it all Worth the Candle?” Nash (1999) emphasized that critics of Bourdieu, such as Tooley and Darby (1998), have invalid grounds to render Bourdieu’s work as a waste of time to educational researchers. Moreover, Reay (2004a) indicated that researchers of education could focus on Bourdieu’s original ideas of habitus more, specifically on how the habitus works to explain how social structure operates in the field, not as a prerequisite to a research study, but as the method of study.

Contrary to critics that challenge the overall usefulness of Bourdieu’s concepts, others have chosen to use his theories to analyze habitus in a variety of methods.
Although the methodologies and conclusions may not always align with the exact words of Bourdieu, they do empirically explore the significance of his ideologies in curriculum and instruction. In a study that supported parts of Bourdieu’s concept of habitus with empirical data, Abrahams and Ingram (2013) expounded on Bourdieu’s concept of habitus by adding Bhabha’s (1994) concept of the third space. Abrahams and Ingram (2013) combined the two philosophies by claiming that the habitus is not necessarily a negative attribute of the field, but that it may be considered a third space of reflexivity. They proposed that the third space, or cleft habitus, is a unique position that allows an individual to have reflexive and transformative abilities (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013).

The cleft habitus is the negotiation of a person’s personality and state of being because of the exposure to more than one field that challenges their realities of their original field position. This space of ambivalence in the habitus is what Bhabha (1994) referred to as the third space. Abrahams and Ingram (2013) considered the third place, or the cleft habitus to be a place of individual adaptability. However, Bourdieu (2000) referred to this ambiguous position as such: “Thus, it can be observed that to contradictory positions which tend to exert structural ‘double binds’ on their occupants, there often correspond destabilized habitus, torn by contradiction and internal division, generating suffering” (p. 160). Abrahams and Ingram (2013) countered Bourdieu’s claim by stating that the habitus or cleft habitus is a beneficial space of struggle that allows the individual to make reflections and inferences to become mentally stronger and more effective.
Abrahams and Ingram (2013) built on Bourdieu’s theory by conducting an experiment to assess how students would negotiate the space of the cleft habitus as they faced new fields in college. The researchers proposed that the students would handle the cleft habitus in one of three ways: “distancing from the university field, distancing from the local field, and adapting to both fields” (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013, p. 3). Their qualitative study focused on the data gathered from students of two universities in Bristol and the interviews during focus groups. The researchers interviewed working students who did not live on campus to determine how they dealt with the constant shift of fields—going from their familial understanding to the norms and standards of the university. One significant university norm was that it was customary to live on campus as a student, as opposed to staying home. Students who stayed home were considered less independent and received negative stigma (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013). To assess these students’ experiences with the cleft habitus, the researchers used an artistic method to analyze the participants’ perceptions. They presented the students with plasticine, a clay-like substance, and had them design models of who they were at home and who they were when at the university.

Abrahams and Ingram (2013) found that many of their students could adjust aspects of their original habitus, such as speech and behavior to their university field, while remaining true to their identity at home. Abrahams and Ingram (2013) observed that the participants adopted a chameleon habitus that could be positive in that it allowed the students to mold themselves as needed when exposed to a new field. However, one must also consider the nature of a chameleon and its reason to make adaptations. Perhaps
they do it because of survival, stability, and safety, but at the sacrifice of their natural disposition.

In another study that explored the ability of the habitus to evolve, James, Busher, and Suttill (2015) addressed the understandings of European high school students who struggled with low social capital and the resulting disadvantages in regards to receiving higher education. Because these students were less likely to enter the field of higher education, education officials of England, Wales, and Ireland created Access to Higher Education (AHE) courses to provide these students with more opportunities to learn by recognizing their diversity. The participants, who had undergone marginalization in traditional education, were from low socioeconomic backgrounds and of minority ethnicities (James et al., 2015). The AHE were productive academic courses that included vocational training. The curriculum was improved by offering AHE courses to help students with disadvantaged backgrounds caused by low social capital to increase their chances of entering fields of higher education. Although AHE had shown improved results, James and colleagues (2015) found that few studies had been conducted to highlight the experiences of these students as they moved from one social field to a new one. The purpose of this study was for James et al. (2015) to use Bourdieu’s field and habitus theories to explore the shift in the students’ identities as they transition to a new field.

The field is an environment or system that maintains social relationships on a variety of levels (Bourdieu, 2002; James et al., 2015). The habitus is an individual’s state of being, thoughts, actions, and is the embodiment of social and cultural values and ideas.
The field can influence the habitus, and the habitus can influence the field by upholding and maintaining its norms. The sociocurricular position a student maintains has influence on the student’s habitus. Therefore, James et al. (2015) were interested in investigating how the AHE field affected its students and how relationships between the students and staff influenced the field.

Many of the AHE students were from disadvantaged backgrounds, therefore their capital and habitus may have had negative identities (James et al., 2015). James et al. (2015) explained, “They can have negative learner identities that are mediated by their perceptions of past educational experiences in their field of origin and the dispositions that arise from these” (p. 5). Considering that the AHE students possessed negative dispositions to learning, the researchers thought that they would make suitable participants in analyzing the ability of the habitus to shift when going from a potentially negative field to a potentially positive field.

James et al. (2015) used a qualitative case-study research method that utilized focus-group interviews to gain understanding of how the students made sense of their new realities (habitus) in the new AHE field. The student participants were volunteers of AHE courses from three different schools. James et al (2015) explored three themes: “AHE students’ reticence towards learning and difficult educational beginnings; transforming learner identities; and learning to become a learner” (p. 6). Once the interview process commenced, the researchers found that most of the participants had
negative experiences with their earlier and formative years of education and therefore felt negative about the traditional educational field. One student stated,

> When I was in primary school I was classed as having learning difficulties, didn’t get any help with that when I was at primary school. So, by the time I went to secondary school, sitting down doing work weren’t something that I ever did. I just gave up. (James et al., 2015, p. 7)

The students’ negative experiences in primary school caused them to have a negative habitus of their academic selves. Therefore, some of these students approached AHE with negative expectations, and others saw the courses as a means of redo and improve upon strategy. The students worked hard in the AHE courses because many saw this opportunity as their second chance. They realized they had negative previous experiences, and as a result, negative social capital. Thus, they were willing to be successful in the AHE courses even if it meant juggling the courses and fulltime jobs. James et al. (2015) found that the students were determined to improve their work ethic by holding themselves accountable and to higher expectations than ever before. One student commented, “When I started here I was a lot more focused than anywhere else I’ve ever studied” (James et al., 2015, p. 9). The students became more confident because they understood that gaining knowledge meant gaining social capital.

In conclusion, the AHE students became more self-determined and confident as they made their transition through their new field (James et al. 2015). As the students recognized their success, their work ethic also became more productive and their academic esteem was enhanced. The support offered in the AHE courses helped the
students gain social capital, implying that the habitus is not necessarily fixed as Bourdieu may have intended in his theory, but that it is flexible and has the potential to grow in positive directions (James et al., 2015).

Critics that contend the school has little influence on a student’s development and social capital claim that other entities influence the student’s habitus (Mehan, 1992). Karen (2002) and Perna and Titus (2005) conducted studies to analyze how schooling does influence students’ social development. Their findings suggested that parental involvement, personal involvement, and personal qualities are influential on students’ ability to achieve social capital.

However, Addi-Raccah and Ayalon (2008) found that when analyzing the school’s curricular structure, the school’s influence on academic and social development is prominent. Huang and Weng’s (1998) research supported Addi-Raccah and Ayalon’s theory that the curriculum influences student’s social development and chances of enrolling into postsecondary institutions. Huang and Weng explored the curricular structure of schools with students who experienced desegregation. They found that students in schools with academically focused curricula enrolled in higher education programs at greater rates. These curricula were challenging for all students without tracking students into individualized programs of rigor and influencing a shift in their habitus (Huang & Weng, 1998).

In conclusion, the structure of the field influences its agents’ habitus by affecting how they embody their reality within its organization. The power of the field is essentially within the agents, who through their developed habitus uphold and shape the
field, maintaining it and reproducing its values. Therefore, the agency, or positions in the field, supports the overall structure (Bourdieu, 1967). The habitus, which is a set of dispositions regarding thoughts, speech, taste, movements, and patterns, is embodied by the individual based on life experiences and his or her position played in the field (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013; Bourdieu, 1967, 1985b; Davey, 2009; Reay, 2004a). Some researchers believe that the habitus is a flexible embodiment that can shift for the betterment of the individual (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013; Davey, 2009). Others contend that the habitus is a fixed state of being that allows for very little room for a shift in an individual’s developed disposition (Bourdieu, 1967; Reay, 2004).

While these researchers (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013; Davey, 2009) found that the chameleon habitus was a positive aspect of an individual’s reality, others such as Bourdieu (1967, 1985a) and Reay (2004a) see the habitus in a new field as a site of struggle. Sociocurricular positions have tremendous influence on the students’ habitus, and thus their learner identities (Friedkin & Thomas, 1997). The institutionalization of school that distinguishes students according to their courses, assessment scores, backgrounds, and social capital, influences the habitus of the student and the roles they play in the field. Thus, it can be implied that students’ habitus determine both their academic progress and agency within the field, making it a crucial asset to consider when developing the curriculum and instruction of an educational environment.

Capital

In addition to studies conducted to analyze the flexibility of the student’s habitus, many examined social and cultural capital as well. Bourdieu (1977) defined social and
cultural capital as “instruments for the appropriation of symbolic wealth socially designated as worthy of being sought and possessed” (p. 488). Scholars such as Dumais (2005), Kisida, Greene, and Bowen (2014), Fabiansson (2015), Mohr and DiMaggio (1995), and Vorhaus (2014) recognized that capital is a beneficial entity to possess within the school system, as it lends to the higher probability of high sociocurricular placement. However, contrary to Bourdieu’s philosophy, DiMaggio (1982) claimed that capital can be gained by the flexible habitus of disadvantaged students, an idea known as cultural mobility (Kisida et al., 2014).

Many researchers believe that cultural reproduction involves the process of those who already possess the desired norms and attributes of a given field passing down their dispositions and orientations to their offspring, thereby continuously reproducing their status within that field. DiMaggio (1982) described the process: “This shared status culture aids group efforts to monopolize for the group as a whole scarce social, economic, and cultural resources by providing coherence to existing social networks and facilitating the development of co-membership, respect, and affection out of which new networks are constructed” (p. 189). On the contrary, cultural mobility theorists suggest that disadvantaged students, those that possess little cultural capital, may have more drive and purpose to acquire more cultural capital (Kisida et al., 2014).

To investigate this premise and analyze the ability of students from disadvantaged backgrounds to acquire cultural capital in hopes of being more academically successful, Kisida et al. (2014) conducted a study in Bentonville, Arkansas where an art museum had recently opened in 2011. One of its kind in the region, Crystal Bridges Museum of
American art initiated a program that offered free museum tours to students. So many schools applied for the program that a lottery had to be instituted. Of the groups in the lottery, 92 were selected (treatment group) to tour the museum, and 92 were not selected (control group). Museum teachers using a constructivist teaching style led tour groups composed of approximately 15 students. The intent of the tour was to provide students with an informative and engaging experience, and the tour focused on just a few pieces of prominent artwork. Expounding upon the cultural mobility theory, Kisida et al. (2014) hypothesized that the museum visit would have a positive effect on the disadvantaged students’ (those who have never been to an art museum) cultural capital acquiring abilities. Following the students’ visit to the museum, Kisida et al. (2014) visited the participating schools and administered a survey to students in the control and treatment groups.

Data revealed that disadvantaged students had the greatest shift in attitude towards art and culture (Kisida et al., 2014). The results of this study indicated the positive effects of a school’s focus on introducing culture into the curriculum. Additionally, the results had significant implications for understanding the nature of the habitus. However, limitations existed within the comparative groups. It is likely that the disadvantaged groups would see the most growth because they have the least amount of social capital.

Dumais (2005) built on Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital by analyzing capital in public schools and Catholic schools. Dumais identified a gap in research on the social structure of Catholic schools. However, she suggested that despite the limited research,
social capital is a major component of Catholic schools that influences both the curriculum and success rates. Dumais (2005) elaborated by explaining precisely how capital works:

Cultural capital comes in three forms: objectified cultural capital, which refers to objects, such as works of art, which require special cultural abilities to use and appreciate; embodied cultural capital, which is the disposition toward appreciating and understanding objectified cultural capital; and institutionalized cultural capital, which refers to educational credentials and the credentialing system. (p. 141)

Dumais (2005) investigated the relationship and prevalence of capital, habitus, and field among kindergarteners in both public and Catholic schools. She sought to determine (a) "Whether cultural capital and parents’ orientation to schooling differ by school sector; (b) how cultural capital and parents’ orientation toward schooling affect teachers’ perceptions of students; and (c) whether these effects vary by school sector" (Dumais, 2005, p. 135). Dumais conducted a regression analysis using data from surveys taken in an early childhood longitudinal study (ECLS). The teachers, parents, and school officials responded to the questionnaires. For the purpose of Dumais’ study, she collected data on only kindergartener students of public and Catholic schools. From this data, Dumais drew several significant implications.

Among these implications were socioeconomic status (SES), achievement correlations, parental involvement influence, the effectiveness of social capital, and the effect of the field. Dumais (2005) found that students with higher SES had parents with a
more positive habitus towards the field. Dumais was also able to ascertain that parents of Catholic school students averaged higher SES, and of these Catholic school parents, 71% were volunteers for the school’s functions. In public school, 41% of the parents volunteered (Dumais, 2005). Regarding social capital, Dumais found that the Catholic schools’ parents had greater social capital because of their social closure (close ties, resources, and connections). However, the parents’ habitus towards the Catholic school field was not as positive as expected, which Dumais (2005) believed could be a result of the study’s focus on kindergarten students.

Additionally, Dumais (2005) drew implications regarding the teachers’ perceptions. These results were significant because they revealed that teachers were more likely to favor female students with a high SES and students whose parents volunteered and participated in school events. Interestingly, the analysis showed that the students’ cultural capital and their participation in art and foreign language studies did not influence the teachers’ perceptions. Hence, Dumais (2005) made correlations between the field, habitus, and capital through her analysis of the ECLS-K data. Her research alluded to the manifestations of Bourdieu’s theories, but also emphasized the critical perceptions of the teachers and students’ positions in the field.

While some support the tracking of students into different paths of rigor, critics of tracking suggest that the practice has many consequences for students. Heck and colleagues (2004) stated, “Researchers studying student course taking, however, have discovered that the types of classes taken, the teaching environments that emerge within them, and the relationships formed while in such close proximity affect student attitudes,
achievement, future aspirations, and attainment” (p. 327). Many theorists agree with these results of tracking (Friedkin & Thomas, 1997; Halliman & Oakes, 1994; Riley, 2010; Spring, 1997). Some schools have undertaken detracking measures, yet for many, some form of curriculum sorting still exists (Heck et al., 2004). Students are organized into courses with varying levels of rigor in the curriculum. As a result, some students receive less college preparatory education than others do, resulting in a hierarchical chain of social capital and sociocurricular positions within the school. Another common characteristic of tracking is that students of minority backgrounds or low social capital are less likely to be enrolled in the advanced and gifted tracks, thereby limiting their access to higher education (Heck et al., 2004). Critics of tracking emphasize that the mechanics of tracking allow for systematic forms of inequality to persist within the school system (Friedkin & Thomas, 1997).

Capital is essentially a form of life currency that individuals can use to advance in society (Bourdieu, 1977). It can be cultural, economic, or symbolic (DiMaggio, 1982). Therefore, the amount of capital an individual has depends upon several factors, but the most influential in the school field are familial economic status, cultural heritage, and natural dispositions (Bourdieu, 1977; DiMaggio 1982; Dumais, 2005; Fabiansson, 2015; Kisida et al., 2014; Mohr & DiMaggio, 1995; Vorhaus, 2014). Those who possess more social capital in school are more likely to be academically successful than those with less capital (Dumais, 2005). When groups of individuals maintain high levels of social and cultural capital, they can monopolize their positions in the field by reproducing their resources and knowledge with their descendants (Mohr & DiMaggio, 1995). Capital, in
conjunction with habitus and field, triangulate to maintain the social structure of an
organization. In the school field, students bring in preexisting amounts of capital, and
can access more, contingent upon their habitus and its negotiating capabilities, as well as
the field’s atmosphere to allow such mobility (DiMaggio, 1982; Kisida et al., 2014).

Ta Endoxa

To investigate the notion of the reproduction of legitimacy effectively, it is critical
to analyze those individuals who have deemed such norms as universal truths.
Epistemological, ontological, and axiological stances and theories have been customarily
challenged, reproduced, and infused into societies for as long as humans could speculate
and theorize the realities around them. One highly regarded and influential individual of
these speculators on universal theory is Aristotle, a scholar of Greece approximately 2300
years ago. His philosophical underpinnings, documented in hundreds of texts, include
various interpretations and theories on topics such as poetry, physics, the heavens, the
soul, zoology, embryology, politics, and rhetoric. Within these domains, he proclaimed
truth theories in an attempt to educate the masses on realities of human and animal
experiences. Among his multiple theories and writings, one of notable and constant
mention among numerous scholars that have succeeded him is The Complete Works of
Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation. These articles constitute his theories and
truths regarding the categories just mentioned, in addition to several more. Scholars have
contemplated these writings and critically analyzed them for their own truths. Thus, his
writings have received diverging interpretations over the past two thousand years. For
the purposes of this investigation, it is important to explore these interpretations and
correlate them to the incidence of reproduction. Therefore, the implication of Aristotle’s ta endoxa will be used here to identify the historical context of the research problem and suggest new implications for ta endoxa in today’s society.

Aristotle used the phrase *ta endoxa* in many of his writings. Dependent upon the context, the translation of the meaning differs, but customarily ta endoxa translates and refers to *the reputable or wise opinions* (Haskins, 2004; Fairclough, 2012; McLeod, 1995; Renon, 1998). The literature indicates repeatedly that Aristotle used these opinions to formulate his truths (Haskins, 2004; Fairclough, 2012; Leff, 1993; McLeod, 1995; Nussbaum, 1986; Renon, 1998), or as he perceived them, universal truths of the world. Much of the literature focuses on Aristotle’s concept of rhetoric and his implications for the truthful or most valuable forms of argumentation. However, philosophical use of Aristotle’s ta endoxa is limited in the correlation to the reproduction of societal norms. For the purposes of this study, ta endoxa will be correlated with dominance in the social order. If Aristotle founded his philosophical theories on the reputable and wise opinions (ta endoxa), one must speculate on the origin of these proclaimed reputable and wise opinions and his ability to discern their truth in the midst of potential bias and agenda.

Aristotle’s philosophies were founded on endoxa. It is apparent in his writing that he upheld the legitimacy of other philosophers that he perceived as wise—as the endoxa. Yet, ultimately, it is Aristotle’s discernment to accept or reject the endoxa (Haskins, 2004). Thus, the endoxa is subject to his orientation towards the truth of knowledge and wisdom, and even more so to those of the endoxa that he wished to uphold. While some believe that Aristotle was open to multiple opinions and concerned with the realities of
mankind, other philosophers counter by pointing to Aristotle’s tendency to uphold the philosophy of the wise and the masses until they challenged that of his own habitus (Nussbaum, 1986; Haskins, 2004). For example,

The opinions of the wise men seem, then, to harmonize with our arguments. But while even such things carry some conviction, the truth in practical matters is discerned from the facts of life, for these are the decisive factor. We must therefore survey what we have already said, bringing it to the test of the facts of life, and if it harmonizes with the facts we must accept it, but if it clashes with them we must suppose it to be mere theory. (Aristotle & Barnes, 2014, 1179a16-23)

Thus, the purpose of endoxa is highly debated. Some suggest that Aristotle had specific sophisticated formulations that appropriated truth values to endoxic suggestions (Denyer, 1991; Irwin, 1986). Others suggest that his studies and conclusions were potentially based on his opinion and cultural bias (Haskins, 2004).

Additionally, interesting to Aristotle’s notion of ta endoxa is his contradictory nature of his usage. In *On the Heavens*, when speaking of the nature of heaven, he stated about the endoxa:

Let us start with a review of the theories of other thinkers; for the proofs of a theory are difficulties for the contrary theory. Besides, those who have first heard the pleas of our adversaries will be more likely to credit the assertions which we are going to make. We shall be less open to the charge of procuring judgement by
default. To give a satisfactory decision as to the truth it is necessary to be rather an arbitrator than a party to dispute. (Aristotle & Barnes, 2014, 279b5-15)

When speaking of the nature of heaven, Aristotle appeared to be open to the reception of all opinions (Haskins, 2004). However, when speaking in his section of *Politics*, his perception of the opinions he wished to receive and legitimate on the matter shifts to a narrow perspective.

By nature, of course, female and slave are distinct . . . Among the barbarians, however, the female is in the same position as the slave. But that is because there is nothing among the barbarians with the natural capacity to rule, and their community is that of male and female slave. Therefore it is reasonable for Greeks to rule barbarians, say the poets supposing that to be barbarian and to be a slave are by nature the same thing. (Aristotle & Barnes, 2014, 1252a34)

Here, Aristotle’s truth appeared to be an absolute, regarding men, women, and barbarians. He mentioned this aspect of nature and reality with authority (Haskins, 2004). Remarks such as these have received challenges from feminist’s theorists (Green, 1992). Additionally, this excerpt implies that slavery and gender denunciation are acceptable or commonplace. Therefore, if Aristotle’s writings suggest obvious hegemony, his notion of the wise and reputable opinions of society, ta endoxa, may be directly correlated to his innate habitus and privileged position within his reality. The validity of the endoxa then, may be perceived as questionable and perhaps even arbitrarily upheld as the standard.
If Aristotle was able to distinguish between the wise ones and their opinions, one must question his massive philosophical influence as it appealed to his cultural and social disposition. His cultural milieu and its influence on his theories are pronounced in additional pieces of his work as well. Specifically, he used *ta endoxa* and his discernment for knowledge value and the use of language. Some of his excerpts encourage individuals to uphold specific forms of knowledge and skill such as poetry, but discourage others from practicing skills, such as singing and acting, portraying them as lower levels of knowledge. Therefore, the use of *ta endoxa* to deem varying notions of the universe as universal truths was subjective to the opinions of Aristotle and individuals who may have likely shared his habitus and societal positions. Consequently, the influence of these individuals may have been reproduced and upheld within their society. With his prominent position as tutor to Alexander the Great, one could reason that Aristotle’s influence and theories spread to the multiple territories of ancient Greece as Alexander led his conquering campaign.

Aristotle is upheld as one of the most influential philosophers of humanity. His writings have been used in virtually every aspect of the human experience. Additionally, his teacher, another notable philosopher, Plato, influenced the social order by creating falsehoods that inevitably stratified the population. Thus, it is also critical to note his essential role played in the development of a stratified society. When speaking with his brother, Glaucon, Plato stated how he would devise and execute such an action:

Plato: Therefore, as I was just now saying, we must enquire who are the best guardians of their own conviction that what they think the interest of the State is
to be the rule of their lives. We must watch them from their youth upwards, and make them perform actions in which they are most likely to forget or to be deceived, and he who remembers and is not deceived is to be selected, and he who fails in the trial is to be rejected. That will be the way?

Glaucon: Yes.

Plato: . . . I am inclined to think this is the sort of way in which our rulers and guardians should be chosen and appointed. . . . How then may we devise one of those needful falsehoods of which we lately spoke—just one royal lie which may deceive the rulers, if that be possible, and at any rate the rest of the city? . . . .

Well then, I will speak, although I really know not how to look you in the face, or in what words to utter the audacious fiction, which I propose to communicate gradually first to the rulers, then to the soldiers, and lastly to the people. They are to be told that their youth was a dream, and the education and training which they received from us, an appearance only; in reality during all that time they were being formed and fed in the womb of the earth, where they themselves and their arms and appurtenances were manufactures; when they were completed, the earth, their mother, sent them up; and so, their country being their mother and also their nurse, they are bound to advise for her good, and to defend her against attacks, and her citizens they are to regard as children of the earth and their own brothers . . . . Citizens, we shall say to them in our tale, you are brothers, yet God has framed you differently. (Plato, 1937, pp. 678-679)
Thus, one could surmise that the influence of Plato and the field position occupied by Aristotle and his supporters possibly served to uphold the perceived legitimacy of an endoxa. The endoxa of Aristotle’s time received the capital to theorize and shift culture to perceived norms. Therefore, one could speculate that as the endoxa’s capital and practices were recycled and upheld as wise truths, their governing presence remains today.

Sociocurricular Positions

Bourdieu’s theory of habitus and field are applicable to the study of curriculum and instruction when one analyzes the dynamics of sociocurricular positions. Bourdieu (1985) stated, “Knowledge of the position occupied in this space contains information as to the agents’ intrinsic properties (their condition) and their relational properties (their position)” (p. 725). Although he did not use the term sociocurricular position, Bourdieu’s theories indicated that he believed there existed positions of power and legitimacy within every field.

Heck et al. (2004) defined the sociocurricular position as the level of status and degree of social capital an individual student holds because of the freedoms, norms, constraints, and curricular structure of a school system. Friedkin and Thomas (1997) analyzed the components of curricular positions created because of tracking. They specifically analyzed the benefits of curricular positions in private institutions. The following paragraphs describe the work of Friedkin and Thomas (1997) and detail how Heck et al. (2004) built upon their work by analyzing the effects of the social structure in conjunction with the curricular positions, i.e., sociocurricular positions.
Friedkin and Thomas analyzed students’ coursework to assess their curricular positions. They found it possible to divide and place students into categories that summarized their course choices and levels of curricular rigor received. This study is significant because it implies the structural divide within tracked schools; therefore it has the potential for exploration of the influence of sociocurricular positions.

Similar to Friedkin and Thomas (1997), Heck et al. (2004) analyzed transcripts of high school students. However, unlike Friedkin and Thomas, they found that they could categorize the students into seven different sociocurricular positions based on the students’ course selections over their high school careers. It became apparent that some sociocurricular positions could be categorized by characteristics such as race and gender. Students of Japanese origin were overrepresented in the most rigorous course schedules, the highest sociocurricular position. The lowest sociocurricular position was overrepresented by the Hawaiian students (Heck et al., 2004).

Other schools in the United States reflect these racial disparities. However, critics who support notions of tracking maintain that inequalities within the school system are unintentional. Mehan (1992) stated, “Schools are not black boxes through which students pass on their way to predetermined slots practices that respond to competing demands that often unwittingly contribute to inequality” (p. 1). On the contrary, critical theorists such as Ladson-Billings (2006) and Apple (2015) claimed that the precedence of sociocurricular positions is the result of an institutionalized system of differentiation, and that the research implies long-term effects on the students. More research is necessary on sociocurricular positions. However, the findings of Friedkin and Thomas and Heck et al.
have beginning implications for the understanding of sociocurricular positions and their possible correlation to the achievement gap.

The following sections provide a review of literature that has expounded upon Bourdieu’s theory of habitus and field by connecting it with curriculum and instruction under a variety of categories. Specifically presented are analyses of studies conducted to investigate the sociocurricular positions within the fields of class, gender, language, official knowledge, and race. The analyses of these categories will show the interconnectedness of the sociocurricular positions students have within these fields as well as how they all combine and manifest in the overarching field, the school system.

Sociocurricular position: Class. Historically, societies around the world have perpetuated the “haves” and the “have-nots” through their multifaceted class categorizations. The formation of a class is based on those that hold the arbitrary, yet valued capital that is desired in a community. Thus, divisions and distinctions are a resulting consequence. Individuals who did not possess the initial desired capital may easily find themselves in the lower class, and their low-class status, their lack of capital, will be passed onto their descendants, because of a lack of resources, accessibility, and exposure to strategies and means of becoming socially mobile. This ideology of the reproduction of capital and dominant norms are essentially Bourdieu’s (1990) theories of social and cultural reproduction. For centuries, societies have allowed for some groups of people to reproduce and pass down their capital and class status successfully, while others have been ostracized and even demonized for not being able to sustain their livelihoods because of a lack of capital (Beckman & Cooper, 2005; Reay, 2004b, 2006).
Consequently, individuals born into middle or high class are more likely to navigate the world successfully with their habitus and ingrained set of resources.

The structural elements that sustain a class system lend themselves to the nature of dominance and subordinance (Beckman & Cooper, 2005; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Reay, 2006; Tyler, 2011). For many years, education was not available and easily accessible to all, especially individuals of the lower class, thereby making education a limiting factor in maintaining exclusivity and capital within the upper classes (Reay, 2004). When education became more available to everyone, the assumption of some was that the achievement gap would decrease and social mobility among the low class would increase (Reay, 2006). However, such is not necessarily the case. Students with low SES went from being the external ‘other’ to the internal ‘other’ (Reay, 2006). When school was made more accessible to the working class, many individuals of high class still worked to ensure that “the schooling of the working classes was always to be subordinate and inferior to that of the bourgeois, a palliative designed to contain and pacify rather than to educate and liberate” (Reay, 2006, p. 293). Once the classes merged within education, the social and historical contexts of the class system seemed to be lost or ignored as middle and high-class individuals proclaimed that their academic success was due to their merits, not their high capital and advantageous lives (Blanden & Machin, 2003; Reay, 2006). Educational priorities begin to shift to accommodate the lack in academic progress of the lower class. The idea that individuals of the low class were there because of centuries of classism received less attention, and educators and their subject knowledge received more attention. Teaching became more prescriptive and less
attuned to societal and historical context, and class was not an excuse for progress or the lack thereof (Reay, 2006). This warrants a discussion of the research on how the habitus of teachers and students’ class influence sociocurricular placement and academic success.

Through observations and interviews, Reay (2006) investigated how students negotiate class within the classroom. She investigated the structural components of two secondary schools in the United Kingdom (UK). The UK currently suffers from relatively high rates of poverty (Reay, 2006). Studies also implicate that not only does the UK have a large class disparity, it has been growing larger since the 1970s (Reay, 2006). Reay analyzed three central themes: pedagogic identities, inclusive learning, and participation in learning. Reay (2006) interviewed students from working class families and found that many of them felt ignored or mistreated in the classroom compared to their middle-class peers.

Additionally, the working-class students appeared to be very troubled by their future performance on the SAT assessment. One student attached her future assessment score to her likelihood of success as an adult. The results of this study imply that, despite the outcry of moving towards equality in western civilization, there continues to be a significant gap of achievement among the classes. Furthermore, the influence of class on habitus continues to echo throughout the school system, as the middle and high-class students continue to have greater access to resources and receive positive perceptions from their teachers. Lastly, the emphasis placed on teaching to the test, and the acquisition of high scores by the students has caused the class divisions to receive less acknowledgment as the domination of certain individuals continues.
In another investigation of habitus, Reay (1995) utilized an ethnographic research method in two primary schools in London, England over the course of 15 months to analyze its use by peer groups. Reay conducted her observations in a primary classroom at an affluent school named Oak Park (pseudonym) for several months to gather data that had implications of the habitus and social functioning of the teachers and students. Towards the beginning of her study, she observed a group of girls playing a computer game based on a girl who worked as a servant. The game allowed the students to control the girl’s (servant’s) actions. When one of the students typed a command in the game, she attempted to follow the command with a ‘please’, but before the student could type ‘please’ in the textbox, she was quickly stopped by another student who remarked, “Don’t be silly . . . we don’t have to say please or thank you. She’s just a servant” (Reay, 1995, p. 362). The girls then began to make the servant do all sorts of frivolous tasks on the game for their entertainment, and they seemed to relish the experience, as well as condone it. Subjecting an individual of a lower SES status to harsh treatment for entertainment seemed to be appealing to this group of girls. It appeared that their habitus had developed to think little of a lower class, and that the lower classed individuals deserved it. One girl stated, “We have to give her orders and be a bit rude because she’s the servant” (Reay, 1995, p. 362). Reay described how this was a telling experience about the students’ habitus towards class.

Even when it was time to end class and clean up the room, most of the students did not find it was their responsibility to clean up the untidiness that they made. When Reay (1995) expressed her surprise at their lack of cleaning assistance, “Susie said, ‘it’s
not our job’, while Oliver interjected, ‘They employ cleaners to do that’” (p. 363). Here it is apparent that the students had little regard for individuals who were below middle class. Reay (1995) explained how the social construct of class had already impacted these students’ habitus: “The students were demonstrating a particular understanding of the division of labor and their place within it . . . . They were also displaying the communicative competence that is integral to the understanding and use of symbolic power” (p. 362). As fifth graders, the girls who were mistreating the servant on the computer game and the students who did not think it was necessary to clean up their own mess had already developed habitus that were both demanding and abrasive towards lower class citizens.

In another study on the influence of class on the habitus of students, Drotos and Cilesiz (2014) analyzed how students of low class backgrounds negotiate attempts to gain more social capital by matriculating into postsecondary institutions. Students who come from households of low-income face many challenges of obtaining post-secondary education (Billson & Terry, 1982; Drotos & Cilesiz, 2014; Rothstein, 2009). Because of financial burden, these students may find it hard to succeed in high school academics, let alone, college, which creates more economical strain. As these students prepare to graduate, the realization of potential success after high school becomes more evident. First-generation college students face the task of trying to pay for application fees, test fees, tuition, and living cost, as well as the challenges of paying senior dues, which can amount to approximately $2,000 (Drotos & Cilesiz, 2014). Such financial need causes many teenage students to take on the workload of a job, while simultaneously trying to
maintain their studies. These students may work upwards to 25 hours per week. Therefore, time for these students becomes a valuable form of capital. Instead of using their time to study or conduct research regarding colleges and admission procedures, they must use a lot of their time investigating survival strategies. Students of lower income families often work to support their households, school dues, and college aspirations. Such responsibilities are challenging to the student’s high school success as they develop habitus focused on surviving under limited resources, while trying to strive to earn more capital. Assets that middle and high-class students are accustomed to—such as computers, printers, transportation, health insurance, food, heat, stable housing—are not guaranteed for students of low SES. Class status then, becomes a crucial factor in gaining access to more capital (Drotos & Cilesiz, 2014).

Since class is so influential in access to more capital, some scholars believe there may be little schools can do to bring about equality. They contend that the students who come to classrooms with capital and survival resources will always have better chances of success (Rothstein, 2009). However, other scholars have contemplated and attempted to bring equality among the classes in the classrooms through psychological changes in the curriculum aimed to provide students with low SES study skills to enhance their chances at college attainment. For example, Drotos and Cilesiz (2014) described,

High school junior and senior students were taught four success strategies, including taking reasonable risk, taking responsibility, searching, their environment, and using feedback. Substrategies included instruction on overcoming procrastination, building self-confidence and responsibility,
managing their daily lives, learning from lecture and textbooks, and preparing for exams. (p. 6)

The curriculum shift, which focused on acquiring certain skills, was a good attempt to enhance students’ abilities so that they may obtain a college education. However, such a curriculum does not acknowledge the external challenges, such as lack of food, power, and transportation. It is true that the school system would have difficulty addressing these real concerns, but to suggest that students with low SES should just apply themselves despite these challenges, and that everything will be copacetic for academic success and college attainment, is negligent and unrealistic (Drotos & Cilesiz, 2014). Drotos and Cilesiz (2014) explained the hazards of curriculum shifts that overlook the challenges that many students with low class sociocurricular positions face: “Curriculum interventions promote solely the development of skill and will action, a ‘pull yourself up by the bootstraps’ mentality. In doing so, blame for lack of achievement is placed on those who are marginalized” (p. 19). Instead of the “skill and will” intervention, Drotos and Cilesiz suggested that it would be advantageous to expose these students to individuals of low class who have attended college and learn how they overcame economic challenges. The researchers also suggested that the schools diversify their college recruitment representatives and that the teachers and administrators give greater compassion to the students with these low-class challenges. Additionally, the curriculum shifts may benefit students of low SES status by acknowledging the disparities in resources and including a social advocacy piece, thus challenging students to consider the nature of social reproduction and methods of defeating its challenges (Drotos & Cilesiz, 2014).
Some students can negotiate their low SES dispositions by embodying the habitus of the dominant agents of their educational field. Such a negotiation of an individual’s orientation to life is what W. E. B. Du Bois (1903) referred to as the double consciousness, and Bourdieu (2000) referred to it as a double bind. The double consciousness and double bind are concepts that support the idea that individuals can support the dispositions or normed behaviors upheld in multiple fields. In other words, students can uphold the habitus in their community or home life while simultaneously upholding a different habitus in their school life. Essentially these individuals have understood that one habitus will bring them capitalistic success and prestige over the other, rather for arbitrary and unjust reasons, and they will act accordingly to acquire more social capital. The consequence of living between two habitus causes the individual to experience a constant pull between two worlds of customs, bringing on a degree of an emotional tug of war (Ingram, 2011). Bourdieu (2002) referred to this tug of war of the habitus as a dialectical confrontation. To analyze how high school students from working class families experience and manage their dialectical confrontation, Ingram (2011) used an art-based qualitative method to investigate the changing habitus of a group of male students.

Ingram (2011) used Bourdieu’s ideas of habitus to analyze how some students may negotiate their natural dispositions in school to overcome class adversity. Much of the research about habitus and class focuses on how students of low SES are underachieving because of their social capital or lack thereof (Beckman & Cooper, 2005; Drotos & Cilesiz, 2014; Reay, 2004a, 2006; Tyler, 2011). However, Ingram’s (2011,
2013) studies are unique in that she focuses on the positive aspects that are necessary for an individual to operate and succeed in society with a *chameleon habitus* (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013). Ingram believed that individuals of low SES are able to succeed in education despite adversity because of their ability to adapt the desired dispositions of a school field.

To explore her theory of the chameleon habitus with Bourdieu’s (2002) dialectical confrontation, Ingram (2011) interviewed a group of students who attended one of the most impoverished schools in Northern Ireland. Ingram was interested in analyzing their ability to overcome their challenges of capital and remain successful in high school. To investigate this topic, Ingram used a qualitative art method to collect the data for her study. She had her participants create their identities using plasticine, a type of modeling clay. The students made their identities using the material and then described them to the researchers. All of the students’ visual representations of themselves illustrated their negotiated habitus and dialectical confrontation. For example, one student, Mick, designed his identity by making a stick and a ball on each side. One of the balls was much larger than the other. Mick told the researcher that the bigger ball represented who he was at school, and the smaller ball represented who he was at home and around his neighborhood friends. Mick talked about his school life as if it were more significant than his home life. He said he appreciated being able to blend in with both environments, but he identified his home life as a place with rough and dangerous individuals, and he looked down on those individuals by referring to his neighborhood friends as “hooligans” (Ingram, 2011, p. 300). Despite these comments, Mick also reflected that he was still a
part of that habitus and found it hard to balance his identity to that of both groups. Mick and the other students acknowledged their dialectical confrontation. Conversely, they were also aware that they had to exhibit the school’s orientations to succeed as adults. This research implies that the habitus is adaptive, but at what expense?

The role of class on a student’s academic progress is highly influential. Class determines the amount of resources and capital available to a student, as well as how others perceive individuals. The presence of dominance within the middle and upper classes of societies all over the world has been upheld and reproduced for thousands of years. This segregation has been upheld so long that it has become normative, as some individuals of dominance carry the habitus that they and their ancestors accumulated wealth from their merit and not the cultural imposition of their ancestors (Reay, 2006). Some individuals believe that success and failure are relevant to nothing but effort. However, research suggests that success, especially in education, has more to do with the structural components of society and the habitus developed out of the oppressed and the oppressors, rather than simply putting forth individual effort (Beckman & Cooper, 2005; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Drotos & Cilesiz, 2014; Reay, 2004a, 2006; Tyler, 2011). To effectively address the disparities in achievement among the different classes, the literature suggests that a shift in curriculum and instruction is necessary, but that would have to include elements of care and understanding of the historical context that has led to class instances of social injustice. Teaching test skills and methods of being accountable are helpful, but students would benefit also from lessons that acknowledge the uneven playing fields and sociocurricular positions, and promote advocacy that leads
to the critical thinking of students of all classes so that they may become effective agents of change.

Sociocurricular position: Gender. Gender is an ascriptive quality typically used to clarify the biological sex of a male or female (Jacobs, 1996). On one hand, despite the physical differences between males and females, Bourdieu (1985) proclaimed that the higher an individual is on the social hierarchal scale, the less differences there are concerning social capital and gender. On the other hand, he also made statements that suggested that he acknowledged the inequalities that exist between males and females following their educational careers (Dumais, 2002; Jacobs, 1996). Many scholars have pondered upon the ability and frequency of males and females transitioning to the top of the social hierarchal scale. Additionally, philosophers have speculated about the incidence of educators having differing expectations and perspectives of their male and female students, the enrollment and grade disparities among the two gendered groups, and the acquisition of different types of social capital that lend to success in education. Some researchers have claimed that gender has little importance in social capital in education (Sullivan, 2001). However, several philosophers dispute these claims (Dumais, 2002; Friedkin & Thomas, 1997; Jacobs, 1996; Lovell, 2000; McNay, 1999; Orr, 2011; Reay, 1995). In view of Bourdieu’s (1967, 1985a, 1985b) concept of the habitus, it is critical to analyze the triangulation of social capital.

Research shows that females generally experience greater academic success in primary and secondary school than males do, and they acquire bachelor’s degrees at higher rates than male students (Dumais, 2002; Jacobs, 1996). However, the social
capital that exists between males and females takes diverging paths as systematic expectations of the genders are reproduced. For instance, males may eventually use their social capital to acquire jobs or political status, while females may use theirs for marriage acquisition and passing on cultural dispositions to their children; thereby having significant influence over the family unit (Dumais, 2002; Jacobs, 1996).

Furthermore, philosophers speculate how females are more likely to perform better than males do in school, yet they receive less financial rewards as adults and tend to occupy fewer occupations in the science and engineering fields. Jacobs (1996) reported, “In the United States, 30% of women would have to change fields of study for women to be distributed in the same manner as men” (p. 168). Many women of the 1960s majored in education and life sciences, but only 14% in engineering (Jacobs, 1996). Such a disparity may be attributable to salary gaps and postsecondary education. In 1990, women with four years of college experience earned 71% of a man’s salary on average (Jacobs, 1996). As gender plays a role in influencing both the habitus of individuals and the structure of the field, it is important to further analyze its dynamics in childhood development, as well as adulthood. The following paragraphs provide a review of the literature on the triangulation of gender, habitus, and social capital that effects the alignment of sociocurricular positioning.

In a study intended to analyze how high school students’ family backgrounds influence their grades, DiMaggio (1982) instead found a significant difference on male and female student perceptions of social status. DiMaggio analyzed the data from a set of surveys called Project Talent. The survey was a large set of responses from
approximately 3,000 European American students in the eleventh grade in 1960. The
instrument measured the students’ cultural capital as they reported their interest and
participation in visual arts, musical arts, and language arts activities. DiMaggio stated
that the participation in these activities represented the norm of those individuals of elite
cultural capital status. DiMaggio made several hypotheses about inferences that he
would find within the data. Among these, cultural capital was positively related to
success in school, and cultural capital revolves around the family background.

Outside of these hypotheses, DiMaggio (1982) found that there were major
differences in the gender specific perceptions of high culture, the effects on grades, and
the orientation of the students’ long-term goals. The female participants had greater
interest and participation in the arts than males. Additionally, DiMaggio found that this
influence of family background on female students was even higher or more likely to be
reproduced in female students of high socioeconomic status. DiMaggio speculated that
this difference may have been due to the idea that females have developed a habitus that
supports a field in which males dominate careers and material resources. Therefore, they
may have embodied the idea that they need to be more culturally invested to gain access
to different opportunities in postsecondary education. DiMaggio proposed that teachers
may reward the prevalence of obedience and interest of high culture within certain
students, thereby helping to reinforce cultural expectations in school. DiMaggio also
suggested that males may be at an age in which they naturally reject high culture because
of its negative stigma perceived by other male students. DiMaggio (1982) concluded by
adding.
Women who wish to be recognized as eligible partners for men from high status backgrounds may need cultural capital to a greater extent than men who wish to achieve in the world of work. For boys from high status families, it may be more important, in high school, to develop a taste for women who appreciate culture than to develop a taste for high culture itself. (p. 182)

Here, DiMaggio is suggesting that both males and females possess social capital, but they use it remarkably differently to attain two distinctive outcomes. While females tend to be involved with more activities of high culture, they need it to be successful in a male-dominated field.

Similar to the previous study conducted by DiMaggio (1982), Dumais (2002) explored student perceptions of social capital by analyzing the responses of a survey on data from Project Talent as well. However, following up on DiMaggio’s study, Dumais intended to explore the differences in capital among male and female students. Additionally, unique to her study, Dumais wanted to incorporate Bourdieu’s concept of habitus in relation to social capital, gender and school success. Dumais used the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) to investigate her hypothesis. The NELS was used as an instrument to survey approximately 25,000 eighth graders of 1988. Dumais specified her study to European American males and females. For her study, she examined the habitus of the students by analyzing their future expectation responses. Like DiMaggio’s findings, Dumais immediately noticed that more females participated in activities of high culture such as art and dance classes. Dumais (2002) found that 75% of females participated in such activities as compared to 45% of males participating in any
activity, like attending concerts or playing in sports. Even in the sports category, 39% of
the females participated. Dumais agreed with DiMaggio that culture seemed to be
appreciated and reproduced from mother to daughter, and that the mother believes in
gender stereotypes that consequently lead to more females being involved in
extracurricular activities. Consequently, that standard will be reproduced in the home
and thus, the school. Dumais also noted that even though females played sports—which
is not traditionally stereotyped as a female activity—the social consequences were far
less than if a male had been participating in traditionally female activities. Dumais
(2002) stated, “. . . the stigma of being called a tomboy is not as strong as that of being
called a sissy” (p. 54). In other words, Dumais concluded that it is taboo for males to
appreciate activities viewed as feminine, thus jeopardizing their opportunities for cultural
capital.

When analyzing the role of the habitus, Dumais (2002) found more females than
boys (47% girls to 35% boys) aspiring to gain white-collar jobs in adulthood. The most
significant difference in this category existed between boys and girls in the lowest
socioeconomic status (SES) group (20% boys to 36% girls). Dumais (2002) then
analyzed the relationship between habitus and grade acquisition and discovered that
habitus matters for both males and females regarding the grades they receive in school.
The higher a student’s orientation is to success, the higher their grades will be. Dumais
also noted that although cultural capital is influential, the habitus and SES have the
bigger roles in effecting the students’ grades. She commented that males do not need
cultural capital (as defined in this study as the participation in art activities) to receive
high grades. They received attention and praise from both teachers and peers because of their physical prowess (Dumais, 2002). Both Dumais and DiMaggio agreed that females use cultural capital to have an advantage over males in their adult lives with regards to obtaining a career, but it is their SES and orientation (established by familial and educational norms) that have the most influence on their grades.

In another study conducted to understand the aspects of gendered capital, Orr (2011) analyzed the results of an Early Childhood Longitudinal Study on a group of kindergarten students. Orr also used the findings of a previous study conducted by Mickelson (1989) as a foundation for her investigation. Orr’s quantitative study used a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) test to investigate the influence that female activities had on females’ grades (if any) and the same for the influence of male activities on males’ grades. Furthermore, Orr (2011) used the test to analyze the positive and negative perspectives male and female students held towards education and to determine if there was any correlation between that and their grade point averages.

Orr (2011) relayed that many believe the educational systems favor males and that their social capital leads them to greater successes during their adulthoods than their female counterparts (Orr, 2011). On the contrary, ample research shows that females maintain a habitus and social capital that is more beneficial for school success (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2007; Mickelson, 1989; Warrington, Younger, & Williams, 2000). Orr analyzed the ECLS-K results of approximately 6,400 kindergarteners from various regions of the United States. As mentioned, earlier Orr’s study was done because of Mickelson’s findings in 1989. Mickelson’s research was essentially done to analyze why
female students seem to do well in school and maintain high amounts of social capital, yet receive lesser return financially than males in adulthood. Such an anomaly remained a mystery even in Mickelson’s conclusion, for she stated that future studies were necessary to explain the reasons females received unequal rewards postsecondary education when compared to males, despite females’ successful efforts in school. Orr (2011) proposed that she could make correlations between gendered capital and explain females’ success in school despite adulthood disparities. Orr analyzed participation in male and female activities, positive and negative attitudes towards schools, and math grades. She categorized the female activities (activities that traditionally have female participants) as being read to by parents, singing songs with parents, doing chores, and creating art projects. Orr (2011) defined the male activities as playing games and sports with the parents, building things, and being taught by the parent how to conduct nature and science projects. The parents responded to the survey regarding the amount of participation of their kindergarten children in these activities. The teachers rated the students’ social behavior and attitudes towards school and provided the students’ fall math grades.

Upon using the MANOVA test to analyze gender differences in the ECLS-K data, Orr (2011) found significant implications. Females had higher math grades than males and were more likely to participate in both female and male activities than males were. Orr also found that their teachers considered females to have more of a positive attitude towards school than males. Orr added that the trait that teachers preferred their students to have the most was the ability to follow directions. Orr (2011) implied that teachers
have been known to give students high grades because of noncognitive considerations, such as following directions. Other researchers support this notion as well (Downey & Pribesh, 2004; Kelly, 2008).

Therefore, females have more positive attitudes than males do towards school because they bring the compliant disposition to the classroom, which is more desirable in the school field than resistance. Orr (2011) emphasized that while the participation in activities continues to be perpetuated and contingent upon gender, specific and dissimilar habitus are being developed in males and females. While females receive encouragement to do chores, remain mild-tempered, and stay under adult supervision for most of their childhood lives, they can adapt a disposition that follows the rules and directions. On the contrary, males are encouraged to explore, play rough, and resist anything that appears feminine. Therefore, males develop habitus that support a more independent disposition, more willing to take risks, and less willing to always follow directions. Thus, females are being fostered to develop orientations that are more complicit to classroom norms and therefore, experience more academic success. However, in post academia, the fact remains that females receive less compensation, and to some extent, fewer careers in the sciences (Orr, 2011; Mickelson, 1989). The reasons for this disparity are vast. However, Orr’s (2011) study and other investigations suggest that females have more social capital in school than males do because the teachers operate under the norms of a field that emphasizes the females’ fostered habitus over the males (DiMaggio, 1982; Dumais, 2002; Downey & Pribesh, 2004; Entwisle et al., 2007; Jacobs, 1996; Kelly, 2008; Mickelson, 1989; Warrington et al., 2000).
Sociocurricular position: Knowledge. Bourdieu’s (1985, 2002) theory of the habitus, a set of dispositions shaped by external and internal experiences, also lends itself to the idea of intellect. The composition of the curriculum and instruction of education is built on encouraging students to absorb levels of intellect from the school field.

However, many researchers believe that intellect—the ability to reason and understand—is more than something that can be assessed with validity, and that it is in reality a social construct (Apple, 1993; Hatt, 2007, 2012; Rubin, 2007; Sternberg, 2007; van den Bergh, Denessen, Hornstra, Voeten, & Holland, 2010). Many researchers contend that standardized assessments do not accurately measure intelligence because intelligence is highly subjective and dependent upon cultural values and the habitus of all involved in the experience of acquiring the knowledge (Hatt, 2012; Sternberg, 2007). Hatt (2012) even argued that intelligence is an implicit process that is “done to others as social positioning” (p. 439). Hatt also suggested that intelligence functions to shape the identities of both the receiver of knowledge and the giver. Contrarily, because of earlier studies conducted by Paul Broca and Charles Darwin, some researchers, such as Rushton and Ankney (2009), suggest intelligence is a genetic quality quantifiable by brain size.

On the other hand, researchers that agree with the concept that knowledge is subjective argue that it is a cultural construct used to perpetuate whatever the dominant beings have identified as legitimate knowledge. Hatt (2012) explained, “Intelligence emerged over time as a culturally produced notion tied to and imbued with relations of power fueled by newly created and validated empirical measures of intelligence, the power of being labeled intelligent became linked to cultural capital” (p. 442). Thus, how dominant
individuals proclaim what knowledge is legitimate depends largely on their preconceived notions of what knowledge is of most worth, making its legitimacy highly subjective. This becomes a concern to the design of curriculum and instruction when those in authoritative positions dictate knowledge, since typically the students who maintain the desired capital of dispositions of the authoritative powers appear to have high intellect (Downey & Pribesh, 2004; Hatt, 2012; Kelly 2008; Sternberg, 2007). This habitus becomes a bargaining chip for smartness, thereby an achievement gap should come as no surprise.

Critical theorist, Michael Apple, refers to the new standard curriculum as official knowledge, which is the knowledge that the dominant culture has deemed as the most important to acquire. Every type of knowledge that lies outside of these limitations is represented by the ‘other’ and therefore devalued. Apple (1993) stated,

A largely monocultural national curriculum (which deals with diversity by centering the always ideological “we” and usually then simply mentioning “the contributions” of people of color, women, and others), emphasizes the mainstream of existing hierarchies of what counts as official knowledge, the revivifying of traditional Western standards and values. . . . (p. 233)

Thus, knowledge, the acquisition of information, is more than a collection of concepts valuable to the learner. Therefore, Apple (1993) suggested that the official knowledge becomes the force that empowers some individuals while belittling the strengths of others.
In the early 1990s in the U.S., educational policy makers prioritized the need for a reform in the school system. To initiate the reform, it was necessary to create a national curriculum raise the level of rigor for the learning standards. The reform derived from the belief that these two changes would make the nation more internationally competitive (Apple, 1993). The concern arises when one considers who was involved in the reform and what states had influential power through text production and selection (Apple, 1993). Additionally, during this period, the rightist agenda entailed bridging teacher pedagogy and preparation with the curriculum and testing (Apple, 1993). Therefore, critics of the educational reform movement found it essential to identify what these reformers wanted to change and for the benefit of whom.

The need for an educational reform that involves a national curriculum and standardized testing operates under the umbrella of capitalism and the need for financial gain. Apple (1993) indicated that testing is not only a very lucrative business, it also operates to legitimize the quality of schools, teachers, and most importantly the abilities and skillsets of the students. Testing can be used to perpetuate dominant social norms, while ostracizing those who do not meet the objective standards and assisting in the tracking and differentiation of the masses into almost immobile class standings. The test then becomes a product and the testers, the consumers. Thus, this is a major enterprise centered on both money and control (Spring, 2011). Those students who uphold the dominant culture and possess the financial means to access more resources many find it easier to have a productive testing career (Apple, 1993). The influence that testing will have on our students will be divisive as students of the dominant culture and within stable
financial means will continue to isolate themselves, in the *best schools* and perpetuate their norms (Apple, 1993).

In 2007, Hatt analyzed how a group of urban high school students negotiated the dominant legitimate knowledge. These students, many of minority ethnic backgrounds, saw *street sense* as their legitimate knowledge. Making money, even when not always under legal circumstances, was legitimate to them because it kept their families clothed and fed. However, the American school systems do not consider street sense as legitimate knowledge; therefore, all the skills and talents these students possessed (which required intellect) were invaluable to the school field. Consequently, their learner identities were “framed as troublemakers, slow learners, and/or misfits” (Hatt, 2007, p. 157).

In 2012, Hatt investigated how the habitus of teachers and students of a kindergarten classroom negotiated knowledge and its worth. Hatt (2012) chose to analyze a kindergarten class because she wanted to observe children at an age when they had not yet been fully inculcated with the idea of official knowledge. Therefore, these young participants were on the cusp of learning what knowledge was of most worth in the school system, as dictated by their teacher. The teacher, Mrs. Rayburn, made it apparent upon the first observation what she considered to be legitimate knowledge. Teachers bring into the classroom their own set of dispositions; their own unique habitus that has been shaped by their experiences in school (Hatt, 2012). Therefore, often a teacher may overlook the strengths and variations of knowledge that students of culturally different backgrounds bring to the classroom. The teacher’s value of
knowledge can work to shift the students’ value of knowledge, thus affecting their learner identities (Hatt, 2012; Rubin, 2007; Sternberg, 2007). Hence, when a teacher states the familiar yet, unfortunate declaration, *put your hand down and stop asking stupid questions*, one must consider the effects it would have on that student’s value of knowledge and habitus (Hatt, 2012).

Hatt’s (2012) investigation into Mrs. Rayburn’s kindergarten class involved analyzing the influence of classroom artifacts and discourse of the students’ learning habitus. Hatt identified the ‘Stoplight’ and ‘Shoe Tyer’s Club’ as artifacts used to indicate smartness. The Stoplight was a visual board that had a movable picture of a car for every student in the class. The cars could be placed on the red, yellow, or green lights. Each light represented the behavioral status of the student for the day. This stoplight, and forms like it, are popular devices used to moderate behavior in elementary schools, and it is highly supported as an effective behavior strategy (Marr, Audette, White, Ellis, & Algozzine, 2002). However, critics challenge that this strategy is constraining on the learner (Hatt, 2012). Mrs. Rayburn used the stoplight to help students check their behavior; however, it also had implications of smartness. Mrs. Rayburn scorned students who spoke out of turn or exhibited excitable behaviors and asked them to move their car to yellow and red. Students who stayed quiet and followed all of Mrs. Rayburn’s directions stayed on green all day. Mrs. Rayburn would make comments to the class about these students on green and stated that they were making smart decisions. The students who stayed on green also received special privileges. Eventually, their peers and teacher viewed the “good” students as the “smart” students. Students with
habitus that did not agree with the teacher’s habitus received the label of “bad” and thus, “dumb”. Students who lived in households where Mrs. Rayburn’s beliefs were upheld gained more classroom capital, and consequently more respect, privilege, and confidence (Hatt, 2012).

The Shoe Tyer’s Club was another artifact in which intelligence was not necessarily tied to cognitive abilities. Mrs. Rayburn asked each of the students to come to the front of the class individually and demonstrate to the rest of the class their shoe tying abilities. Students who could tie their shoes in front of their peers received privileges, and the ones who could not tie their shoes received admonishments for not practicing at home with their parents. Hatt (2012) noted that Mrs. Rayburn had never taught the students how to tie their shoes in class; this was an expectation that she held for them to do at home. Mrs. Rayburn connected intelligence to a skill based strictly on the families’ ability to teach, indicating some class bias. Hatt (2012) also observed belittling the children to adults about their parents working all the time or not working at all, or she would dismiss any food items brought to class by working class students because she did not trust their households (Hatt, 2012). Mrs. Rayburn’s open disdain for individuals was evident during her instructions, and the young kindergartners swiftly began to identify their position on the scale of smartness. Interestingly, Mrs. Rayburn’s standards for intelligence lost ground when some of the children who were constantly on red, criticized, and often noted as not making “wise” decisions, scored some of the highest scores on the standardized tests (Hatt, 2012).
Hatt’s (2012) study provided important implications. The teachers’ habitus and values of knowledge have significant influence over the students’ learner identities. When the teachers and administrators are unaware of the variety of legitimate knowledge, the school becomes a battleground of compliance and resistance for the gain of capital (Hatt, 2012). Hatt (2012) concluded her study by advising, “We must see smartness as a tool of control and social positioning. Only then can we begin to disrupt smartness in everyday schooling practices, empowering students to frame and author their lives” (p. 457). Intelligence varies considering one’s life experiences. Therefore, to advocate for the students’ freedom of self, it is important to consider the diversity in what one might consider legitimate knowledge.

Ladson-Billings (2000) summed up the theories of critical philosophers on the notion of legitimate knowledge.

Thus, the conditions under which people live and learn shape both their knowledge and their worldviews. The process of developing a worldview that differs from the dominant worldview requires active intellectual work on the part of the knower, because schools, society, and the structure and production of knowledge are designed to create individuals who internalize the dominant worldview and knowledge production and acquisition processes. The hegemony of the dominant paradigm makes it more than just another way to view the world—it claims to be the only legitimate way to view the world. (p. 258) Ladson-Billings’ quote encapsulates the general principles held by critical theorists on the concept of legitimate knowledge. Their studies indicate that knowledge receives its
legitimacy dependent upon arbitrary circumstances and only for the means of upholding the dominance of specific individuals through the perpetuation of sociocurricular positions.

Sociocurricular position: Language. Language is a unique form of communication that allows for the transmission of ideals and concepts. Its use separates animals from human beings, making the species able to bridge knowledge in a wide variety of ways. Unique to language are the linguistic differences that exist among populations from varying regions of the world. Different combinations of letters and characters create numerous words spoken by different ethnic groups. Additionally, a variety of tones, inflections, accents, and voices, influence the spoken word. As a result, groups of people may be identified and categorized on their speech and language posture (Bourdieu, 1991). Interesting to this notion is the use of language to legitimize strength, intelligence, and the ability to condone field expectations. Bourdieu (1991) spoke to this issue, the issue of the legitimate language, when he proclaimed that language is more than a communication device, it is also a source of power, specifically in the educational field. Bourdieu (1991) stated,

The official language is bound up with the state, both in its genesis and in its social uses. It is in the process of state formation that the conditions are created for the constitution a unified linguistic market, dominated by the official language. Obligatory on official occasions and in official places (schools, public administrations, political institutions, etc.) this state language becomes the theoretical norm against which all linguistic practices are objectively measured.
Ignorance is no excuse; this linguistic law has its body of jurists—the grammarian—and its agents of regulation and imposition—the teachers—who are empowered universally to subject the linguistic performance of speaking subjects to examination and to the legal sanction of academic qualification. (p. 46)

Bourdieu’s theory supports the notion that, when a language is considered “official”, other linguistic characteristics outside of that norm are subordinate. Language then is a form of cultural capital, and it works to establish sociocurricular positions (Bourdieu, 1991; Graff, 1987; Handsfield, 2006; Handsfield & Jimenez, 2009; Hanks, 2005; Luke, 2003). This idea becomes very relevant in the educational field, specifically in schools that promote a single language curriculum. Schools with diverse populations serve all their students effectively when the design of the curriculum acknowledges the officialism of the linguistic backgrounds of its students. To analyze this topic, several researchers have conducted studies to investigate the practice of teachers’ roles in perpetuating the official linguistic norms in their instruction. The following paragraphs present a review of the literature on literacy instruction as it relates to the habitus of the teacher and the sociocurricular positions of diversified student populations.

Handsfield (2006) explored Bourdieu’s ideas of the power of language in her study by investigating the negotiated habitus of a 32-year-old beginner schoolteacher of a culturally diverse classroom. The teacher, Joyce, worked in a school that encouraged a multicultural literacy curriculum. However, tools to enforce such a curriculum were difficult to access. Throughout the study, Handsfield observed Joyce and her students.
In the U.S., it is often portrayed that if you can read books efficiently and on a frequent basis, you will be able to better pursue the American dream (Handsfield, 2006; Handsfield & Jimenez, 2009; NCLB, 2002). The No Child Left Behind Policy Brief (Education Commission of the States, 2002) highlighted the Reading First Program, which is described as fundamental for the student’s academic success, as well as success in their prospective careers. The idea that reading books is the key to a successful life is what Handsfield referred to as the literacy myth of Graff (1987). The literacy myth, lived and upheld by American educators, details the habits of American individuals to uphold the notion that readers are more success-oriented people with moral upstanding (Handsfield, 2006). Despite the globalization of the American economy creating an influx of immigrants to diversify the schools, little research addresses the teachers’ habitus regarding instruction of diverse populations (Handsfield, 2006; Handsfield & Jimenez, 2009; Luke, 2003). To provide more insight into the teacher’s habitus towards language and diverse students, Handsfield’s analysis of Joyce’s orientation to teaching literacy in a diverse classroom focused on Joyce’s background experiences with her family and education, which shaped her pedagogic actions.

Joyce’s habitus towards literacy developed because of her childhood and adulthood experiences. She was born to Filipino parents who had immigrated to the United States before Joyce was born. Handsfield discovered more about Joyce’s literacy background through additional interviews and observations. She found out that Joyce’s parents (immigrants from the Philippines) rarely ever read books but enjoyed magazines instead. Although her parents were bilingual and were well versed in society, Joyce was
contemptuous of their literacy practices, because their literacy practices were not desirable to the American cultural norms of literacy strength (Handsfield, 2006). Joyce also commented on the fact that her parents never read newspapers, and as an adult she was committed to reading one newspaper every day. Joyce had developed a habitus that newspaper and chapter book reading were clear indicators of literacy strength, and therefore pathways to success.

As a child, Joyce attended a school comprised of a diverse population, yet during the interviews, she emphasized the discouragement of the use of other languages outside of English in the classroom. Another telling anecdote of how Joyce’s habitus developed was that one of her favorite grade school teachers used to encourage her students to read by using the Monopoly board game. The more the students read, the more money they received, and the more property they could purchase. Joyce’s teacher essentially compared reading to money, success, and capitalism (Handsfield, 2006). Therefore, to Joyce, books and the dominant language are a form of capital (Handsfield, 2006).

Handsfield (2006) observed Joyce in her class approximately 60 times and spoke with her during many follow-up interviews. Joyce’s class was a diverse population of Hispanic- and African-American students, as well as one French-speaking student from Africa. Throughout the observations, Handsfield noticed that Joyce often praised her students for speaking English or practicing reading norms upheld mainly in American culture. Joyce frequently encouraged and instructed the students to read chapter books, as many as they could and on a daily basis. Furthermore, she was not concerned with her students reading for pleasure as much as she was with them reading books for length and
complexity. Handsfield (2006) provided an example of such enforcement in Joyce’s teaching:

When Christopher shows Joyce his book, she asked, “Haven’t you read it before?” He nods yes, and she asks him why he checked it out if he’s already read it. Christopher responds, “Because I like it.” Joyce announces to the class, “Many of you can read chapter books, but are checking out picture books that only take you ten minutes to read.” She tells them that they should be making “wise choices.” (p. 15)

While Joyce was setting goals and standards for her students that she believed were appropriate levels of rigor, she was upholding the literacy myth that reading and language are adequate when an individual is constantly reading lengthy books, not books of interest or books with illustrations (Handsfield, 2006).

During Joyce’s instruction she emphasized reading, and reading often, and the use of standard spoken English. Although her class contained mostly Spanish speakers, and African-American students who often used African-American Vernacular English (AAVE), Joyce prioritized standard American literacy and linguistic practices. Her habitus to the school field affected her curriculum and instruction by emphasizing mainstream norms. The case study conducted by Handsfield provided Joyce the opportunity to reflect on her instruction. However, moving away from her orientation to literacy and adjusting her instruction would be a long-term process.

In a similar study, Handsfield and Jimenez (2009) attempted to analyze the effects of Joyce’s habitus and sociocurricular positions as a teacher using the cognitive strategy
instruction (CSI) for literacy. This strategy is a popular literacy instruction strategy that includes graphic organizers and making connections (Handsfield & Jimenez, 2009).

Here, the researchers intended to analyze the positive and negative consequences to CSI. They found that using CSI did allow teachers to explore strategies with a variety of techniques to teach their students and reach each of their needs. However, despite these potential beneficial consequences, the researchers were also concerned that through CSI, the teacher would encourage her students to uphold mainstream literacy norms, treating them as legitimate norms, while discouraging the background knowledge brought from students of culturally diverse populations.

More research is necessary to analyze the effects of the triangulation of field, habitus, cultural reproduction in language and literacy; however, this research implies that the cultural individualities of students may be reinforced as illegitimate if they do not comply to the mainstream norms. In Joyce’s case, she had moments of suppressing cultural diversity as well as moments of uplifting diversity. Yet one wonders, at what price does this ambivalent teaching cost? Handsfield’s (2006) research implies that the habitus of the teacher will influence her instruction, as Bourdieu (1991) suggested.

Language may symbolize power, and that becomes increasingly obvious in diverse classrooms. Hanks (2005) indicated that the education field inculcates standardization upon its students, thereby causing them to develop habitus that in turn upholds the norms of that field, and subsequently reproducing the cultural norms continuously, while all variations of the norm go unsupported. Thus, the legitimacy of
the official language of a culture or field becomes a desirable form of social capital if one wishes to belong or hold a high sociocurricular position.

Sociocurricular position: Race. A review of the literature on the sociocurricular position of race requires a preface of a brief explanation on the concept of race as understood in American society. Many scholars define race as an ascriptive characteristic; however, the identifying factors and reality of race is widely debated. Some speak of race as a construct that changes with social norms and time. Others consider race to be a construct that is necessary to simply categorize people and give them an identity (Omi & Winant, 1993). Another perspective of race is that it is indeed a social construct, but one that has negative undertones (Apple, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Morrison, 1992). Critical race theorists, such as Apple (2015), Giroux (1997), and Ladson-Billings (2000), view race as a circumstance for inequality by which fields are created that uphold the dominant and arbitrary dispositions of certain individuals. Apple (2015) stated, “But the key for any concrete analysis of the current balances of forces is how racism is constructed and employed in supporting a dominance in a specific historic conjuncture” (p. 175). Additionally, critical theorists believe that the systematic support of such dominance is observable within many elements of the school systems’ curriculum and instruction.

Despite the variety of definitions of race, many researchers agree that race influences social and cultural capital, school success, and career attainment (Diamond et al., 2004; Downey & Pribesh, 2004; Horvat & Antonio, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2000; Reay, 1995; Yosso, 2005). Bourdieu’s theories of social reproduction and habitus
can be used to analyze the influence of race in correlation with school success (Yosso, 2005). Educational statistics indicated disparities in academic achievement between the different racial groups in the United States (NCES, 2016). Often the minority racial groups of Hispanic and African descent compose the lower achieving portion of the spectrum. Because of long-held cycles of social capital and reproduction, many students face challenges in academia due to specific sets of capital, sociocurricular positions, students and teachers’ habitus, expectations, and biases (Downey & Pribesh, 2004; Friedkin & Thomas, 1997; Kelly, 2008; Yosso, 2005). Therefore, race is an influential characteristic that affects the overall acquisition of knowledge for all students in positive and negative ways. This sociocurricular section provides a review of studies that investigate the role of race in curriculum and instruction, as well as the formation of sociocurricular positions.

Why race matters in the classroom is a question that puzzles researchers as they try to describe race’s function in school by using correlational data and accounting for numerous variables. Some studies suggest race is a relevant factor of education because many teachers believe African-American and Hispanic-American students are less engaged in the classroom (Downey & Pribesh, 2004; Yair, 2000), while other students, such as Asian Americans receive high or excellent ratings from their teachers in the area of classroom citizenship (Downey & Pribesh, 2004). Two viewpoints offer explanations for the attention to explain success in school as it relates to race. Supporters of the oppositional culture theory claim that students who come from a background of low social capital and societal oppression may actively resist the dominant culture in the
school field to reconcile their own disposition (Downey & Pribesh, 2004). Therefore, these students may be less engaged or more likely to cause classroom disruptions. Contrarily, supporters of the *White teacher bias* theory claim that European Americans lack cultural relevance, and therefore they do not value the expressive nature of students from different ethnic backgrounds (Downey & Pribesh, 2004). Alternatively, because of oppressive societal influences, African American and Hispanic American students have less material resources and social capital that disallow school success. To analyze the influence of race and cultural relevance on school success Downey and Pribesh (2004) analyzed the data of a NELS and NCES study of 1988.

Downey and Pribesh (2004) analyzed the NELS data by viewing the ECLS-K responses from teachers and parents of kindergarten teachers and the NELS data of a cohort of eighth graders. This quantitative study investigated if teachers and students of the same racial group favored each other more when teaching or learning from an individual of another racial group. Downey and Pribesh referred to the idea of a teacher teaching a student of the same race as *being matched*. They found that most African American students (70%) had European-American teachers, and most European American students had European-American teachers. Most of the African-American students who had African-American teachers received positive ratings by their teachers for classroom citizenship and lower on average than those students with European American teachers. Asian American students received high ratings from their teachers regardless of their teacher’s race (Downey & Pribesh, 2004). The results from this study have significant implications, although there are many variables to consider, such as SES.
factors. However, these results could be used to further analyze the correlation between race, sociocurricular position, and academic success.

Although Bourdieu (1985) did not specify the dynamics of race within the field and the habitus developed around it, race has significance to his theory of habitus because educators experience achievement disparities among racial groups. To refer back to Reay’s (1995) ethnographic study in terms of the sociocurricular position of race, Reay, stated, “Habitus can be used to focus on the ways in which the socially advantaged and disadvantaged play out attitudes of cultural superiority and inferiority ingrained in their habitus” (p. 360). Race plays a role in both the habitus of students and teachers because of societal norms and historical context. During Reay’s long study, she witnessed the students and teachers’ habitus concerning race when one day, Mrs. Symmonds of Oak Park elementary, received a new student of African-American descent.

Upon entering the classroom, the new student, Temi, appeared to be nervous, Reay (1995) reported, perhaps because no one else in the classroom shared Temi’s ethnic ancestry. On the following day, Reay reported that the students acted as though Temi was not there; they essentially ignored her. Mrs. Symmonds asked one student, Nancy, to help Temi become acclimated, and Nancy obliged. However, when Nancy noticed her assistance to Temi was costing her value with her friends, she began ignoring Temi as well. Reay (1995) asked Mrs. Symmonds to give Temi more attention in an effort to persuade the students to stop ignoring her, but the teacher did not wish to do so. Nancy and the other children, who were accustomed to living life with privilege and high social capital, were not willing to risk their capital for the sake of an outsider to their already
developed habitus and sociocurricular positioning. Thus, Temi remained invisible and they remained silent towards her. Reay (1995) explained the phenomenon, “The racism of these middle-class children was not manifested in any action, rather it lay in the absences. Paradoxically, it was there in what was not there, in the lack of care, lack of contact, lack of recognition” (p. 367). The absences of the recognition of an entity is a method (intentional or unintentional) that fosters the development of identifying the ‘other’ s existence. The individuals made invisible because they do not maintain the field’s norms possess very little capital and therefore denote all potential for equality.

hooks (1992) described the development of the ‘other’ through invisibility:

These looking relations were reinforced as whites cultivated the practice of denying the subjectivity of blacks (the better to dehumanize and oppress) of relegating than to the realm of the invisible. . . . To look directly was an assertion of subjectivity, equality. (, p. 168)

As a result of this treatment, Temi’s habitus began to respond to the feedback she received from the field (Reay, 1995). Temi started to focus on her work, not expecting any social interaction from the students, and began to desire the need to help her teacher clean up the classroom and make small talk with adults. Temi’s habitus and attitude towards school melded into the norms, expectations, and habitus of the dominant group. Additionally, Reay (1995) made no mention of the teacher attempting to disrupt the norms in the classroom field. Thus, one could assume that the teacher, the students, and Temi were all working within their habitus to reproduce such an atmosphere. Temi
remained academically strong, but the teacher could have modified the curriculum to recognize the whole student in all students.

While Reay (1995) and Downey and Pribesh (2004) analyzed the influence of race in the classroom between students and teachers of oppositional culture, other researchers (Farkas, Grobe, Sheehan, & Shuan, 1990; Diamond et al., 2004) have concerned themselves with looking at the teacher’s habitus as it relates to student expectations. Diamond and colleagues (2004) investigated how teachers’ expectations of their students can influence their students’ progress and growth mindset. If teachers feel that their students have low social capital, they will expect little academic progress from their students, and those students will then embody these low expectations and become less engaged in their academic career, creating for them a manifest destiny occurrence (Diamond et al., 2004). Additionally, the researchers suggested that students of low income and of African-American descent will particularly be more likely to have teachers that feel less accountability for their learning. Diamond et al. (2004) argued that this conveyance of negative expectations from the teachers to the students and its consequences on the students’ success is an occurrence termed as organizational habitus.

To counteract the negative influence teachers’ low expectations can have on low-income based students of color, Diamond et al. (2004) suggested that the effectiveness of administration is critical. They examined school leaders who used their authority to heighten teachers’ accountability of student success through strategic professional development and conversations. For this study, the researchers examined how class and race affected the students and faculty of five urban elementary schools. The schools
varied in demographic makeups and levels of professional training; however, through a six-month ethnographic study, telling implications arose.

The schools were given the pseudonyms of Lewis, Harris, Davis, Erickson, and Adams. Lewis and Harris had a population of 5% African-American students and 25% Latino-American students. Lewis however, had a population of 70% European-American students, and Harris had 60% Asian American students. The other three schools, Davis, Erickson, and Adams, had student populations that were 100% African American. All the schools, no matter the racial makeup, had at least 50% of the students from low-income households. Adams elementary school though, had 98% of its students from low-income households (Diamond et al., 2004).

During interviews with the teachers at Adams and Erickson, the teachers reported the most deficit-centered perceptions of their students. They immediately associated all their students’ challenges (i.e., poverty and single-parent households) with the students’ academic potential. One teacher commented,

These kids are hard-core inner city. Out of 30 kids, I’d say I have ten kids living with a grandparent of foster parent and 20 living with their mother. I think I only have one living with both parents. And those numbers are consistent with my class last year. It’s really sad. (Diamond et al., 2004, p. 84)

This teacher’s perception centered on her idea of challenges in her students’ lives, but it lacked mention of their strengths. She had already accepted the idea that her students had little social capital and, therefore, little academic potential. One of the eight teachers interviewed at this school gave positive feedback about his students, but it was
because he claimed his students were much better behaved and smarter than the students were at the last place he worked, a juvenile detention center (Diamond et al., 2004).

When Diamond et al. (2004) interviewed teachers at the low-income schools with mostly European-American students or Asian-American students, such as Lewis and Harris elementary, the results were different. Educators at these schools reported more about the students’ strengths instead of challenges and were more willing to modify their teaching to help students when needed. To explain how educators perceive one race of low-income students deprived and the other race of low-income students as filled with potential, Lev and Loeb (2000) suggested the school field operates as a long continuum with highly accountable teachers and lowly accountable teachers. Diamond et al. (2004) found no correlation between the race of the teachers and their responses, but the race of the students influenced their expectations. Although this data cannot be exclusively used to indicate the influence of the teacher’s habitus and accountability of students’ learning on student progress, there are implications that race seems to be an important factor when considering teachers biases, and curriculum and instruction.

Horvat and Antonio (1999) investigated the dynamics of organizational habitus by analyzing how the organized habitus of a group of African-American students attending an elite college-preparatory school with mostly affluent European-American students. Since the African-American students were the minority, Antonio and Horvat assigned them an *outsider* status and believed this status was highly influential on the habitus, as these students did not comply with upholding the dominant norms and cultures established within the school (1999). Horvat and Antonio (1999) stated,
Last, we suggest that these students pay a price for the promise of social mobility through their attendance at the elite, predominantly white, college-preparatory school we examine this price is manifest in the pain and anguish they endure by living out their lives as outsiders within the race- and class-defined dominant habitus of the school organization. (p. 318)

Unfortunately, the fluidity of the habitus allows for both positive and negative influences, and it is particularly vulnerable to negative change when consistently in an environment that does not support its dispositions. While social capital and entrance to elite universities may be more accessible when attending schools that offer societal benefits, the costly lessons of otherness can have implications that affect the students’ trajectories after postsecondary education (Horvat & Antonio, 1999).

If learning is a social process as Vygotsky (1930/1978) suggested many years ago, then the social interactions that students experience in school shape their habitus, and therefore, their academic progress. Nasir and Saxe (2003) also referred to learning as a social interaction, but one that also involves social spaces. They proclaimed that identities form through social interactions where the person’s habitus is negotiated with their cultural capital under the confines of an environment’s norms and practices. Thus, Nasir and Saxe implied that minority students may feel compelled to act raceless and deny their cultural identities in the classroom to become academically successful, while others may actively resist the norms by becoming disengaged. Both situations provide opportunities for the habitus to adapt, but not necessarily in the most productive methods.
Another perspective of how racial predispositions may affect curriculum and instruction is the amount of rigor educators will apply to their students based on what they think they can comprehend under culturally biased assumptions. Thus, some educators may give their African-American or Hispanic-American students low rigor instruction and assign Asian-American students higher levels of rigor during instruction. For the African-American and Hispanic-American students, having low expectations upon them in the academic field may counteract their academic potential. If students are only accustomed to simplified work that offers little rigor, they will negotiate their habitus with these low expectations and embody the ideology that they cannot strive for academic greatness (Rubin, 2007). Such a scholastic atmosphere creates what Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) and Rubin (2007) referred to as a figured world, which is essentially a field created by a mixture of oppressing and oppressed habitus, in which the students’ learner identities are influenced under a “socially constructed and locally negotiated nature of experience” (Rubin, 2007, p. 225). The figured world is basically a sociocurricular position. Such spaces become particularly challenging because the student’s academic progress is in jeopardy, especially students who maintain the smallest amount of social capital. As the previous studies implied, unfortunately the habitus created by the field are so strongly supported through various aspects that the students embody these realms, even if they are not soliciting the students’ maximum potential.
Pedagogic Action

Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) referred to pedagogic action as “objectively, symbolic violence insofar as it is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power” (p. 5). They elaborated:

Pedagogic action is, objectively, symbolic violence first insofar as the power relations between the groups or classes making up a social formation are the basis of the arbitrary power which is the precondition for the establishment of a relation of pedagogic communication. (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 6)

Essentially, pedagogic action is the agency to uphold norms of the educational field, deemed by an arbitrarily chosen figure of dominant and wise opinions.

Fundamental to the pedagogic action of the educator is their propensity to teach through the reproduction of legitimated and dominant norms (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Fataar & Feldman, 2016; Feldman, 2016), which requires a habitus that has embodied the norms of the field, regardless of the potential to form dominant and dominated groups.

Consequently, the habitus of the educator who embodies the norms of the arbitrarily indoctrinated field is a form of mental violence upon the students known as symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990)

To educate is a multi-faceted action. The ability to engage students and to enhance their cognitive practices requires multiple skills and layers of communication (Eccles et al., 1993; Fataar & Feldman, 2016; Hester et al., 2003; Longo, 2016; Meece, 2003; Nelson et al., 2010; Nocera et al., 2014; Parker, 2009). To engage a student effectively is to maintain students’ interest while inducing thought-provoking dialogue
(Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Eccles et al., 1993; Fataar & Feldman, 2016; Hester et al., 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Longo, 2016; Meece, 2003; Nelson et al., 2010; Nocera et al., 2014; Parker, 2009; Pinar, 2004). While stimulating knowledge production through critical and divergent thinking, it is also important that the students find the information relevant or purposeful to their lives (Chin, 2013; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1997; McMahon, 2003). As the U.S. society grows in diversity due to career opportunities from international entities, engagement now requires educators to expand their lessons so that they highlight aspects of the students’ differences (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Handsfield, 2006; Handsfield & Jimenez, 2009; Kincheloe, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Luke, 2003; Reay, 2004b; Townsend, 2000; Riley, 2010; Rubin, 2007). It requires creativity, planning, and foresight of the educator. To do so, teachers must be cognizant of the existence of cultural differences within their classroom field and understand that without engaging and considering their pedagogic action, students may resist in self-defeating or disruptive behaviors (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Giroux, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2000). Thus, it is critical that the learning honors and values the reflections and realities of all students for effective instruction (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Giroux, 2001; Hester et al., 2003; Kincheloe, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2000).

McMahon (2003) suggested that all cultures are included into the “mainstream, compulsory curriculum” (p. 263). Here she was referring to the fact that some students may view the presence of African-American courses or Women studies courses as inferior or outside the mainstream priority because of their limited instruction. This
incidence involves the structure and priorities of a given curriculum. The curriculum of an academic field is critical in establishing the agenda, or the plan that cognitively develops and fosters students (Adler, 1982; Boyle & Charles, 2016; Ornstein, Pajak, & Ornstein, 2015; Pinar, 2012). The curriculum is essentially the guide for educators to use to instruct their students. Despite this driving force, which may apply pressure upon the educators for measurable outcomes, the educators maintain primary control of the instruction, as they are the authoritative messengers of the value of knowledge (Eisner, 2008; Kincheloe, 2008; McMahon, 2003; Riley, 2010). To encapsulate this concept, McMahon (2003) stated:

> By keeping this focus intrinsic to curriculum development, implementation, and review, educators are able to integrate concepts such as oppression, authority, voice, language, and empowerment in order to educate themselves and assist students in learning how to redefine and reframe other concepts such as culture, privilege, power, and justice. (p. 263)

Thus, the pedagogic action of the educator is critical to upholding or resisting norms that do not value the inclinations of all students or diversified populations. If the educator chooses to uphold dominant norms, even with a prescribed curriculum, then his or her pedagogic action in essence is a form of violence, as it does not serve to tolerate difference (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

In an attempt to analyze the effectiveness of professional learning communities in influencing the pedagogic action of educators, Fataar and Feldman (2016) used a dialogical approach as a catalyst for pedagogic change. They initiated dialogue and
dialectic engagement among a group of educators to expose and examine the influence of
their habitus on their pedagogic action. Multiple professional learning meetings in which
the reflexive dialogue was encouraged revealed that the educators eventually became
aware that their teaching was in essence part of the norms that they had embodied from
the endoxa. The educators found that their pedagogic actions, such as keeping their
students quiet at all times, were prescribed and reproduced norms of the school field.
However, these methods were remotely disengaging. Upon reflexive thinking that
stimulated their conscious and unconscious feelings about their instruction, a common
realization was that they were upholding arbitrary rules and procedures without resistance
(Fatar & Feldman, 2016). This study is critical in that it provided a strategy that worked
to address the influence of the habitus of the teachers on their pedagogic action by
revealing arbitrary notions of their habitus of which they were vaguely unaware.

Orientations to mainstream norms, or those initiated by the endoxa, are largely
reproduced in the education field via the habitus and pedagogic actions of the educators
(Bourdieu, 2002; Diamond et al., 2004; Dumais, 2005; Nash, 1999; Reay, 2004a; Riley,
2010; Rubin, 2007; Woollen & Otto, 2014). Multiple studies have been conducted to
analyze the educators’ orientations towards various aspects of society and how it
influences their teaching and cycling of notions of normed behavior (Edgerton et al.,
2013; Evans-Winter & Esposito, 2010; Fataar & Feldman, 2016; Giroux, 2001;
Townsend, 2000). These studies indicated that the happenstance of societal oppressed
and oppressors occurs due to an intricate system of inculcated norms embodied by those
in power to the extent that they are unconsciously reproduced. Specifically, the researchers analyzed the characteristics of class, gender, knowledge, language, and race. The results of these studies indicated that the educator, as the authority of the classroom field, maintains the power to reproduce norms of dominance throughout the delivery of the curriculum. Traces of classicism, gender bias, knowledge value, linguistic bias, and racism were being reproduced through the instruction of the educator in various degrees of agency. The educator who possesses tendency to uphold norms that create hierarchy within the educational field is a social functionary; those who use their pedagogic action to challenge initiatives in the name of equality are critical educators.

Kincheloe’s (2008) described the pedagogic action of teachers who wish to induce change by challenging notions of the field that appear unjust. He contrasted this pedagogic action to what he referred to as the functionaries, educators who use their authority to follow administrative mandates, even when they appear to not be at the best interest of the students. In regard to the critical educator, Kincheloe (2008) stated, “While fairness is obviously important, the critical perspective referenced here brings an awareness that the way curricular exclusions are executed is typically an insidious process that takes place under a flag of objectivity” (p. 111). Educators who act as functionaries for social reproduction fail to recognize that “it is at this ostensibly ‘innocent’ level that the power of patriarchy, white supremacy, colonial assumptions of superiority, heterosexism, and class elitism operate” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 128). Thus, the disposition of the educator within systemic efforts to uphold societal hierarchy plays a
critical role in the transfer of knowledge, and the influence to reproduce norms of the endoxa.

To analyze the significance of the habitus within the pedagogic action of the educator, researchers have analyzed preservice teachers to determine their agency to uphold dominant norms. Marsh (2006) analyzed the habitus of preservice teachers for their inclinations to incorporate culturally relevant texts into their literacy lessons. Marsh found that although research supports culturally relevant literacy curriculum as a positive form of instruction that induces student engagement and participation (Dyson, 2002; Hagood, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Marsh & Millard, 2000), the preservice teachers were hesitant to use it. The data indicated that despite the research-based evidence that the use of culturally relevant literacy texts was beneficial, the habitus of the educators, which was to uphold only dominant and legitimated forms of texts, vetoed the inclination to teach more effectively. Marsh (2006) stated, “The dislocation of these beliefs from their practices was strong indication of the imperceptible way in which habitus worked to reinforce hegemonic discourses” (p. 173). Therefore, the power of the pedagogic action and habitus of the educator is important to reveal and reflect upon. Educators often teach without cognizance of their habitus or pedagogic actions that serve to uphold notions of dominant norms. Nor are they all equipped with effective strategies of dialectic reflection. This unconscious, conscious, or dysconscious agency begins with preservice teachers, and it lasts throughout the duration of many educational careers. Thus, without the implementation of research based evidence to challenge and enhance educators’
pedagogic authority, symbolic violence through the curriculum may continue to inhabit the academic field.

**Theory of Resistance**

Critical theorists, Giroux, Foucault, Freire, and Bourdieu, are of many critical theorists to compose literature on the subtle yet pervasive components of a society that functions to maintain dominant and subordinate strata. Multiple articles on this ideology have been written, and in the educational context, they are customarily a call for action and equality amongst American students. This section of the literature review focuses on the theory of resistance, which is encapsulated in the concept of viewing society with a critical lens for indications of hegemony in the social structure. Thus, a historical review is necessary as well as the present implications the literature serves for the academic field.

The Frankfurt School, created in Frankfurt Germany in 1923, at the University of Frankfurt by a group of philosophers, was a school founded to expound upon critical thoughts and societal influence (Walker, 2017). The most notable of the philosophers were Friedrich Pollock, Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, and Jurgen Habermas. These individuals held a variety of career positions, such as sociologists and political scientists. Established shortly after the World War I, the Frankfurt school was as a response to the new Marxist theories of the time (Walker, 2017). This group of philosophers expressed dismay and disappointment of how the new regime under a new orthodox that practiced positivism and contradicted their notions of nature and knowledge neglected the previous notions of Marxism (Giroux, 2001; Walker, 2017).
Positivism is a school of thought that relies solely on facts, universal truths and neutrality (Kincheloe, 2008, Giroux, 2001; Walker, 2017). The philosophers of the Frankfurt school were of the post-positivistic school of thought that challenged subjectivity and humanity, in addition to addressing problems from a parts-to-whole premise (Giroux, 2001; Kincheloe, 2008). Under the new rule in Germany, the philosophers speculated upon capitalism and Fascist practices for their connection to the socialist understandings of Marxism and their tendency to uphold positivistic positions.

The shift in governmental leadership and the rise to power of the Nazis in Germany, which was contra to the post-positivistic rationale, forced the Frankfurt school to relocate (Walker, 2017). The philosophers eventually relocated to New York City of the United States. However, their work continued to challenge other schools of thought. Fundamentally, the Frankfurt School became an early rendering of critical theory (Giroux, 2001; Walker, 2017). Philosophers of the Frankfurt School used the concepts of dialectical thought and immanent criticism (Giroux, 2001) and addressed issues in society by analyzing conflicting practices and the reality of the individual’s consciousness (Giroux, 2001; Kellner, 2002). They also analyzed cultural reproduction through the understanding of art and music aesthetics, similar to Bourdieu’s (1984) investigation of the cycling of legitimated values of art and taste through societies until they inevitably create acceptable and unacceptable forms of expression. According to Walker (2017), Adorno and Horkheimer believed that the culture industry prepared people to acquiesce to the demands of capitalist society. Since access to the productive forces that created the products of mass culture meant access to wealth and the
means of production, the ideas transmitted by mass culture would be the ideas of the ruling class. (para. 17)

Thus, the members of the Frankfurt School evaluated the legitimation of aspects considered high culture and the resulting capitalistic division.

Despite significant contributions that the Frankfurt School philosophers made to the thoughts of Marxism and critical theory, they were not immune to criticism. They received accusations of benefiting from the role of legitimacy and cultural reproduction while challenging it, thereby appearing to be contradictory (Walker, 2017). Additionally, Held (1980) challenged them for ignoring economic determinism and empirical studies in their theories. However, Giroux (2001) challenged these critics by quoting Adorno’s (1966) statement regarding the legitimacy of empirical data:

My own position in the controversy between empirical and theoretical sociology. . . . I may sum up by saying that empirical investigations are not only legitimate but essential, even in the realm of cultural phenomena. But one must not confer autonomy upon them or regard them as universal key. Above all they must terminate in theoretical knowledge. Theory is no mere vehicle that becomes superfluous as soon as data are in hand. (p.353).

Therefore, the Frankfurt School challenged and resisted commonly held forms of thought by critically analyzing the dialectical consciousness and the role of the individual in the pronunciation of legitimated high-cultural values. Giroux (2001) stated,

On the contrary, it had to be viewed as an emerging open-ended phenomenon, the significance of which was to be gleaned in the cracks and tensions that separated
individuals and social classes from the imperatives of the dominant society. In other words, there were no laws of history that prefigured human progress, that functioned independently of human action. Moreover, history became meaningful not because it provided the present with the fruits of “interesting” or “stimulating” culture, but because it became the present object of analyses aimed at illuminating the revolutionary possibilities that existed in the given society. (p. 35)

This early critical thought has influenced critical theorists to advance their work and, with its post-positivistic views, has challenged educational theorists who hold positivistic views of knowledge in high regard (Giroux, 2001; Kincheloe, 2008). Their resistance to legitimation led to the essence of a radical pedagogy in the academic field, for the use of the Frankfurt School’s historical context and the dialectical critique to denounce notions of society that reproduced knowledge in methods that ultimately served to divide influenced individuals (Giroux, 2001).

Upon a review of the influence of the Frankfurt School and its early influence on critical theorists and radical pedagogy in the academic field, this section analyzes the hidden curriculum and the resistance towards it. With industrialization and capitalistic shifts in the society of the United States, academic fields have also shifted to meet the demands of the working force and the reproduction of dominating norms. Thus, the school exists with a dual set of curricula (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Duncan-Andrade, 2008 & Morrell; Giroux, 2001). One curriculum is evident with the focus on the acquisition of knowledge in customary content areas. The other curriculum, known as
the hidden curriculum, is elusive and omnipresent, and it operates to reproduce societal norms (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Duncan-Andrade, 2008 & Morrell; Giroux, 2001).

Capitalistic demands, political regimes, and industrialization have compiled and functioned historically to drive class wedges and societal stratification. As the academic field operates as an extension of the society-at-large, the demands and legitimated norms of society are infused into its field. Thus, the students are essentially human capital, resources to fill the needs of political and capitalistic agendas (Apple, 1993; Giroux, 2001; Ferrare & Apple, 2015; Spring, 1997; Spring, 2011). Despite this finding, some individuals of dominant societal positions challenge that this notion of treating students as *materials* to be *produced* for specific societal needs is necessary to maintain the societal structure. O’Toole (1977) stated,

> Because of the American school system’s commitment to mobility and equality, there is now a shortage of working class people, individuals socialized for an environment of bureaucratic and hierarchical control and of strict discipline. Employers are correct in their observations that schools are failing to provide enough men and women who are passively compliant, who seek only extrinsic rewards for their labor, and who have the stamina and stoicism to cope with the work technologies and processes developed during the industrial revolution. (as cited in Giroux, 2001, p. 44)

Therefore, if given the appropriate amount of pressure with federal funding as a catalyst, schools may fall subject to industrializing their institution, to funnel and prepare students for specific forms of careers, thereby limiting the students’ academic freedom with
deterministic agency (Ayers, 2001; Apple, 1993; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Giroux, 2001; Ferrare & Apple, 2015; Spring, 1997). Thus, the critical theorists resist the manifestation of politics, social and economic correlations within the school field and how they exist to limit certain students in their academic success, causing achievement disparities (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Duncan-Andrade, 2008 & Morrell; Giroux, 2001).

“Resistance is a valuable theoretical and ideological construct that provides an important focus for analyzing the relationship between school and the wider society” (Giroux, 2001), p. 107). Therefore, critical pedagogues resist the agency of the reproduction of norms that persist in the academic field under the guise of equality (Duncan-Andrade, 2008 & Morrell; Giroux, 2001; Kincheloe, 2008). They call for resistance that seeks to challenge the historical context of tension and cyclical domination to emancipate the mental and psychological complexities of all of those that are involved, both the oppressed and the oppressors.

Many studies allude to the concept that schools are agents of social reproduction (Ayers, 2001; Apple, 1993; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Duncan-Andrade, 2008 & Morrell; Giroux, 2001; Ferrare & Apple, 2015; Kincheloe, 2008; Kincheloe, McLaren, Steinberg, 2011; Morris, 2007 Reay, 2004a; Riley, 2010). These studies suggest that the school field holds and reproduces norms and behaviors that have been legitimated by dominant social constructs. Additionally, these studies have been used to correlate the school to large-scale political and divisive agendas that seek to stratify the social structure. Consequently, critical theorists and pedagogues argue and resist the hidden
curriculum, which thrives under macroscopic agency to support the microscopic agency. Thus, critical theorists such as Giroux, Duncan-Andrade, Morrell, Freire, and Kincheloe view the school field metaphorically as an appropriate mental and psychological battlefield, in which the fight against hegemonic practices can be effectively challenged through social justice-oriented advocacy in the curriculum.

The history of pedagogy often includes prescribed norms of behavior and knowledge attainment through behavioral and content-based analysis with specific and prescribed curriculum designs (Tyler, 1950). However, a review of the pedagogical literature suggests the lack of emphasis on societal reproductive matters as they relate to knowledge acquisition, behavior, and power (Giroux, 2001). Thus, in the literature of the critical theorists a call to action has commenced due to the perceived neglect of this crucial correlation. Giroux specifically addressed the need to challenge educational theory in its frequent use of and dependence upon theoretical and empirical evidence alone, without critical consideration of social networking and the subjective nature of prescribed practices. Giroux (2001) stated,

That is, the specificity of practice cannot be abstracted from the complex forces, struggles, and medications that give each situation a unique defining quality. Theory can help us understand this quality, but cannot reduce it to the logic of a mathematical formula. (p. 100)

This is a critical resistance in that Giroux emphasized the importance of critique and avoided blindly absorbing theories for universal truths. Additionally, Giroux (2001) found that critiquing educational reproduction should be a process that includes analyzing
both the positive aspects of the field as well as the negative. Resistance in an academic field may be a symptom of resilience and strength, or a symptom of defeat. Either way, it requires analysis from multiple vantage points. Doing so provides the researcher with the liberation to distinguish the relevance and significance by elevating their dialectic observations (Giroux, 2001). Therefore, resistance in education is multifaceted. It is one’s aim to liberate through democratic methods. Thus, resistance could be considered more than an unsettling insurrection. Students and educators resisting systemic schools of thought supported by empirical evidence are not necessarily rebels without cause (Giroux, 2001).

Giroux (2001) presented reasons for students to not want to learn anymore; he suggested that they may find themselves resisting learning. He alluded to the notion that because some educational institutions are reproducing dominant cultures and statuses through standardized testing and the lack of critical thinking, some students may resist this type of learning model. Giroux (1994) stated, “Here, the dominant pedagogical model is said to be a ‘banking system’ which introduces students to the ‘correct’ ways to understand the world, and rewards those who re-present these understandings in examinations, course work, and so on” (p. 337).

This banking model concept received notable recognition from the earlier philosopher, Paulo Freire (1970/2000). Students who are not representative of the dominant culture suffer from a misrepresentation in courses, and they are sometimes unable to process information because of its nonsensical connection to their own realities. After repeated exposure of being unable to achieve equilibration cognitively, a student
may resist learning (Giroux, 2001; Piaget, 1952). That resistance may be self-defeating, for the student may quit school (Giroux, 2001). The resistance may be silence, or it may be transformative (2001). Giroux encouraged transformative resistance because in this instance, these students are potential agents of change who recognize the need for improvements and suggest ways to make the curriculum more diversely engaging. Thus, critical theorists of education propose to replace detrimental resistance of the student with a self-deterministic resistance towards aspects of the curriculum that disengage them as learners and future members of the society at large.

Critical Pedagogic Action of Resistance

Educators who want to promote societal change by resisting the teachings of domination and perpetuating the betterment of certain groups of students can use critical pedagogy (Amburgy, 2011; Bartolome, 2004; Beyer, 1986; Cook, 2000; Freire, 1970/2000; McMahon, 2003). Everyone’s cultural background merits consideration as primary aspects of the curriculum, not just randomly highlighted (McMahon, 2003). In a system that actively suppresses the identities of unique individuals, features such as class, gender, knowledge, language, and race must be considered to foster the development of students as agents of change (Bajaj, 2011; Grant & Gibson, 2013). Canlas, Argenal, and Bajaj (2015) explained, “Rather than adopt an assimilationist approach in the classroom where students are expected to discard their home cultures in order to be absorbed into dominant culture, our approach invited students’ experiences as a source of cultural wealth and from which we all could learn” (p. 41).
For example, a group of human rights activists used artistic activities to get high school students comfortable with the expression and valuation of their uniqueness and identity. The students had to make an “I am a tree” project to depict their characteristics. The follow-up activity was to draw outlines of their bodies, and in each section of their bodies, they had to describe their thoughts and feelings. For instance, in the stomach region they had to describe something that they needed (Canlas, et al., 2015). This activity proved to be a good way to make the students feel comfortable and needed in the classroom discussion. Furthermore, Canlas et al. (2015) maintained that students felt an appreciation of their differences:

These activities allowed for students to begin practicing “heart” thinking, the human development skills of empathy and understanding. At the core of human rights is the recognition of the dignity and worth in each human being, and the core of critical pedagogy is humanization and valuing of our students. (p. 42)

An education that addresses human rights yields numerous benefits:

First, students—whether operating from social locations of privilege or marginalization—must be able to feel human in the learning process. Through identifying their personal relationships to ideas of rights, dignity, and empathy, students can explore how their rights and those of others have been fulfilled or violated. Second, for all students but especially for those who occupy the margins, it is important that they see themselves in the curriculum and see examples of people from their backgrounds as agents of individual or collective change. (Canlas et al., 2015, p .45)
Involving human rights in critical pedagogy is supporting a democratic education. Edwards (2010) related disputes and tensions among philosophers regarding the differences of the two. Critical pedagogues want to create justice-oriented citizens, and democratic advocates wish to create participatory citizens. However, both are very similar and fall under the auspices of a democratic education (Edwards, 2010; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Standardization and conformity in education blur the lines of American democratic education. Giroux (2016) indicated,

In a culture drowning in a new love affair with empiricism and data, that which is not measurable withers. Lost here are the registers of compassion, care for others, the radical imagination, a democratic vision, and a passion for justice” (para. 3).

Learning that cultivates critical inquiry, social tolerance, and the individual’s self-identity could lead to the cultivation of social agents of change.

Challenging social injustice helps to form our epistemological background (Revilla, 2004). Revilla emphasized the power in teaching social justice by encouraging students to voice their discontent and opposition to themes of dominance and discrimination in society. She chose the Raza womyn (Chicana) for her study because of their concern with the intersectionality of sexism and racism.

In her work, Revilla (2004) promoted transformational resistance, which can be advocated when teaching the students of prominent activists in the past and comparing them to ones of the present. Revilla (2004) stated, “In their efforts to accomplish their goals or visions of social justice, these students develop intimate connections between their education and their lives” (p. 93). Here Revilla emphasized that bridging the gap
between students’ background knowledge and the curriculum standards may have positive implications on the students’ self-concepts and learning.

Critical pedagogues work to resist conformity by encouraging critical inquiry and individuality. Teachers should use critical inquiry in their instruction to encourage students to dig deeper into meanings and identify the ways they affect them. Critical inquiry is the idea of questioning knowledge or information to transform and accept knowledge by taking a more critical view of society. Lassonde (2009) emphasized, “Critical inquiry is vital in teacher education if we want to encourage teacher candidates to become agents of societal change and in positions that will allow them to empower students” (p. 42). If we want students to have positive influence on society, it is important to identify their differences in addition to encouraging them to think critically about their differences. Border pedagogy addresses this issue in that it encourages teachers to teach outside of the norm by acknowledging the diversity in their classrooms and encouraging creativity and critical thinking.

In a study related to critical pedagogy, a professor of a teacher certification program (Social Foundations of Education) asked her students to describe their perspectives on the issues of race and inequity in education. This course challenged the preconceived ideologies of teachers. The professor explained the occurrence of a teacher holding onto biased opinions without actively acknowledging it as dysconsciousness, which is “an uncritical habit of mind (including perceptions, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs) that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given” (King, 1991, p. 135). A specific type of dysconsciousness is dysconscious racism,
which King (1991) described as “a form of racism that tacitly accepts dominant White norms and privileges” (p. 135). King discovered that her student teachers had little knowledge of social inequity. In other words, although they may have been aware of and exposed to racism, they had acquired little researched-based evidence of the phenomenon. King (1991) reported,

My students’ explanations of persistent racial inequity consistently lack evidence of any critical ethical judgment regarding racial (and class/gender) stratification in the existing social order; yet, and not surprisingly, these same students generally maintain that they personally deplore radical prejudice and discrimination. (p. 135)

If teachers do not understand their own misconceptions and miseducation about social stratification, they may perpetuate these beliefs upon their students (King, 1991).

A portion of teachers of Mexico and California semi-annually convene to have conversations regarding a type of critical pedagogy in a practice known as border pedagogy in cafés. Cafés in this content refer to safe places where teachers can discuss the challenges they face by teaching students that are crossing cultural boundaries (Necochea & Cline, 2008). The participants receive encouragement to switch from group to group so that they may engage with different issues, while the table facilitator keeps the conversation going. Qualitatively, Necochea and Cline (2008) analyzed the effectiveness of the cafés:

With the border pedagogy cafés, educators have discovered a bold initiative that has allowed them to connect teachers from both sides of the border through
meaningful conversations that produce multiple perspectives, creative solutions to complex problems, and the emergence of powerful cross-border understandings of the issues facing education. (p. 257)

Necochea and Cline (2008) found that the border cafes were successful because the teachers could present their concerns about education without the fear of ostracism for refusal to conform.

To move towards critical pedagogy that addresses legitimated ways of being, multiple scholars have suggested that educational institutions should incorporate a justice-oriented curriculum that inspires critical thinking, appreciation of the dialectic discourse, and use of post-positivistic inquiry (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell; Freire, 1970/2000; Giroux, 2001; Kincheloe, 2008). The literature suggests that theory that seeks to explore knowledge acquisition without these concepts is not as effective in emancipating students from societal strong holds and valuing their individualities (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell; 2008; Freire, 1970/2000; Giroux, 2001; Kincheloe, 2008). This would require a rewiring of the system, since it traditionally upholds notions of technical and surface teachings that do not delve into the underpinnings of societal function (Giroux, 2001). To do this, Giroux contended (1994), “It is more appropriate to begin with those educators who both mediate and define the educational process” (p. 194). Thus, to start the use of justice-oriented education of resistance to dominant and divisive norms, the educators need to reflect upon their habitus within such a system and acknowledge their role in its reproduction. The use of reflective strategies that challenge educators to challenge themselves and the roles individuals hold within the social order
will influence their pedagogic action so that educators teach with cultural and individualistic relevance.

A Critically Creative Resistance

The funneling, tracking, labeling, and separating of students to elicit different attitudes and personalities, sustainable for certain social levels and occupations when they reach adulthood, is the concept of inquiry for this investigation. The research suggests creative resistance may be effective in counteracting the theory of social reproduction and the aforementioned characteristics. Conceptual art making produced without the confines of capitalistic goals or desires for normality allows for a creative resistance to societal expectations that go against freedom and individuality (Ray, 2007). Emancipatory art allows an individual to observe and reflect on the aspects of nature before replicating it and requires a critical lens that actively uses inner speech and self-identity to create an accurate reflection of an individual’s perceptions. Art allows for the accessibility and wide-awakedness of all of one’s senses as they channel energy into the creative process (Greene, 1995; Moon et al., 2013). It requires understanding of all perspectives and truths.

Edwards (2010) who promoted the use of critical pedagogy for enhancing democratic education, proclaimed that it is crucial that art teachers become aware of critical pedagogy and use it in the art classroom to promote justice and participatory-oriented citizens. Although critical theorists consider the knowledge of critical pedagogy to be a necessity of educators, many educators lack training to use such theories in their classroom. Thus, their students’ learning experience is ultimately limited. King (1991)
advised, “Prospective teachers need both an intellectual understanding of schooling and inequity as well as self-reflective, transformative emotional growth experiences” (p. 134). Many come to work as educators without any knowledge of how children learn, and highly influential theorists, such as Vygotsky, are unfamiliar names to them. For educators to cultivate the strongest and most effective students who can fulfill their goals and compete internationally, educators must be properly equipped with effective pedagogical practices (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Kincheloe, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

A large body of research acknowledges the benefits of art education, but only a small amount of empirical studies exist regarding its use to encourage creative resistance. Creative resistance is the use of creative expression to illustrate one’s individuality, value, or role in society (Ray, 2007). It is essentially a visual combination of an individual’s epistemological, ontological, and axiological views. The visual arts educator has many methods for cultivating creative resistance thinking in their class. Fundamentally, the goals are to expose students to thoughtful and emotionally provoking representations of norms saturated in the media and to challenge those students to perceive and consider the reasons for this phenomenon.

In one study of using visual art to encourage divergent thinking, Amburgy (2011) provided suggestions for art teachers to introduce constructions of diversity into their art courses to elicit conversations involving social injustice. She structured her diversity course by displaying visual representations that display people of privilege and in different groups, such as race or sexual identity. Additionally, she showed viewers how
to take several different interpretations from art. In one assignment, she presented her students with a piece of art, and then asked the students to interview three other students about their interpretations. The students had to deem each viewers’ interpretation as “dominant, negotiated, or oppositional” (Amburgy, 2011, p. 10). A good example of this is showing people Barbie advertisements, or cartoons, and classifying their interpretations to gauge how the students perceive both the image and their self-identity within the image. Not only does this promote critical thinking about perceived norms, it also prompts students to understand their own realities within those perceived norms (Amburgy, 2011). Amburgy (2011) stated,

> We should not just passively absorb this environment without thinking critically about the social functions of representations. In art education, it is important to teach students to think critically about all the visual representations that surround them, including art, and to see themselves as agents for social change. (p. 11)

Amburgy suggested that art is a natural vehicle of resistance, as it forces individuals to analyze aspects of their cultural background and the similarities and differences that exist between that and the norms of society. The use of a critically creative resistance pedagogy in not only art classrooms, but all classrooms, has the potential to enhance divergent thinking and critical thinking, while fostering the development of students’ unique self-identities.

Signs of resistance to oppressive and discriminatory practices in society may be expressed in a variety of ways. Art forms provide flexibility to express such feelings. One group of Asian-American women expressed their resistance to stereotypes through a
written form called a *zine*. They referred to themselves as the Asian American riot grrrls. These women fought for female empowerment with resistant stories. They used grrrl instead of girl to express anger and aggression; grrrl also represented a growl. They spread their rebellion by using the zines. They distributed these booklets in bookstores, libraries, shows, and any venue possible to relay their message. The grrrls were actively resisting the country’s view of femininity. Zines can be very beautiful and artistic (they usually are), but they can also be *educative shocks* filled with resistance and inconvenient truths (Goulding, 2015). “By placing us so intimately within the emotionality, visual and aesthetic constructions, and life histories of the zinesters, zines confront their readers towards what is uncomfortable and difficult” (Goulding, 2015, p. 184). Zines allow young people to reflect and share their opinions of the world and to disseminate their information through the media cost effectively and easily accessible to their peers. With technological advances, graphic design can accomplish such a feat. Zines help critical and divergent thinking while reflecting aspects of marginalization in society (Wan, 1999).

The media, through visual culture, portray aspects of sociocurricular positions. Magazines, television, and computer advertisements often uphold notions of social capital. Such imagery helps to reproduce social norms and standards of legitimacy. Although much of the literature suggests that visual culture serves as a method of social reproduction, some researchers think the contrary. For instance, Mitchell (2002) stated, “It should be clear, then, that the supposed hegemony of the visible in our time (or in the ever-flexible period of modernity, or the equally flexible domain of the West) is a
chimera that has outlived its usefulness” (p. 174). While some scholars such as Mitchell (2002) stated that visual culture has little to do with the practice of hegemony, scholars such as Amburgy (2011), Greene (1995), Ray (2007), and Revilla (2004) contended that visual culture allows for the practice of questioning social structures.

The idea of hegemony in visual culture has little use, as Mitchell (2002) stated. Research shows that it continues to aid in the perpetuation of the dominance of cultural arbitraries. Jesus Christ is an example of hegemony in visual culture. He is perpetually painted as a Caucasian male with blue eyes in mainstream America, dissimilar to his visual representation in other cultures. For example, his depiction in the ancient Spaniard church, Montserrat, is with a brown face and brown eyes. Thus, the visual culture of Christianity in the North American visual culture continues the idea of dominance by visually upholding specific features of certain individuals.

Overall, the research on the influence of sociocurricular positions and inequity indicates that they are not happenstance figments of the imagination as contenders such as Mehan (1992) suggested, but in fact, they have significant involvement on the student’s ability to become academically successful by playing off the dynamics of the student’s habitus. Particularly influential on the placement of sociocurricular position are the student’s class, gender, knowledge, language, and race. Sociocurricular positions are dependent upon a combination of ascriptive characteristics and habitus that the student naturally upholds. The groupings of these characteristics are numerous, and therefore, some students may possess the combination of characteristics that lend to a desirable habitus, thus academic success. Large components of the incidence of sociocurricular
positions are the pronouncement and acceptance of what is deemed legitimate and the agency negotiated by the players of the field to maintain these legitimate values.

Students who maintain the norms that the school culture has deemed legitimate access social capital that will pass to their descendants. Hence, a cycle of dominance and subordination is perpetuated almost seamlessly. Bourdieu (1967) explained such a complex and camouflaged system:

In a society where the handing on of culture is monopolized by a school, the hidden affinities uniting the works of man (and, at the same time, modes of conduct and thought) derive from the institution of the school, whose function is consciously (and also, in part, unconsciously) to transmit the unconscious or, to be more precise, to produce individuals equipped with the system of unconscious (or deeply buried) master-patterns that constitute their culture . . . . through the very logic of its functioning, the school modifies the content and the spirit of the culture it transmits and above all, that its express function is to transform the collective heritage into a common individual unconscious. (p. 345)

When reflecting on Bourdieu’s words, one can surmise his implications about the power of legitimacy and the consequences it has on a society. Thus, sociocurricular positions derive from societal standards of normalcy and the need for dominance. However, the integrity of the unconscious characteristics that make an individual uniquely connected to their own culture and background experiences are at jeopardy. For the student, this is concerning as it effects their chances at academic success, for the sake of conformity.
Summary

This chapter provided a review of the literature on the concepts of engagement, social reproduction, cultural reproduction, field, habitus, capital, sociocurricular positions, resistance, critical pedagogy and middle childhood. A review of the literature provided studies that imply that the influence of the teacher’s role in curriculum and instruction is critical to the self-concept of the learners, consequently their academic success. Students maintain habitus, orientations, to learning that have developed as a response to their background experiences. Also, crucial to the learner’s habitus is the social capital of the family, dependent upon various ascriptive features of legitimacy. These features lend themselves to divisive enforcers of society that have been used to appropriate capital and categorize individuals into a variety of social positions. Within the school context, these social positions are known as sociocurricular positions.

All agents (students, teachers, administrators, and stakeholders) of the school field establish and uphold sociocurricular positions. An examination of the sociocurricular positions of class, gender, knowledge, language, and race in this critical synthesis served to provide an analysis of their influence on students’ academic success. Table 1 provides an outlook of the studies reviewed concerning the effects of sociocurricular positions. More than half the articles reviewed on sociocurricular positions show the presence of negative effects on the academic progress of students, implying that the incidence of sociocurricular positions is attributable to achievement disparities.
Table 1

*Summary of Studies Examining Sociocurricular Positions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher(s)</th>
<th>Research Method</th>
<th>School Level</th>
<th>Sociocurricular Position</th>
<th>+ or – Influence of the Habitus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drotos &amp; Cilesiz (2014)</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingram (2011)</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reay (1995)</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reay (1995)</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DiMaggio (1982)</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>+ &amp; -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumais</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entwisle, Alexander, &amp; Olson (2007)</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacobs (1996)</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Postsecondary</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orr (2011)</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warrington, Younger, &amp; Williams (2000)</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apple (1993)</td>
<td>Theoretical</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>+ &amp; -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hatt (2012)</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladson-Billings (2000)</td>
<td>Theoretical</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubin (2007)</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sternberg (2007)</td>
<td>Theoretical</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graff (1987)</td>
<td>Theoretical</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handsfield (2006)</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handsfield &amp; Jimenez (2009)</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanks (2005)</td>
<td>Theoretical</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>+ &amp; -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke (2003)</td>
<td>Theoretical</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>+ &amp; -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DiMaggio (1982)</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Race</td>
<td>+ &amp; -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumais (2002)</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Race</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entwisle, Alexander, &amp; Olson (2007)</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
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<td>Jacobs (1996)</td>
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<td>Postsecondary</td>
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<td>Orr (2011)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Warrington, Younger, &amp; Williams (2000)</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The studies used for this review examined how the components of reproduction and resistance lend themselves to applicability in the educational system through the pedagogic action of educators for sociocurricular positions. Critical theorists such as Bourdieu (1995) suggested that individuals who have habitus (an individual’s set of dispositions oriented to their reality) that are desirable to the arbitrary dominant social group maintain their dominance by the perpetuation of the norms that the dominant individuals deem as legitimate. Perpetuation of these norms not only requires that the dominant individuals uphold them, but also the compliance of the subordinate groups. This manifests in the educational field as sociocurricular positions. While Bourdieu (1995) claimed the habitus was an embodiment caused by the experiences and capital of one’s life, challengers of his theories contend that such an embodiment is deterministic. However, many studies in this review suggest that nuances of curriculum and instruction sharply influence them (Apple, 1993, 2015; DiMaggio, 1982; Drotos & Cilesiz, 2014; Dumais, 2002, 2005; Giroux, 2002; Ingram, 2011; Jacobs, 1996; Reay, 1995a, 1995b). Therefore, the habitus has the potential for flexibility, indicating it may not be as deterministic as Bourdieu mentioned. Even so, his theory still holds significance in the understanding of students’ dispositions to learning. Figure 2 provides a visual framework of the correlation of the literature and the premise for this investigation.
Chapter 3 provides the methodology for the investigation. It also presents a rationale and description of the critical visual bricolage methodology used in this study to analyze the agency for reproduction or resistance of teachers in their pedagogic action. Additionally, descriptions of the screening process, participants, and data analysis are provided and supported by critical theories and empirical evidence.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY: AMORITES ON SAFARI

“I was a really lousy artist as a kid. Too abstract expressionist; or I’d draw a ram’s head, really messy. I’d never win painting contests. I remember losing to a guy who did a perfect Spiderman”  

(Basquiat, 1983)

What does it signify for one to render something perfectly that already exists? It could suggest the ability to reproduce with precision or the innate orientation towards its truth. However, what of one whose reproduction juxtaposes that truth and its rendering presents a representation of a different truth or a truth that has been expounded upon and altered? Is it any less reputable? Basquiat’s reflection of his loss in a contest to a child who rendered a perfect representation of a superhero could have multiple implications for the value of conformity, among other variables. One could argue that Basquiat (1983) was implying in his quote of “I was a really lousy artist as a kid. Too abstract expressionist; or I’d draw a ram’s head, really messy. I’d never win painting contests. I remember losing to a guy who did a perfect Spiderman” that because his visual representation sharply contrasted that of the establishment of legitimate aesthetic appreciation, he lost the contest. However, his creative process served his reality and perhaps the realities of others with similar habitus. Thus, are these orientations rightfully outcast because the cultural milieu of ta endoxa has deemed them illegitimate, and their perceived wisdom has ultimately influenced the societal mass to uphold or respect its legitimacy and truth? In an effort to understand the reproduction of the reputable norms
of dominant individuals, a critically visual bricolage methodology was employed, since it lends itself to the creative and nonconformist habitus of the researcher who seeks to understand the consequential social order when deciding whose realities are of reputable value.

The purpose of this qualitative visual bricolage is to explore how middle school educators negotiate their experiences of agency within the presence of social and cultural reproduction. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), who upheld the notion that society subtly reproduces the dominance and power of cultural arbitraries, thereby suppressing the expression and prominence of all others, developed and advanced the notion of social and cultural reproduction. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) are among the scholars who have identified that the education system and pedagogic action within said system constitute the primary environment responsible for maintaining social and cultural reproduction through the curriculum and instruction as perceived by educators. The educators are the perpetuators of this doctrine, through their compliant delivery of instruction laden with dominant culture dogma. The focus of this project is in exploring how the theories of reproduction manifest in the perspectives of teachers as they negotiate sociocurricular positions within the field of education. Exposure and reaction to art images were used to elucidate their perspectives and gain a deeper understanding of the educators’ sense of agency in upholding the reproductive norms of legitimacy.

This study seeks to explore how educators enact their pedagogic action and enliven these theories through either perpetuation or resistance in their delivery of the dominant-culture based curriculum. The study seeks to assess the maintenance or
resistance to sociocurricular positions and notions of legitimacy. Henry Giroux (2001) provided a correlation between resistance and the theories of social and cultural reproduction by detailing that resistance. Ample literature details the dynamics of social and cultural reproduction (Apple, 1993; Bourdieu, 1996; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Ferrare & Apple, 2015; Giroux, 2001; Tripp, 1992). Essentially, it includes legitimated and dominant positions upheld and recycled through individuals of society in ways that challenge individuality. Critical to the incidence of this reproduction is the nature in which individuals uphold and dispel these norms. The school field is a suitable environment for this incidence to take place, as children are highly influential to authoritative mandates and dispositions to legitimate behavior and skill sets. Thus, the pedagogic action of the educator to reproduce social norms has the potential to continue the cycle of dominant truths or to resist them and influence change.

The purpose of this study is to assess the maintenance or resistance to sociocurricular positions and notions of legitimacy through the pedagogic action and habitus of the educator. To analyze this purpose, a qualitative arts-inferred research methodology will be used under the umbrella of bricolage. To critically analyze participants’ dialectic orientations towards dominantly reproduced norms, I will show the participants art images to elicit their habitus on the topics of class, gender, knowledge, language, and race. The intent of this process is to encourage educators to use the art images as catalysts to reflect upon their habitus towards the social order and their places within it.
Scholars contend that visual culture is contingent upon the eye of the beholder, the natural inclinations of the viewer that affect their reality and outlook (Cole & Sandagata, 2015; Wallraven, Kaulard, Kurner, & Pepperell, 2008; Westphal-Fitch & Fitch, 2017). I have explored the meaning of how specific pieces of art hold true to the viewer, which speaks to their reality and their identity within the reality of the image (Amburgy, 2011; Darts, 2004). Research details the dynamics of social and cultural reproduction (Apple; 1993, Bourdieu, 1996; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Ferrare & Apple, 2015; Giroux, 2001; Tripp, 1992). However, there is little to test the theory using the perceptions of educators with a visual-situated methodology. Harper (2002) provided a collection of the few dissertations that utilized photo elicitation. These three dissertations used photos as their imagery and approached the realm of using art as the qualitative research prompt. Two dissertations used photo elicitation as it relates to social class, Guschker (2000) and Sustik (1999). One dissertation used photo elicitation for the historical context of a community (Sampson-Cordle, 2001). A review of the literature gave no indication of research conducted for the exploration of social and cultural reproduction through the responses of educators to visual art.

Visual bricolage incorporates the use of visual arts to analyze an inquiry from a parts-whole-perspective for the understanding of multiple perspectives, but also their intersectionality. Pieces of art from a variety of mediums were used to prompt educator reactions. The art was used to elicit components of the participants’ habitus by encouraging their personal reflections and connections to the art. After receiving the participants’ responses to the art, an unstructured discourse commenced regarding the
incidence of reproduction and sociocurricular positions. Following the interview, I then made inferences and correlations regarding the relationship between the educators’ realities and their position in a system of social and cultural reproduction, and the ways it may affect their curriculum and instruction and subsequently the development of the students’ self-advocacy and concept.

This chapter provides a discussion of the specific components of the research design, data collection, and data analysis processes. The Research Design and Rationale section presents the rationale for choosing a visual bricolage method and research design. The Participants, Setting, and Sample Study section provides the reasoning for participant selection for this study. This section will also offer details regarding the setting in which the observations convened. The Data Collection and Instrumentation section relates the description of the data collection process and its organization and storage. The Data Analysis section provides information regarding the coding and analysis of the data for contextual meaning regarding the focus of this study. The Dependability and Credibility section is a discussion on research trustworthiness. Finally, the Ethical Safeguard section details the process for preserving the anonymity of all participants, as well as methods for maintaining a professional and ethical role as the researcher throughout each segment of the research study.

Purpose of the Study

Theorists who support the incidence of social and cultural reproduction contend that it is happening under subtle, yet influential circumstances within the school system (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Ferrare & Apple, 2015; Giroux, 2001). The belief is that
under the pretense of equality, the school is operating as an institution that functions to maintain the dominance of one culture (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). The concern then is, that if one culture is being perpetuated, the individualities and uniqueness of other cultures are being very discretely suppressed. This study sought to explore middle school educators’ conceptual awareness of the processes of social and cultural reproduction and to analyze their role in what Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) referred to as the cultural arbitrary being perpetuated in the sociocurricular positions of class, gender, knowledge, language, and race.

This study sought to understand why, and how, under the umbrella of equality in education, a system of social and cultural reproduction could be tolerated and propagated. What are the dynamical forces of social and cultural reproduction? Additionally, what are the perceptions of educators whose pedagogic actions serve to counter the creative and cultural identities of the students they serve? Are there any correlations between the educators’ commitment to resist the negative consequences of social and cultural reproduction and the ability of certain students to maintain their sense of individual agency and identity integrity? Conversely, does a correlation exist between those educators who do not resist aspects of social and cultural reproduction to the students who represent divergent cultural positions and are not in possession of strong self-concepts? This research is of value as it sought to understand the degree to which students maintain the liberty to develop their unique self-concepts, as well as to understand the pedagogic actions that may lead to a more effective understanding of students in their own realities and pursuits of happiness. This study also has potential
implications to develop more effective and culturally inclusive curriculum and pedagogic practices.

The manner in which middle school educators uphold mainstream norms within their habitus as agents of social and cultural reproduction were elucidated by analyzing their responses to artwork. The overarching aim was to prompt and then analyze the educators’ reactions and verbal responses to the provided pieces of art to determine if their habitus were wired to either promote or resist components of social and cultural reproduction. Social and cultural reproduction theories uphold the ideology of certain cultural arbitraries receiving and maintaining dominance over all others (Bourdieu, 1996; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Giroux, 2001). Thereby, the promotion of social aspects and cultures that are not of dominance receive less emphasis and perpetuation in society. The divergent cultural aspects are deemed as less legitimate, while the norms and standards perceived by those of the dominant culture serve as the standard for all others to aspire. Therefore, those who are not of the dominant culture are inculcated with another’s culture over the importance of their own.

Middle school students undergo a highly influential stage of development, known as the middle childhood (Akos, 2005; Eccles, 1999; Rhodes, Roffman, Reddy, & Fredriksen, 2004; Simmons & Blythe, 1987). Students within this age range experience heightened sensitivity to their inclinations and skill sets, thereby their self-concepts (Eccles, 1999; Rhodes, Roffman, Reddy & Fredriksen, 2004). This age range, often referred to as the “storm and stress”, is a pivotal time for guiding and fostering students. Additionally, the middle school environment has significant influence on the middle
child’s development as well, since the culture of the environment influences the habitus of the teachers and the students (Giroux, 2001; Fataar & Feldman, 2016; Feldman, 2016). Therefore, if the school institution fundamentally functions as a microcosm of the valued norms and beliefs of the mainstream culture, the influence on the child’s self-concept is the most vulnerable during the middle childhood in the middle school environment. If the norms of ta endoxa are those of the individuals who have been wise or reputable and the possessors of universal truths about inclinations and talents, the mainstream society will uphold them as dominant ideals (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984; Giroux, 2001; Fataar & Feldman, 2016). This may result in the depreciation of the student’s self-concept, as his or her natural habitus is discouraged because of a lack of features considered legitimate. Thus, the individual and natural inclinations of the child may be lost due to the need to assimilate for success, or it may resist. Therefore, the art elicitation methodology was useful in analyzing the perspectives of the educators who play pivotal roles in fostering the development of the self-concept of students.

To analyze the potential curricular implications of social and cultural reproduction and its impact on student development effectively, the researcher must possess a firm understanding of the investigative how for the study. The investigation into the agency of social and cultural reproduction as experienced by educators involved a qualitative method known as visual bricolage. The researcher assumed the role as a visual bricoleur to align with scholars who uphold the notion that the visual imagery of ones’ life critically depicts their thoughts, perceptions, and realities (Knoblauch, Baer, Laurier, Petschke, & Schnettler, 2008; Pink, 2013). This method aligns with the
phenomenological approach to data. Visual bricolage was used to expose a group of
purposefully selected middle school educators to visual art pieces that conform to and
challenge aspects of social and cultural reproduction. The goal was to gage their
perception of the occurrence as it relates to sociocurricular positions.

Guiding Research Questions

1. To what degree of agency do middle school educators uphold mainstream
   norms of legitimacy in the sociocurricular positions of class, gender,
   knowledge, language, and race?
   a. How do teachers respond to images that appear to resist the dominant
      cultural norms?
   b. How do teachers respond to images that appear to uphold the dominant
      cultural norms?

2. How does the cultural habitus of middle school educators influence the
   delivery of their curriculum and instruction?

Research Design and Rationale

In an attempt to acknowledge the vast complexities of research inquisitions and to
bring the immeasurable variables of the investigation to a level of significance,
qualitative research explores problems without the absolute need to justify theories and
hypothesis. This occurs without the primary use of numerical data, for it involves the
divergent use of linguistic analysis and discourses (Creswell, 2013; Fairclough, 2012;
Kincheloe, 2008; Lichtman, 2013; Tracy, 2013). Quantitative research often calls for the
use of a systematic approach to an inquiry through the scientific method and the search
for an “objective reality” (Lichtman, 2013, p. 10). Comte (2017) professed the need for research that posits the researcher of an inquiry as a neutral individual who only seeks an objective truth of reality. This view of research is positivistic.

In juxtaposition to this objectifiable inquiry, post-positivistic research considers the nuances of the problem and the role of the researcher’s habitus in the analysis process. Post-positivistic views of research hold variability in the interpretations of a phenomenon as significant to identifying its reality. Thus, the validity of the two major approaches to research is largely contingent upon the epistemological, ontological, and axiological perspectives of the researcher. Both approaches have validity and significance in the field of inquiry to a certain extent. They also overlap in the process of investigation (Creswell, 2013; Lichtman, 2013). However, for the purposes of this research and the researcher’s approach to the philosophy of the human experience, which encompasses the significance and acceptance of multiple truths, the qualitative methodology was employed.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is a research approach that addresses the meaning of human nature from various points of view (Brink, 1993; Creswell, 2013; Lichtman, 2013; Tracy, 2013). Lichtman (2013) stated, “The purpose of qualitative research is to describe, understand, and interpret human phenomena, human interaction, or human discourse” (p. 17). Unlike quantitative research, in which the data is primarily obtained statistically, qualitative research brings a voice and reasoning to the study. Qualitative research allows the researcher to capture and address the many variables of a phenomenon. Thus,
it does not seek to find a solution contingent upon numerical data and precise validity. This type of research includes a process known as phronesis, or *practical wisdom*, and it involves searching for the reasons of social concerns without the expectation of a certifiable answer (Tracy, 2013).

Despite the fact that qualitative research has been a chosen methodology for some for many years, it continues to receive criticism by skeptics who promote quantitative exploration as a more scientific and evidence-based practice (Dixon-Woods, Shaw, Agarwal, & Smith, 2004; Leung, 2015; Rolfe, 2006). Qualitative research, conducted through a thick description of lived experiences, allows for a self-reflective and involved exploration of the *how* and the *why* (Brink, 1993; Creswell, 2013; Tracy, 2013). Tracy (2013) claimed, “Such work has the potential to provide insight about marginalized, stereotyped, or unknown populations—a peek into regularly guarded worlds, and opportunity to tell a story that few know about” (p. 5). Essentially, qualitative research of a chosen topic can provide a deep and contextual exploration of a specific concept.

Qualitative research allows the researcher to take an emic or etic perspective when conducting the research. Emic perspective is “the insider’s or native’s perspective of reality” (Fetterman, 2008, p. 289). The emic perspective allows for thick description of how a culture operates, but without objectivity (Fetterman, 2008). Contrarily, the etic perspective involves formulating the reality of a culture or phenomenon from an external perspective, one that is more objective (Fetterman, 2008; Tracy, 2013). Both perspectives are useful to this bricolage study. The emic perspective involves the researcher gaining a true interpretation of the reality of the cultural group and the etic
perspective provides objectivity and challenge to the reality of the culture. Bricoleurs may choose or blend perspectives. For this study, both emic and etic perspectives were blended and utilized to analyze the data as a method of triangulating the study.

Additionally, qualitative research allows the researcher to make transparent their own assumptions and preconceived notions regarding the topic (Creswell, 2013). This is a challenging characteristic about qualitative research. The faculty of the researcher to be aware and self-reflective regarding personal realities and the historical contexts of his or her life that have given way to such thoughts and perceptions of the data is a crucial difference between qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell, 2013; Leung, 2015; Lichtman, 2013). Since individuals have different background experiences and diverging opinions and viewpoints about problems, how one goes about exploring an issue qualitatively depends much on that person’s vantage point. An individual’s unique social, cultural, racial, gendered, intellectual, and philosophical perspective frames each distinct vantage point (Chin, 2013; Collins & Cooper, 2014). It is important for the researcher to acknowledge his or her habitus to the issue continuously during the entire process. Doing so would suggest that the findings are not absolute, just suggestions and implications of a particular issue from a particular perspective being added to a collection of documented information on a specific topic. Thus, the choice to operate under a qualitative methodology arrives with an understanding that reality varies upon the beholder of the research, there are not always universal truths to the context of the topic, and the contribution of multiple perspectives to the issue enhances everyone’s overall understanding of its complexities.
Ethnographic Perspective

Ethnography is a research method that requires the analysis of certain dispositions and aspects of a people. Tracy (2013) explained, “Ethnography combines two ancient Greek words: *ethnos*, which meant “tribe, nation, people,” and *graphein*, “to write” (p. 29). This study stems from an ethnographic perspective. The ethnography method was initially my method of choice because my study involved qualitative characteristics that sought to understand the cultural operations of a specific group of individuals. I added the visual nature to the ethnography to augment a very thick and telling description of their unique self-concepts. This component was also added in order to illuminate perceptions of and reactions to visual arts pieces that served as keys to the manner in which the participants negotiated the world around them to fit into their own realities (Pink, 2013; Schwartz, 1989). As a visual ethnographer, Pink (2013) stated, “The visual is therefore inextricably interwoven with our personal identities, narratives, lifestyles, cultures and societies, as well as with definitions of history, time, space, place, reality and truth” (p. 1). The visual ethnography provides a passageway into the exploration of one’s perceptions of the mainstream legitimacy without the subtle discomfort provided by traditional question-based interviews.

Ethnography is the art and science of describing a group or culture. Fetterman (2008) stated, “The ethnographer enters the field with an open mind, not with an empty head” (p. 288). Lichtman (2013) described ethnography as being similar to anthropology, in that it involves the examination of a culture through the direct observation of that culture. This method has its origins in the early 1900s, but it became
very popular as an educational research method in the 1980s, as the focus on reform in education started to materialize (Lichtman, 2013). In addition to ethnography moving into the education field, stirrings from other schools of thought such as critical theorists and feminists started to position their ideals so that they were a part of the reform as well (Lichtman, 2013). Therefore, ethnography has evolved into a popular methodology used in multiple disciplines and incorporates multiple theoretical lenses, such as the realists, critical theorists, and feminists (Creswell, 2012).

Within the chosen theoretical lens, the ethnography is essentially the study of the lived experiences and characteristics of a particular group of people. The ethnographic approach allows the researcher to analyze the dynamics of a cultural group for insight and understanding of that group’s norms. However, I realized that I was actually approaching my research problem from a multiperspective, parts-to-whole methodology. Using a monological research method such as ethnography would have required the attempt toward a specific answer or conclusion to a specific phenomenon. This research focused on the agency of sociocurricular positions from five different societal perspectives. After careful consideration and advisement from my dissertation committee, the bricolage approach presented a much more effectively aligned approach given the multi-layered aims, goals, and facets of this study.

Critical Paradigm

For the purpose of this research, I operated under the critical theory paradigm. Critical theorists provide a social critique regarding a cultural issue that they perceive (Creswell, 2013; Lichtman, 2013; McMahon, 2003; Tracy, 2013). They are the
investigators of cultural power struggles. Tracy (2013) elaborated, “Critical researchers view cultural life as a constant tension between control and resistance and they frame language as a type of power” (p. 42). The critical researcher works to bring these hierarchal relations to the surface to advocate liberty for the marginalized and oppressed (Tracy, 2013).

The critical researcher is typically interested in themes that speak to the dynamics of social institutions and the occurrences of domination and struggles of resistance within these institutions (Creswell, 2013). Critical theory derived from the neo-Marxist movements and now includes feminist theory and queer theory (Lichtman, 2013). Critical theorists dissect systems and sayings by looking to find links to the suppression of an individual’s true nature. Tracy (2013) detailed how a critical theorist would have a unique response to the popular philosophical question,

“If a tree falls in the woods and there is no one there to hear it, did it really make a sound?” The critical theorist might answer, “Well, why did the tree have to fall in the first place? Who cut it down? How might we shed light on the problem of deforestation?” (p. 43).

The critical paradigm largely challenges notions upheld by European philosophers by acknowledging that their dominance is a cultural arbitrary inculcated on individuals of American society as themes of legitimacy (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Lichtman, 2013). Lichtman (2013) stated,

Perhaps the most characteristic tenet of postmodern critical work is that everything that European philosophy and science has held to be fundamentally
true at an abstract or programmatic level is in fact a contingent, historically specific cultural construction, which has often served the covert function of empowering members of a dominant social caste at the expense of others. (p. 114)

I also found it necessary to operate under the critical paradigm because the nature of my study involved understanding the perpetuation of the dominance of a culture and how the system of social and cultural reproduction is perpetuated, specifically via sociocurricular positions in the educational field. Understanding the perpetuation of dominance and the occurrence of resistance to it essentially describes critical theory. However, in addition to questioning the system, critical researchers must keep in mind the bias of their own perceptions. Tripp (1992) stated,

In practical terms, it is not simply a matter of challenging the existing practices of the system, but of seeking to understand what makes the system be the way it is, and challenging that, whilst remaining conscious that one’s own sense of justice and equality are themselves open to question. (p. 13)

Therefore, as a critical bricoleur, I ensured a critically credible analysis of the data by using Guba and Lincoln’s (1981) characteristics of trustworthiness, discussed later in this chapter.

Bricolage

This type of investigation yields much more than a specific answer, as it analyzes multiple points and perspectives of the problem. Kincheloe (2004) explained that the monological type of inquiry causes issues and social dilemmas to be disjointed and
analyzed separately, thereby excluding critical connections and drawing upon the influence of their correlations. Kincheloe (2004) elaborated,

Information is sterilized and insight into what may be worth exploring is abandoned. Ways of making use of particular knowledge are viewed as irrelevant and creative engagement with conceptual insights is characterized as frivolous.

Empirical knowledge in the quest for order is an end in itself. (p. 6)

The purpose of this research was to explore the influence of multiple ascriptive characteristics on sociocurricular positions in the middle school classroom. It was essential to consider multiple factors that influence the teachers’ habitus because of their relevance to the overall focus of the study, which was social and cultural reproduction within the school field. Struggles for power and legitimacy exist in multiple avenues within the educational field. Therefore, proper analysis required a polysensitive lens.

Under the context of qualitative research, which highlights the examination of people and their perceptions, the research was conducted using a critical visual bricolage method. Visual bricolage is a relatively new qualitative method, although the word bricolage derives from an art form. It combines imagery and media with the principles of bricolage to provide a visually conceptual understanding of a culture or social group.

Bricolage is a method of research that involves addressing a problem by analyzing how the parts of a phenomena correlate to compose the whole (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004; Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011; Rogers, 2012). Bricoleurs analyze phenomena through a polysensitive lens and with multiple sources and angles of data (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004; Kincheloe et al., 2011; Rogers, 2012). They are thought of as users of local
tools, of various sources, to investigate a phenomenon that consists of the
intersectionality of multiple components. Lincoln (2001) explained that the bricoleur “is
searching for the nodes, the nexuses, the linkages, the interconnections, the fragile bonds
between disciplines, between bodies of knowledge, between knowing and understanding
themselves” (pp. 693-694). Within the last decade, this methodology has only recently
gained popularity. Thus, it is still widely misunderstood (Rogers, 2012). Kincheloe and
Berry (2004) worked to clarify the process,

The bricolage exists out of respect for the complexity of the lived world. Indeed,
it is grounded on an epistemology of complexity. . . . In this process bricoleurs
act upon the concept that theory is not an explanation of the world-it is more an
explanation of our relation to the world. (p. 1)

Some regard the approach as an eclectic attempt at qualitative research (Rogers,
2012). However, it is a critical, polysensitive, multiperspective approach to understand
social phenomena, which some would argue is the true nature of understanding the
acquisition of knowledge (Berry, 2004; Rogers, 2012). Bricoleurs approach the
understanding of knowledge and individual realities through fluid and nonprescriptive
processes. Particularly, bricoleurs deduce meaning by challenging institutionally held
beliefs in norms and legitimacy. Rogers (2012) stated, “In this new context, bricolage
becomes an approach to meaning-making that challenges the basis of structural
rationality. Specifically, it challenges the epistemological and ontological assumptions
that the world has universal structures that exist independently of human rationalities” (p.
3). Bricoleurs view knowledge and the meaning of knowledge through multiple points of
view and theoretical paradigms to weave conclusions. Rogers (2012) stated, “Epistemologically, bricoleurs explore how the foundations of knowledge of a given context surround an object of inquiry” (p. 10). Since the bricolage method allows for a close and diverse examination of various historical contexts that shape cultures of knowledge, I concluded that this methodology would serve as an efficient method of design for my focus on social and cultural reproduction.

The bricoleur is even more defined through a variety of classifications: interpretive, theoretical, methodological, narrative, political, and critical. The interpretive bricoleur interprets knowledge from different perspectives and recognizes that knowledge is contingent upon subjective means (Rogers, 2012). The theoretical bricoleur approaches phenomena by acknowledging that the inclusion of multiple theoretical lenses (e.g. feminism, constructivism, or behaviorism) is necessary to better comprehend the whole scope of the issue (Rogers, 2012). The methodological bricoleur uses multiple methods to inquire about knowledge (Rogers, 2012). The narrative bricoleur sees knowledge as revealed in stories, and these stories are contingent upon the storytellers’ dispositions and realities within their lived discourses (Rogers, 2012). The political bricoleur observes knowledge through its political underpinnings, in the belief that knowledge is created to disenfranchise certain individuals (Rogers, 2012). From the political bricoleur ideology, Kincheloe (2004) derived the critical bricoleur. The critical bricoleur observes phenomena through the structures of power among individuals and the ways power ultimately influences discourses and societal positions (Rogers, 2012; Kincheloe, 2004). In the following statement, Rogers described the critical bricoleurs:
In such a context, bricoleurs not only seek to develop complex understandings of a phenomenon (e.g., an understanding of the multiplicity of ways phenomena can be interpreted), they aim to disrupt imbalances of power, social injustice, marginalization, and oppression perpetrated through traditional meaning-making practices. (p. 8)

For the purposes of this research I have operated as a critical bricoleur, searching for how knowledge is produced and sustained in education through sociocurricular positions, which denotes individual capital and power.

Critical bricolage. The critical bricoleur analyzes power structures and characteristics of legitimacy by comparing the society under study to one’s differing regions. This task allows the researcher to take on a rigorous understanding of the ‘other’ perspectives and norms allowing them to absorb additional forms of meaning-making that can be viewed as those of the specific society under investigation. Thus, the critical bricoleur can draw comparisons that serve to question the exclusivity of power as it relates to only some individuals (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004). Kincheloe and Berry (2004) stated, “As detectives subjugated insight, bricoleurs eagerly learn from labor struggles, women’s marginalization, the double consciousness of the racially oppressed, and insurrections against colonialism” (p. 16). I found it best to operate as a critical bricoleur for this study because my research centered on analyzing standardization by questioning the implications of knowledge deemed in society as legitimate. I was acutely aware of the social and historical structures that manifest in our everyday lives through our discursive actions. Kincheloe and Berry (2004) maintained,
In this context the bricoleur becomes a sailor on troubled waters, navigating a course that traces the journey between the scientific and the moral, the relationship between the quantitative and the qualitative, and the nature of social, cultural, psychological, and educational insight. (p. 4)

Epistemological theorist, Foucault (1972), perceived knowledge as culturally and historically negotiated. Furthermore, Foucault (1973) coined knowledge as established by a culture and its social positions as an *episteme*. Foucault saw the acquisition of knowledge as a political and cultural construct essentially upheld to promote the legitimacy and control of certain groups of individuals. Kincheloe and Berry (2004) concluded, “Thus, an important aspect of the work of the bricoleur involves coming to understand the social construction of self, the influence of selfhood on perception, and the influence of perception on the nature of inquiry” (p. 6). Critical bricoleurs explore the concept of self (the habitus)—how it forms and how it works to merge with social realities. Therefore, the critical bricoleur is invested in drawing context or semiology from the discourse of participants to analyze their negotiation of power, legitimacy, and dominance. From the critical bricoleur viewpoint, I was interested in understanding the underpinnings of social and cultural reproduction and the ways they manifest themselves through the educators’ pedagogic action. Therefore, as a critical bricoleur, I identified a theoretical problem, presented research questions and assumptions, and collected data from my participants that encompassed multiple societal perspectives to effectively develop a holistic understanding of the investigated phenomenon.
Since this study was conducted under the critical paradigm, it was suitable to employ the concept of critical hermeneutics to investigate the roles of power in advocating legitimate knowledge. Kincheloe and Berry (2004) stated, “In this context, critical hermeneutics facilitates bricoleurs’ attempts to identify socially oppressive forms of meaning making and research process” (p. 11). A focus of this project was investigating how legitimate knowledge, deemed by individuals in power, influences the way individuals of a society negotiate and navigate their realities.

The role of the observer in a bricolage study can vary from being an observer who stays in the background of the environment to being an active, immersed participant in the culture under study. For this project, the researcher remained semi-active by conducting the bricolage through analyzing a series of responses to visual art. I identified key participants who share lived experiences as middle school educators acting as agents of social and cultural reproduction. After obtaining informed consent from these individuals, which involved notifying them of the aim of the study and the needs of their participation in the study (see Appendix B), I conducted interviews and captured their discourse through a thick description of the analysis of their responses. As a critical bricoleur, it was my duty to remain truthful and reflexive to my own predilections and biases. Additionally, it was important to remain ethical throughout the study by ensuring that the identity of my participants and setting remained confidential.

Visual bricolage. Visual culture involves the expression of feelings as experienced by the artist within a particular culture (Pink, 2013; Bourdieu, 1990a; Rose, 2016). Visual art encompasses the artist’s reaction to the environment around him or her
or one in which he or she has observed. Through visual expression, artists will make it known whether they relish the observations of their reality or actively resist it. Several pieces of visual art uphold this notion, including as Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica* or Jean Basquiat’s *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Derelict* (Knowles & Cole, 2008). I chose to use a visual methodology because studies show that visual artwork encapsulates the reality of the artist, for it shows his or her perception of society and where he or she fits within that society (Amburgy, 2011; Greene, 1995; Ray, 2007; Revilla, 2004; Rose, 2016). Eisner (2008) stated,

> First, the arts address the qualitative nuances of situations. . . . The examination or perception of a painting is as much a kind of “reading” as a text might be. . . . Thus, in addressing what is subtle but significant, the arts develop dispositions and habits of mind that reveal to the individual a world he or she may not have noticed but that is there to be seen if only one knew how to look. (p. 10)

Therefore, art is a way of knowing, despite the earlier teachings of Plato, which hold that absolute certainty and science indicate meaning. Aristotle contested that knowing comes in various forms, and the power to create and interpret is one of them (Eisner, 2008). Particularly, art is a way of knowing through resistance. Conceptual art making produced without the confines of capitalistic goals or desires for normality allows for a creative resistance to societal expectations that go against freedom and individuality (Ray, 2007). Emancipatory art allows the individual to observe and reflect on the true aspects of nature before replicating it. It requires a critical lens that actively uses inner speech and self-identity to create a reflection of one’s perceptions accurately. Art allows for the
accessibility and *wide-awakedness* of all of one’s senses as energy channels into the creative process (Greene, 1995; Moon et al., 2013). It requires the understanding of all perspectives and truths, making it an effective aspect to combine with my chosen research methodology, critical visual bricolage.

In one study of using visual art to encourage divergent thinking, Amburgy (2011) provided suggestions for art teachers to introduce constructions of diversity into their art courses to elicit conversations involving social injustice. She structured her diversity course by showing visual representations that display people of privilege and in different groups, such as race or sexual identity. Additionally, she showed viewers how to take several different interpretations from art. In one assignment, she presented her students with a piece of art, and then she asked the students to interview three other students about their interpretations. The students had to deem each of the viewer’s interpretations as “dominant, negotiated, or oppositional” (Amburgy, 2011, p. 10). A good example of this is showing people Barbie advertisements, or cartoons, and classifying their interpretations to gauge how the students perceive both the image and their self-identity within the image. Not only does this promote critical thinking about perceived norms, it also motivates the students to understand their own realities within those perceived norms (Amburgy, 2011). Amburgy (2011) stated,

> We should not just passively absorb this environment without thinking critically about the social functions of representations. In art education, it is important to teach students to think critically about all of the visual representations that
surround them, including art, and to see themselves as agents for social change.

(p. 11)
In other words, Amburgy suggested that art is a natural vehicle of resistance, as it forces one to analyze aspects of their cultural background and the similarities and differences that exist between that and the norms of society.

Critical visual bricolage. As previously mentioned, visual bricolage, the study of a phenomenon of a culture through the response to visual imagery, is a relatively new methodology of qualitative research. The purpose of this study was to interpret how middle educators perceive and negotiate their habitus as agents of social and cultural reproduction or as agents of sociocultural resistance. As an art educator and artist, I am interested in appealing to educators’ emotional and aesthetic domains to stimulate genuine responses to visual images. Specifically, it was the aim of this research to determine how middle school educators negotiate the reproductive agency of sociocurricular positions through their responses to visual art.

*Photo elicitation.* For this study, I used a method under the umbrella of visual bricolage known as photo-elicitation (Collier, 1967) in combination with Kincheloe and Berry’s (2004) Point of Entry Text (POET). This section provides a discussion of the components of photo elicitation, followed by a section explaining POET. I used images of visual art during the interview process to elicit responses from my participants. This concept involves interpreting the participants’ meaning of the visual art, and connecting it to their realities of society. The purpose of using photo-elicitation is to produce an effective way of knowing the participants’ perspectives because these concepts may not
be as easily communicated when the participant is presented with verbal interview questions (Pink, 2013; Rice, Primak, & Girvin, 2013). The purpose of using photos to elicit the participants’ responses is to receive an honest insight of their perceptions. Harper (2002) stated,

The parts of the brain that process visual information are evolutionarily older than the parts that process verbal information. Thus, images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than do words; exchanges based on words alone utilize less of the brain’s capacity than do exchanges in which the brain is processing images as well as words. (p. 13)

Most photo-elicitation studies have used photographs (Harper, 2002). However, in this study, images of paintings were used to elicit responses from the participants. There are many types of photos used in photo-elicitation, but for the purposes of this research, which was to interpret the dynamics of social and cultural reproduction, I used photos of paintings that portrayed aspects of American society. Harper (2002) commented,

“Elicitation interviews connect ‘core definitions of the self’ to society, culture, and history. This work corresponds to postmodern sociology’s decentered narrative; of the sociology of the body, and of social studies of emotion” (p. 13-14). Harper (2002) added that another useful feature of photo-elicitation is that it decenters the authority of the researcher, causing more comfort for the participant during the interview process.

While opponents of critical theory and cultural projects challenge that the researchers make assumptions, and impose their biases onto the participants, photo elicitation counters this skepticism by examining how the participants conceptualize
societal messages (Harper, 2002). Photographs allow for the participant to connect their own realities to the imagery allowing for more access to their conception of the phenomena. Harper (2002) stated, “Photographs can jolt subjects into a new awareness of their social existence. As someone considers this framing of take-for-granted experiences, they are able to deconstruct their own phenomenological assumptions” (p. 21). The purpose of this study was to understand how educators respond to visual art under three pretenses; acceptance, conformity, and resistance. The visual art was used to provoke the realities of the educators concerning their agency to reproduce dominant norms, and as a catalyst for threading their responses for implications regarding their instruction.

POET. While some studies have been conducted using the visual art produced by the participants (Eisner, 2008; Moon et al., 2013; Pink, 2013), this visual bricolage methodology involves the researcher interpreting the discourse of the participants as they view and respond to previously created works of visual art. Therefore, I propose that the use of visual art in this study to provoke critical thinking regarding the educators’ perceptions of social and cultural reproduction was a conducive approach for gaining understanding of why certain norms and values are continuously perpetuated throughout society. This study utilized a blend of the visual arts within the bricolage methodology. Artwork was used to elicit participant responses to the theories of social and cultural reproduction. Kincheloe and Berry (2004) referred to this process of using art to stimulate responses as the Point of Entry Text (POET). POET was the instrument used to anchor the investigation. It is the entity in the investigation that encouraged meaning
making. Kincheloe and Berry (2004) explained its use: “While there are many ways of employing the bricolage, we suggest that researchers take their POET and thread it through a variety of conceptual maps” (para. 1). These maps could include discourse of social theory, cultural and social positionalities, disciplinary views of knowledge, philosophical domain, and power modes (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004).

The POET acts as the source of contention for previous challenges. It is used to thread concepts and positions of concern. As the POET is used in different context during the research, it creates a disturbance within the understanding of a phenomenon, which provides new ways of viewing the issue. Kincheloe and Berry (2004) referred to the process of POET threading through multiple components of the conceptual framework of the study as feedback looping. Kincheloe and Berry (2004) stated,

The POET has been subjected to multiple readings, conflicting discourses, perspectives from diverse positionalities, different epistemologies, diverse modes of power, differing research methodologies, and a plethora of previously unconsidered knowledge sources. As the POET travels through these different domains, it circles back to its starting point. Each time it threads through the map the process looks more and more like a feedback loop. The bricolage process demands that this threading be repeated numerous times. The POET’s interaction with the conceptual maps creates a state of turbulence, a disequilibrium that reflects a healthy feature of complexity and autopoiesis. Indeed, such turbulence sets up the possibility for discerning relationships and processes that open new conceptual vistas for the ethnic studies researcher. In this context conditions are
created for analytical and interpretive spontaneity, random associations that yield
profound insights, and novelty. (p. 34)
Thus, the POET is a critical component to the data collection and data analysis process. It
serves to correlate the issue of investigation through diverging pathways, prompting
unique implications.

Description of the Research Sites

The investigation took place in two southeastern U.S. public middle schools (grades 6-8) with populations of approximately 1,000 students in each. For the purpose of confidentiality, I used pseudonyms for the schools. One of the middle schools, Winston Middle School, offered an International Baccalaureate (IB) program and had a diverse student population. The other middle school, Riverside Middle School, offered a traditional comprehensive program; however, it maintained a diverse student population as well. The schools and their surrounding areas differed in socioeconomic statuses as well as curriculum focus. I selected these sites because of my familiarity with one of the schools, Winston Middle School, in which I was employed at the time of this study.
After working for a school that offers an IB program, I found significance in the curriculum structure because it emphasizes diversity. The student population at Winston is diverse regarding class, gender, knowledge, language, and race—the sociocurricular positions of interest. Therefore, I became concerned with the educators’ habitus within such a varied population that supports IB standards in comparison to the teachers’ habitus within a diverse population that supports traditional comprehensive standards.
Additionally, the juxtaposition of social and cultural reproduction as it relates to the
schools and their differing surrounding communities concerning population demographics was of interest in this study to draw correlations between the agency for sociocurricular positions.

Winston Middle had instituted the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program (MYP) for seven years. The program was for students 11-16 years of age, as it stretched into high school curriculum as well. Its curriculum focus was to support international features throughout the structure, as well as promote critical thinking. Students were required to take one complete year of a foreign language and fine art. Additionally, students were consistently encouraged to employ themes of care, citizenship, risk-taking, and open-mindedness throughout their daily functions. Lesson plans and assessments were given to propel and maintain notions of the IB curriculum. Such a curriculum fosters the development of an all-inclusive atmosphere believed to encourage students and teachers to be tolerant of difference. Thus, I chose a school with an IB program to compare the teachers’ agency of sociocurricular positions to that of a middle school without an IB program established.

Participants

I chose educators as my participants because much of the literature suggests that the perpetuation of social and cultural reproduction happens through the agency of the educators (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Ferrare & Apple, 2015; Giroux, 2001). I tested the theories of social and cultural reproduction on middle school educators specifically because the students they teach are of middle childhood (ages 6-14), an influential age for self-concept development. Studies have shown that students who are in middle
childhood are developmentally at the phase in which their self-concept is of significant progression (Eccles, 1999; Rhodes, Roffman, Reddy & Fredriksen, 2004). Eccles (1999) explained,

The years between 6 and 14-middle childhood and early adolescence-are a time of important developmental advances that establish children’s sense of identity. During these years, children make strides toward adulthood by becoming competent, independent, self-aware, and involved in the world beyond their families. (p. 30)

Additionally, I chose to test these theories by selecting participants of various ethnicities to get a fair and broad sense of the nature of social and cultural reproduction. I was under the impression that it was not only teachers of the majority ethnic group who lacked cultural relevance and responsiveness to the domination of one cultural group, but that because reproduction has so heavily become a natural habit as Bourdieu (1996) stated in our everyday lives, it resides and is perpetuated through individuals of all backgrounds. Therefore, I used a cultural identity integrity scale to survey a variety of educators. I then chose those who reflected a diverse population to conduct interviews using photo elicitation.

The presence of social and cultural reproduction of dominant norms, if it existed, within the habitus of middle school teachers was investigated by analyzing the participants’ reactions to visual art pieces. To select my participants for this study, I used a bicultural integrity scale as a screening process (Cortes, Rogler, & Malgady, 1994). The scale has 20 questions that focus on how one prioritizes cultural norms. To get an
overall sense of how participants feel about the mainstream culture, and their identity within it, the questions are generally broad.

Participants were selected from the two middle schools, Winston and Riverside, based on how they score on the integrity scale. If the participants received a score for their original cultural integrity that was lower than that of their mainstream cultural integrity, they were approached to continue their participation in the study. The principals of these schools were also approached and given the details of the study, and permission was requested from them to distribute the modified Bicultural Integrity Scale (Cortes et al., 1994) to all faculty members with at least five years of teaching experience. Using the Bicultural Integrity Scale (CRM-BS), I analyzed the participants’ responses to questions regarding their original culture and questions regarding their perceptions of “mainstream” American culture. Upon receiving the principals’ consent and the Institutional Review Board’s approval, I distributed the survey (see Appendix E) to willing participants of the schools’ faculty.

Upon the participants’ completion of the survey, I analyzed the results. Each participant had to have at least five years of teaching experience. This was to ensure that the participants had become acclimated with the culture of the school and accustomed to their preferred teaching theories and beliefs regarding the curriculum and instruction. I was also looking for teachers who upheld the idea of mainstream American culture to use as participants for the study of the agency for sociocurricular positions.

The survey served as a screening process to decipher which participants would provide the most relevant responses to the visual elicitation approach to enhance my
understanding of social and cultural reproduction. It included 20 questions regarding the
two sections of interest for this study. The five areas focused on to gain a better
understanding of the context of social and cultural reproduction included: class, gender,
knowledge, language, and race.

The first 10 questions of the survey are questions regarding the participants’
dispositions to their original culture. The last 10 questions are questions regarding the
participants’ dispositions to the dominant culture. Upon collecting the surveys, I
calculated the scores by identifying the participants under the following categories:
Acculturated, Bicultural, Culturally Marginalized, and Culturally Traditional ((Mezzich,
Ruiperez, Yoon, Liu, & Zapata-Vega, 2009). This allowed me to assess the participants’
level of immersion in their original culture and that of the dominant culture. When
analyzing the survey results, I looked for those individuals who scored higher on their
dominant cultural items than on their original cultural items. Doing so allowed for the
purposive sampling of this study by choosing those individuals who upheld the dominant
culture to move on to the next step in the data collection process. This survey, as stated
by Cortes, Rogler, and Malgady (1994) is an elementary screen of the participants’
disposition to culture. Further analysis and investigation was conducted to research the
effects of these educators’ habitus.

Study Overview

The purpose of this study was to examine:

(a) educators’ response to images that appear to uphold or resist the dominant
mainstream culture of legitimacy in American society;
(b) educators’ self-concept within the images; and

(c) educators’ perspective of the students’ self-concept within the images.

The goals of the research were:

(a) identify the agency of educators in perpetuating social and cultural reproduction;

(b) identify the cultural integrity of the educators;

(c) identify the cultural expectations the educators have for the students; and

(d) make connections from the cultural habitus of the educator to the curriculum and instruction and incidence of sociocurricular positions

Research conduction involved:

(a) a 20-question survey assessing the educators’ cultural integrity identity;

(b) selection of participants, contingent upon their survey results;

(c) photo elicitation with 10 visual art pieces that portray the conformity and resistance to social and cultural reproduction; and

(d) the asking of questions that involve understanding their habitus or their take-away meaning of the visual art images.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study involved the use of POET during teacher interviews. Additionally, observations were conducted to support the findings. The following section details the processes taken to collect the data necessary to explore the agency sociocurricular positions in the middle school setting.
Data Collection Instruments

The data collected for this study were informed by the literature regarding visual bricolage, social reproduction, and cultural reproduction. The data were collected to report the lived experiences of middle school educators as they negotiate their roles in social and cultural reproduction in the classroom. Creswell (2013), Lichtman (2013), and Tracy (2013) described the qualitative approach as the process of the researcher observing a culture for an understanding of their lived experiences. I observed the lived experiences of middle school educators as they grappled between understanding their original cultural heritage and the dominant social expectations inculcated upon them.

Additionally, I used photo elicitation under the umbrella of visual bricolage to acquire participants’ responses to visual artwork that challenged and upheld the dominant norms of American society regarding the following areas: class, gender, knowledge, language, and race. I showed the participants art from the following artists: Banksy, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Leonardo da Vinci, Pablo Picasso, Frida Kahlo, Raphael, James Taylor, and Zeal Harris. Appendix C provides background information for each of the art pieces used for photo-eliciting purposes. I chose these artists because they have taken a stance of conformity or resistance to the social and cultural reproduction and identified their reality or the reality of others within such a system. These art pieces were used as the POET to encourage participants to discuss their realities and habitus as it related to the art and to divulge their perceptions of society as it related to their students.

The participants received a few minutes to observe and analyze each art image. Following this observation, an unstructured interview was prompted and audiotaped,
using the photos to elicit the participants’ personal responses. The unstructured interview style is malleable and permits the participant to have more control of their responses (Tracy, 2013). I chose this structure for the interview because it allowed the agency of the educator to come out unrestrained by strict interview questions and facilitated a natural flow of dialogue concerning their perception of each art image. Tracy (2013) outlined the interview process.

- Interview Structure—Unstructured
- Interview Type—Discursive
- Interview Stance—Responsive
- Topics to discuss
  - Dispositions to the images
  - Background experiences that have influenced orientations
  - Applicability of images to students
- Interview Question Types
  - Opening Questions
    - Informed Consent
    - Rapport Building
    - Experience
    - Factual Issues
  - Directive Questions
    - Photo Elicitation (p. 146)
Data Analysis

Upon collecting the data, I transcribed and coded the interviews for prominent themes of discourse that implied the participants’ agency for sociocurricular positions (Saldana, 2013). I then analyzed the collected discourse using the critical discourse analysis (CDA) method (Fairclough, 2010, 2012; Rose, 2016; Wetherell & Potter, 1988). The following section introduces the concept of discourse, followed by a review of how I used CDA for semiotic purposes.

Discourse

Discourse is a set of statements that imply how things are thought and how those thoughts are responded to (Rose, 2016). It is a set of linguistic statements and absences representing an individual’s perception of his or her reality or a phenomenon (Fairclough, 2010; Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984; Wetherell & Potter, 1988). Therefore, the discourse of an interview is pivotal to the researcher examining the habitus of the participant. The power of interpreting the discourse of an interview lies within the language used by the participant (Fairclough, 2010, 2012; Rose, 2016). Moreover, often times, the language used by the participants are filled with inconsistencies and variables as they adjust their cognitive processes to the situation and context (Wetherell & Potter, 1988). Thus, the underpinnings of language become critical to the analysis. Tonkiss (1998) stated, “Rather than gathering accounts or texts so as to gain access to people’s views and attitudes, or to find out what happened at a particular event, the discourse analyst is interested in how people use language to construct their accounts of the social world” (pp. 247-248). For a visual bricolage, I was interested in exploring the discourse of the
interviews to make implications regarding how the participants construct the social world upon viewing artwork that conforms to or resist legitimated cultural norms. Therefore, the discourse analysis was a beneficial method to study the participants’ reasoning for legitimating or resisting dominant societal norms.

Foucault (1972) also spoke of the power of discourse and its ability to offer the truth of knowledge construction. How the researcher analyzes these tidbits of truth within the discourse is what Foucault (1972) referred to as discursive information. The discursive interview is the occurrence of the researcher listening to the discourse to find constructs of social power as viewed by the participant (Lichtman, 2013; Tracy, 2013). As methodologist Tracy (2013) stated, “A discursive interview picks up on the fact that participants’ compassion emerges from and intersects with larger discourses of race, class, and myth—for instance the myth of the American dream” (p. 141). The purpose of this research was to explore the educator’s habitus regarding its agency of the large social construct of sociocurricular positions. Therefore, I was compelled by this research to analyze the significant discourses of my participants to apprehend their truth.

Critical Discourse Analysis

To analyze the agency of social constructs that the educators uphold, it is important to use a critical lens on the semiotics of the discourses. Fairclough (2010) clearly stated the importance of critical discourse analysis (CDA) in relation to social structures and power:

That is, it shares the concern of critical social science to show how socio-economic systems are built upon the domination, exploitation and dehumanization
of people by people, and to show how contradictions with these systems constitute a potential for transforming them in progressive and emancipatory directions. (p. 304)

In other words, I analyzed the discourses of the interviews for language that indicated the agency of the educators within a social field of constructs inculcated upon them, and perhaps perpetuated by them, for the maintenance of dominant societal norms. The language used during the unstructured interviews was transcribed and analyzed for indications of how the participants viewed roles of power and resistance. Bourdieu (1989) stated,

In order to account fully for the power of discourse, we see that it is necessary to connect language to the social conditions of its production and use and to search beyond words, among the mechanisms that produce both words and people who emit and receive them, for the basis of the power that a certain way of using words allows on to mobilize. (p. 41)

I analyzed the semiotic characteristics of my participants with a critical lens in search of their negotiation of power within the school field. Semiotic characteristics influence the structure of a social field by offering meaning to the organization of social groups, and how that is verbally processed in the participant’s reality. Therefore, Fairclough (2010) suggested that the dialectical arguments of the participants are essential to understanding their perception of the endoxa. As stated earlier, endoxa, a concept of Aristotle, are ideas of legitimacy borrowed from those considered dominant and wise within a social field. Grote (1872) used endoxa to understand how the individual embodies these dominant and
borrowed opinions to generate their *common sense*. Therefore, to understand how one embraces and supports systems of imbalance and superiority, it is critical to analyze their dialectical arguments of endoxa (Fairclough, 2010; Grote, 1872).

To interpret conceptions of reality within fields of power effectively, I transcribed the interviews of each participant, coded the transcriptions, and then categorized the systems of thoughts for each issue of study into bounded units of language, or interpretive repertoires (Fairclough, 2010; Saldana, 2013; Wetherell & Potter, 1988). The selection of discourse for the interpretation of social and culturally reproductive practices of hegemony and legitimacy was based upon Fairclough’s (2010) semiotic conditions for selection of discourse for critical analysis (see Figure 3).
Figure 3. Semiotic conditions. Original figure created from a text synthesis of *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language* (2nd ed.), by N. Fairclough, 2010.

These conditions were used when selecting statements of discourse to compile each participant’s interpretive repertoire of class, gender, knowledge, language, and race. Once the interpretive repertoires were established, they were analyzed for the educators’ agency to uphold and reproduce dominant norms within sociocurricular positions.

The Critical and Functionary Educator

Using Kincheloe’s (2008) characteristics of critical and functionary educators (see Table 3 for characteristics), I analyzed the educators’ agency to uphold the current
educational field and the sociocurricular positions within it. Educators who instruct on
the principal of resistance to a stratified society of unjust dominant social norms are what
Kincheloe (2008) referred to as critical educators. Critical educators analyze knowledge
production and reproduction for signs of dominance and legitimacy behind the façade of
equality (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Kincheloe, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1997).
Contrarily, those educators who unquestionably uphold dominant standards of legitimacy
that have been inculcated upon them by the endoxa are referred to as functionaries,
reductionists, and positivist educators (Kincheloe, 2008). For the purpose of this study, I
refer to these types of educators as social functionaries, as they function to uphold (both
intentionally and unintentionally) dominant norms, thus maintaining the field’s integrity
of sociocurricular positions. The educator who exhibits the functionary position limits
the academic identity and success of the student by reproducing dominant norms in the
classroom that do not value the uniqueness of all students (Apple, 1993; DiMaggio, 1982;
Ferrare & Apple, 2015; Kincheloe, 2008; Rubin, 2007; Reay, 2004a).

Issues of Ethics and Credibility

Qualitative research offers multiple opportunities for the researcher to explore the
phenomena of the lived experiences of a specific group of individuals. However, with
such opportunities, there also exist the chances of heightened subjectivity and unethical
investigation. To safeguard against incredible research because of unethical
methodology, it is important to produce quality research that is: credible, sincere, worthy,
rigorous, influential, significant, meaningful, and ethical (Guba, 1981; Lichtman, 2013;
Rose, 2016; Tracy, 2013). This research was conducted with the intent of investigating
social structures of two middle school environments to make implications regarding effective curriculum and instruction. I am sincere and committed to the best interests of the students, educators, and district.

Trustworthiness

During this naturalistic inquiry, under a critical bricoleur design, I interviewed educators to analyze their interpretations of the reproduction of sociocurricular positions. To ensure trustworthiness of my data analysis, I referred to the suggestions of research analysts, Guba and Lincoln (1981), who provided four questions of trustworthiness to consider when conducting naturalistic inquiries:

1. **Truth value.** How can one establish confidence in the “truth” of the findings of a particular inquiry for the subjects (respondents) with which and the context in which the inquiry was carried out?

2. **Applicability.** How can one determine the degree to which the findings of a particular inquiry may have applicability in other contexts or with other subjects (respondents)?

3. **Consistency.** How can one determine whether the findings of an inquiry would be consistently repeated if the inquiry were replicated with the same (or similar) subjects (respondents) in the same (or similar) context?

4. **Neutrality.** How can one establish the degree to which the findings of an inquiry are a function solely of subjects (respondents) and condition of the inquiry and not of the biases, motivations, interests, perspectives, and so on of the inquirer? (p. 79)
To address these questions and conduct a trustworthy inquiry, I used Guba and Lincoln’s (1981) four recommendations: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Using Guba and Lincoln’s (1981) advisement for trustworthiness, I yielded reasonable findings for credibility by conducting: interviews with the participants that were 1.5 hours in duration, classroom observations, member checks, and the use of peer feedback. I yielded transferability by purposively selecting my participants using the bicultural integrity scale (Cortes et al., 1994) to screen participants. To maintain dependability and stability within my inquiry, I kept an audit trail of my data. Furthermore, to eliminate bias and confirm my findings, I analyzed multiple forms of data (survey, observations, and interview transcriptions).

Additionally, Lichtman (2013) emphasized that it is important to uphold a “do no harm” premise, during data collection. Although the participants received a consent form to conduct this research, I also personally ensured them that their information would remain confidential through rigid safety and storage measures. Participants were also guaranteed that this study in no way compromised their employment and that they were free to discontinue their role in the study at any time. It was not my intention to make participants feel uncomfortable during the process. Therefore, I requested that the participants notify me during any incidence of discomfort during the interviews. Furthermore, I used pseudonyms for each of the participants and their places of employment. The data collected were only available to the chairperson of my research, Dr. Wynnetta Scott-Simmons of Mercer University, and me. Upon the completion of this
study, all data were destroyed and the electronic data permanently deleted. Moreover, I upheld the ethical guidelines of research presented by Mercer University.

Furthermore, critical to the credibility of the research is the transparency of the researcher. It was important to include my habitus and philosophical paradigm as the researcher. In previous sections, I included the paradigm that I utilized for this research: the critical paradigm. However, the next section provides the framework for my personal philosophical underpinnings to give the readers transparent insight into my underlying dispositions.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher for this study was to remain as a collector of information for the purpose of learning the realities of others, and not inculcating my dispositions upon their responses. I acted as the recorder during the interview process and drew conclusions based only upon the data and research-based literature. However, despite these statements, I was cognizant that my physical, emotional, and spiritual characteristics must be taken into consideration as I was the one who conducted discursive formation upon my participants’ discourses. Therefore, the following section provides my epistemological, ontological, and axiological beliefs, as well as a description of my background.

Epistemology

The theory of what defines human knowledge dates to the pre-Socratic era and is currently of continuous discussion. Socrates believed in the power of discussion, critical thinking, and the ability to reason (Gaarder, 2009). I agree with Socrates and his idea of
reasoning, and I think everyone possesses it—although some may be able to reason about certain matters better than others can, we all have it. I believe knowledge is the ability to use experiences, senses, and reason to understand humanity, nature, and skill sets. Everyone has their own lens through which they view their world (Gaarder, 2009). Their expertise is contingent upon their experiences and attractions. We must recognize that everyone is unique and special in this way. Therefore, I find it very difficult to value one individual’s skill set over another. The individual experiences that students bring to academic institutions are unique collections of subjective knowledge. Schools that disallow for divergent and critical thinking are restraining these bodies of knowledge (Chin, 2013; Giroux, 2013b). Giroux (2013b) addressed my perception of the lack of prioritizing creativity and critical thinking for the sake of upholding legitimate norms of knowledge and behavior:

> At the core of the new reforms is a commitment to a pedagogy of stupidity and repression that is geared toward memorization, conformity, passivity, and high stakes testing. Rather than create autonomous, critical, and civically engaged students, the un-reformers kill the imagination while depoliticizing all vestiges of teaching and learning. (para. 11)

Axiology

What knowledge is of most worth? Who gets to be the knowledge appraiser? The individuals that control the answers to these questions in education are policy makers, politicians, special interest groups, and invested parents (Spring, 2011). These are the players of the educational field. I am very concerned that the individuals
responsible for education and education reform are placing what they prioritize as valuable knowledge upon the recipients of learning. Those reformers who value math and science are excluding the special talents of those who do not have a natural affinity for those categories. The incidence of continuous achievement disparities among varying ethnic groups is because there is little consideration for the needs and interest of all individual students, particularly the marginalized and oppressed (Freire, 1970/2000; Giroux, 2013a). The maintenance of social capital becomes critical to social success. Unfortunately, many students of lower social capital are placed in lower sociocurricular positions, receive less qualified teachers, less rigor, less exposure, and in general less opportunities to learn (Schmidt Burroughs, Zoido, & Houang, 2015). Consequently, they are receiving knowledge that is of little value to them. I believe that the knowledge that is of most value to myself and everyone is knowledge concerning matters that people are naturally skilled in, as well as knowledge that liberates by addressing oppression at its roots in order to invoke positive change.

Ontology

Ontologically, I identify myself as the agent of change, and a freedom fighter. I wish to give voice and liberty to those marginalized individuals who are silenced and placed in low socioeconomic positions. Thus, I represent schools of social reconstruction and critical theory. Potentially individuals in power are perpetuating notions of class structure to maintain a state of inferior and superior beings. To rid this country of such characteristics, it is imperative that we address such matters of unjust and undemocratic practices in our classrooms through critical pedagogy (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell,
My goal is to teach my students with cultural relevance by considering their differences and adopted capital (Ladson-Billings, 1997). Furthermore, I want to provide them with the knowledge that will prevent the marginalized individuals from further mental restraint, as well as encourage those who are not being marginalized to consider and care for the oppressed to revolutionize the roles of the field.

Habitus

Giroux (2013b) stated, “As a practice, freedom is the ability to not only understand the world but to act on that understanding and be able to shape the commanding forces that bear down on one’s life” (para. 9). Critical theorists are concerned with the systematic efforts being made and upheld in society to propel the continuous success of specified individuals through conformity and societal norms of the dominant culture (Beyer, 1986; Cook, 2000; Giroux, 2011, 2013; Lassonde, 2009; Ray, 2007). They also support the notion that critical thinking and knowledge of one’s self are emancipatory (Cook, 2000; Giroux, 2013a; Lassonde, 2009). I am compelled to agree with critical theorists. I am an African-American female who, throughout my life, has experienced external and internal stressors created by the intersectionality of my race and gender. I have grown up primarily in the southeastern region of the United States, where I had to go to school every day until I was in the eighth grade under a Confederate flag hanging outside the building as a strong reminder of my ancestors’ struggle for equality. I have been a part of the tracking system as a student, taught primarily about European-American and European accomplishments, and alienated from my classmates at times for my artistic nature. Despite these circumstances, I feel that I am a successful human being
who is pursuing happiness. Yet, I often wonder, what could I have been? How much more would I have been able to accomplish if my culture and individuality were completely valued and explored in all of my academic disciplines despite my ascriptive characteristics?

As an advocate of critical theory and pedagogy, I find that it is also essential that teachers analyze and understand their own identities and perspectives as it relates to societal issues and individual differences. To think critically requires one to shed preconceived notions about certain types of people, especially those that are negative. To do so would allow the teachers to avoid reproducing dominant norms and silencing presentations of knowledge that do nothing to equip impoverished students with the skills needed to rectify their life circumstances (Bartolome 2004; Giroux, 2011). Accordingly, I have found that as individuals, we all possess our unique strengths, weaknesses, and passions. If we all possess strengths of some kind, who is to say what knowledge is of most worth? I am dedicated to using critical pedagogy and my art skills to illustrate that all knowledge and learning is of most worth. Therefore, all students should feel valued and allowed equal passage to academic success.

Summary

The purpose of this critically visual bricolage study of social and cultural reproduction within the middle school field was to investigate the degree of agency of middle school teachers to uphold mainstream norms within their habitus and its implications for their classroom instruction. This provided insights into methodology to collect and analyze data for this research study. I have included the purpose of the study,
guiding research questions, and the rational for my approach. The purpose of this study is to explore how educators maintain agency of perceived mainstream legitimacy throughout their deliverance of the curriculum and instruction. Therefore, I provided an overview of my methodology to investigate this issue using critical bricolage research and art elicitation. These methods were chosen to examine the lived experiences of teachers who occupy the same cultural academic environment and how their habitus influences their profession. Bricolage provides the opportunity to explore these experiences through personal investigative processes. My research design, data collection, and analysis involves interviews, field notes, and observations with the educators of two different middle schools. After collecting the data, I transcribed and analyzed the educators’ interviews, using critical discourse analysis (CDA) for discursive formation regarding the educators’ maintenance of the social structure in their school and sociocurricular positions. Additionally, included in this chapter are my commitments to producing quality qualitative research by using credible and dependable methodologies. Furthermore, I have provided the nature of my own habitus, as it is critical to discuss my dispositions as the researcher to maintain a mode of transparency, which also further enhances the credibility of the study. In the next chapter, I will discuss my findings.
Words have extraordinary power. The ability to communicate with them is an essential and significant distinction between human beings and all other forms of life. Words convey messages of individual truths. Their power lies in their discursive usage and agency of beliefs (Fairclough; 2012; Foucault; 1972; Kincheloe & Berry, 2008). As one communicates with words, their reality becomes evident if the audience is truly activating an awareness of their usage.

Basquiat’s (1984) quote, “I cross out words so you will see them more; the fact that they are obscured makes you want to read them”, suggests that words are lost in their depictions of reality as the audience frequently misinterprets their intent. One prominent example of Basquiat obscuring words in his art to emphasize their meaning is in his painting, Charles the First, in which he wrote “Most Young Kings Get Their Head Cut Off”. He obscured the word “Young” to draw more attention to it and its meaning. Thus, he resorted to accentuating aspects of his written language by strengthening their expression with obscure and prominent strikes.

Words are critical to interpreting intent, but often their dialectic component is undermined. Thus, as with Basquiat, sometimes the mystery of the obscure incites
inquiry into the critical understanding of word usage. Similarly, to incite inquiry and correlation of the incidence of social and cultural reproduction in middle schools through the agency of educators, the dialectic component of the participants’ interpretative repertoires offers the obscurity for inquiry and enlightenment. The contradictions and shifts of the habitus as they relate to different sociocurricular positions offer insights, new meanings, and implications as the obscure juxtapositions of each issue are embodied by the individual and verbalized. The use of POET, the dynamic and obscure understandings of the intersectionality of dominant norms were supplied and analyzed for their divergent implications.

The purpose of this visual bricolage was to investigate to what degree middle school educators uphold sociocurricular positions in the classroom. I observed middle school educators for their verbal reactions to visual art pieces that explored the theories of social and cultural reproduction. Additionally, I interviewed the educators for an analysis of their habitus and how it informs their practice of reproducing dominant cultural norms within their classrooms. The data collected in this study has implications for addressing the educational achievement gap and enhancing teacher preparation programs.

This chapter presents the data collected in this visual bricolage from five experienced middle school educators and their orientations to dominant social norms. The data analysis focused on the interpretative repertoires of each participant using critical discourse analysis (CDA) to provide a critical interpretation of the participants’ interview data and to draw correlations regarding their conceptualizations of social and cultural reproduction. This chapter also includes a descriptive analysis of the study site
and each participant. Following the descriptive analysis, I report on the interpretative repertoires of each participant and draw correlations between their responses and critical interpretations of the influence on curriculum and instruction. This study focused on dominant social norms and the role that teachers play in reproducing them as legitimate concepts. Therefore, I analyzed the data with a critical lens for dominance, mainstream ideals, and the struggle for legitimacy among diverse populations. The objective of this study was to understand the habitus of teachers within social and cultural reproduction and the ways it influences students’ academic identity.

While analyzing the interview responses and field notes, I learned that the participants’ dispositions varied in the degree of upholding dominant legitimated norms. However, each participant revealed how their habitus and position within the field influenced their orientations towards society. Their claimed orientations shaped their mode of curriculum delivery. As participants spoke of norms established and promoted by the majority cultural group, incidents of internalized social and cultural reproduction were revealed frequently. The topics of legitimacy varied, but in every category under investigation, I found significant incidents of the participants upholding norms deemed legitimate under European-American male standards. While the participants demonstrated incidents of effective instruction, the data revealed an undeniable incidence of dominantly legitimated social norms being reproduced in the educational field in the following areas: class, gender, knowledge, language, and race. Thus, multiple major findings emerged in this investigation.
Site Analysis

To gauge the influence of the school environment on a teacher’s instructional practices, I compared participants of schools with two different instructional models in addition to socioeconomic differences. The sites will be referred to as Riverside and Winston Middle School. Chapter 3 provides a description of the schools’ educational standards. The following sections provide brief descriptions of the schools’ student populations, achievement scores, and location demographics.

Riverside Middle School

Riverside Middle School was located in a district of approximately 25,000 people in the southeastern region of the United States. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2017e), this district is composed of approximately 5% European Americans, 90% African Americans, and 3% Asian Americans. Approximately 54% percent of the population is female, with its largest subgroup of females being between the ages of 50-54 years of age. The male population represents approximately 45%, and the largest subgroup of the population is between the ages of 15-19 years of age (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017e). Approximately 34% of the households are husband-wife households, and 14% of the households are husband-wife households with children under the age of 18 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017e). Of the housing units, approximately 60% are owned by the occupants. Of the 18 to 24-age group, approximately 22% of the residents have a high school diploma or less than (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017a).

For the over 25-age group, approximately 9% percent had a graduate or professional degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017a). When analyzing educational
attainment according to race, 85% of the European-American residents, 92% of the African-American residents, and of the third largest subgroup in the district, 70% of the Hispanic-American residents were high school graduates or higher.

The approximate median income for this district was $46,000 annually for the household. Concerning individuals determined to earn income below the poverty level were approximately 9% of the European Americans, 17% of the African Americans, and 15% of the Hispanic Americans (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017d). The district had approximately 150 business establishments (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017f). Of the approximate 12,000 working individuals, approximately 3,000 were occupied in educational or health institutions; 1,100 were occupied in scientific fields; 1,700 were occupied in retail; and 900 were occupied in food services (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017f).

Riverside Middle School offered a traditional, interdisciplinary approach to its approximately 1100 students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Of its student population, approximately 96% were from households with low income. Approximately 30% of the students were English language learners. The approximate ethnic makeup of the students was as follows: 60% African Americans, 30% Asian Americans, 3% Hispanics, 3% European Americans, and 1% of two or more races. Its school performance score was 60 out of 100. The school’s progress scores were contingent upon student achievement and the achievement gap.

Winston Middle School

Winston Middle School was located in a district of approximately 30,000 people in the southeastern region of the United States. According to the U.S. Census Bureau
(2017e), this district was composed of approximately 70% European Americans, 12% African Americans, and 15% Asian Americans. Approximately 55% percent of the population was female, with its largest subgroup of females being between the ages of 20-24 years of age. The male population represented approximately 45%, and the largest subgroup of the population was again between the ages of 20-24 years of age (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017e).

Approximately 40% of the households were husband-wife households, and 16% of the households were husband-wife households with children under the age of 18 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017e). Of the housing units, approximately 60% were owned by the occupants. Of the 18 to 24-age group, approximately 25% of the residents had a high school diploma or less than (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017e). For the over 25-age group, approximately 30% percent of this age group had a graduate or professional degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017a). When analyzing educational attainment according to race, 96% of the European American residents, 80% of the African American residents, and of the third largest subgroup in the district, 80% of the Asian American residents were high school graduates or higher.

The approximate median income for this district was $60,000 annually for the household. Concerning individuals determined to earn income below the poverty level were approximately 15% European Americans, 32% African Americans, and 22% Asian Americans (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017d). The district had approximately 900 business establishments (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017f). Of the approximate 16,000 working individuals, approximately 5,000 were occupied in educational or health institutions,
2,500 were occupied in scientific fields, 2,000 were occupied in retail, and 1,000 were occupied in food services (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017f).

Winston Middle school offered an international baccalaureate approach to its approximately 900 students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Of its student population, approximately 40% of the students were from households with low-income. Approximately 15% of the students were English language learners. The approximated ethnic makeup of the students was as follows: 44% African Americans, 25% European Americans, 14% Hispanic Americans, 14% Asians, 3% two or more races, 1% Pacific Islanders, and 1% Native Americans. Its school performance score was 73 out of 100. This score was also contingent upon achievement and the achievement gap.

Participant Selection Analysis

I chose the participants based on Cortes, Rogler, and Malgady’s (1994) Bicultural Integrity Scale (CRM-BS), which provided brief insights regarding each of the potential participants’ dispositions to cultural norms. I distributed the scale to Riverside and Winston Middle faculty members with at least five years of teaching experience. I selected the participants who scored a higher percentage on the dominant culture items than the original culture items on a voluntary basis to participate in the study’s investigation. Participants’ ethnic background or gender were not stipulations for the consideration of involvement in the study. The CRM-BS was the sole screening instrument for participants’ dispositions that would be the most beneficial to this study.

I intended to select three appropriate participants from Riverside Middle School and three from Winston. While three surveyed participants were willing to participate at
Winston Middle School, only two were willing to participate at Riverside Middle School, despite a multitude of attempts to acquire more participants. The five volunteer participants who scored a high percentage of dominant culture items on the scale received information regarding the purpose of the study, informed confidentiality with the use of pseudonyms, and ethical concerns. The following sections provide a brief description of each participant to allow the reader to conceptualize their habitus and social positions prior to the analysis of field notes and interviews.

Makayla

Makayla had been teaching for 16 years in the North American educational system. She was currently a sixth-grade social studies teacher on the ESOL team at Riverside Middle School. Of European ancestral lineage, she grew up in Europe. She recognized both Jewish and Christian religions, as she grew up with a parent of both beliefs. When asked to describe her upbringing Makayla remarked, “I’m weird; I come from a very high academic family. I come from a very academically achieving family. My mom and dad—all of us have very high IQs”.

Ashley

Ashley had been teaching for 25 years in the North American educational system. She was currently a seventh-grade science teacher on the gifted team at Winston Middle school. Raised in the southeastern region of the U.S., she was a practicing Christian. When asked to describe her upbringing, Ashley stated that she was from a two-parent in what she would consider an upper middle-class household because “both of my parents were college graduates”. She also referred fondly to a housemaid of African American
descent with whom she and her siblings were raised and who “was exactly like Mamie from *Gone with the Wind*.”

Katherine

Katherine had been teaching for five years in the North American educational system. She was currently an eighth-grade mathematics teacher at Riverside Middle School. Raised in the southeastern region of the U.S., she was a believer of the Christian faith. When asked to describe her upbringing, Katherine stated that she has always been highly skilled in mathematics and grew up in a single-parent middle class household. She also stated that her mother always prioritized good grades when she was a student. She stressed that her grades were always very important to her mother.

Kinsey

Kinsey had been teaching for 11 years in the North American educational system. She was currently a sixth-grade English language arts teacher at Winston Middle School. Raised in the Midwest region of the U.S., she was a believer in the Christian faith. Kinsey grew up in three environments as a child: with her mother, in foster care, and with her grandparents. When asked about how her childhood impacted her childhood, Kinsey stated, “. . . it has played a big part on who I am”.

Renee

Renee had been teaching for seven years in the North American educational system. She was currently a seventh-grade mathematics teacher at Winston Middle School. Raised in the southeastern region of the U.S., Renee was the child of parents who were South Korean immigrants, relocated from South Korea to North America when
Renee was six years old. She attended a Christian church on a weekly basis. When asked to describe her upbringing, she expressed that she was not raised like some of her students from “troublesome” households. She stated,

It’s just that when they go home, it’s not like how I was brought up; when I came home, like my grandmother cooked, I didn’t have to; I mean I washed dishes, and I helped her here and there, but she always said do your homework first.

Additionally, Renee spoke fondly of her grandfather who told her as a child, “... be careful when you are around White people; you don’t want to make them upset. Like don’t be too loud and things”.

Participant Overview

Overall, the participants and their backgrounds offered a diverse group of perspectives and sociocurricular positions, as well as subjects and middle school grade levels taught. All of the participants were female, and again this was not deliberate. It is due to the voluntary responses to the Bicultural Integrity Scale. However, the diverse range of teaching experiences and sociocurricular positions provided a significant collection of data that drew societal implications of social and cultural reproduction.

Table 2 provides a visual summary of the participants and their habitus.
Table 2

*Participant Habitus*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>School R/W</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Subject Taught</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Racial Construction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Makayla</td>
<td>R&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Social studies</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>European American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley</td>
<td>W&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Monolingual</td>
<td>European American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>R&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Monolingual</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinsey</td>
<td>W&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Low/Middle</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>English language arts</td>
<td>Monolingual</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renee</td>
<td>W&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>Asian American</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.*  
<sup>a</sup> Richland Middle School  
<sup>b</sup> Winston Middle School

Guiding Research Questions Reiterated

1. To what degree of agency do middle school educators uphold mainstream norms of legitimacy in the sociocurricular positions of class, gender, knowledge, language, and race?
   a. How do teachers respond to images that appear to resist the dominant cultural norms?
   b. How do teachers respond to images that appear to uphold the dominant cultural norms?

2. How does the cultural habitus of middle school educators influence the delivery of their curriculum and instruction?
Major Findings

Using Kincheloe and Berry’s (2008) bricoleur interview component, POET (Point of Entry Text) as the instrument of elicitation, visual art pieces were threaded through the interview processes of each participant. The art served as the anchor to loop and access the dialectic embodiment of each sociocurricular position under study. Using POET, the guiding interview questions emphasized (a) the embodiment of dominant mainstream norms of class, gender, knowledge, language, and race; (b) the occurrence and acknowledgement of social and cultural reproduction; and (c) the influence of the agency for or against the reproduction of norms that specifically create forms of social hierarchy. I then analyzed the interviews for semiotic conditions with a critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2010), as displayed in Figure 3. Additionally, I identified indications of social functionary and critical positions upheld by the educators using Kincheloe’s (2008) characteristics of critical pedagogy theory, which is located in Table 3.
Figure 3. Semiotic conditions. Original figure created from a text synthesis of *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language* (2nd ed.), by N. Fairclough, 2010.
Table 3

**Characteristics of the Critical Educator and the Social Functionary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Educator</th>
<th>Social Functionary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Observes deliverance of knowledge under disguises of equity</td>
<td>(a) Passes along a prescribed curriculum without researching the students’ cultures and communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Becoming a learned individual requires “interpretation-not in stuffing volumes of unproblematized data in mental filing cabinets” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 109).</td>
<td>(b) Values the ambiguity of language as cultural but not legitimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Views low confidence as a result of power relations within race, class, gender, knowledge, and language, which sorts students into levels of legitimacy</td>
<td>(c) Views knowledge production as a rational process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Advocates for the recognition knowledge disparities to various stakeholders</td>
<td>(d) Views text and research as endoxa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) Teaches with levels of rigor that include the concept that knowledge is complex, and cannot be primarily assessed by standardized test with multiple choice questions</td>
<td>(e) Recognizes the legitimate dominant standards of knowledge as prioritized values in the educational field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) Promotes correlation between lived experiences and processes of knowledge</td>
<td>(f) Teaches with positivistic reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(g) Resists dominant forms of legitimacy and promote student advocacy for subordinate forms of knowledge</td>
<td>(g) Follows administrative mandates under conditions that have separated “conceptualization from professional task”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kincheloe, 2008.

Finding One: Class is a Part of the Natural Order

To initiate the agency of class within the middle school educators, I showed participants Jean Michel Basquiat’s painting titled, *Native Carrying Some Guns, Bibles, Amorites on Safari*. The painting features an individual painted with black paint,
carrying cargo over his head, and standing behind an individual outlined with black paint, carrying a shotgun. Around these two individuals are words such as “good money in savages”. When I asked the participants to identify the dominant entity in the painting, they all declared that the individual with the gun was the dominant individual in the painting. Therefore, the individual carrying the cargo was the subordinate. I then asked the participants to correlate the image to class structure. According to the interpretive repertoires of each participant, the findings on this issue were diverse. However, consensus among four of the participants was that class is mobile and contingent upon willingness.

Interpretive repertoires: Class. Makayla stated that class is a part of the “natural order”—without it everyone would be “in the mud together”. She added that class is contingent upon individuals’ strengths, weaknesses, and their willingness to work. When asked if she thought class works—if it is legitimate—she stated, “It’s legitimate if society buys into it”. Makayla understood class as a willingness to work, and the idea of equality to her was ineffective.

I think it’s the natural order. If you have everyone equal that’s communism and that’s never worked in the history of the world. . . . The only way to truly be equal is for everybody to be in the mud together, that’s the only true equality there is. In the human population, there is a natural kind of bell curve, you know what I mean. . . . I mean humans naturally segregate themselves, I mean that’s how human nature is.
In the art representing class, Makayla acknowledged that there were dominant and subordinate forces at play. She also stated that the dominant individual had dominance because of his weapon. Therefore, Makayla, in one instance perceives class structure as natural segregation and willingness to work, and in another instance as class created from aggressive and violent tactics.

When the discourse moved towards class and curriculum, Makayla stated that she often buys supplies for her students who cannot afford them or pays for the students who she likes to go on field trips.

I have supplies in the classroom, I have folders, I have paper, I have pencils. Um, typically, because you always have the kids who can’t get, typically I always have a couple kids that I adopt for like field trips, if they are, I mean the demon kids I don’t do that for, the ones who will burn the museum down if they get the chance [laughter].

For her delivery of the curriculum, she stated that she emphasized to her students, (because many of them are immigrants) that America allows for many opportunities, if you are willing to work for it. Interesting about this interpretative repertoire of class is that Makayla did not make a correlation about those who have maintained high class and dominance through aggression, and the cyclical reproductive dominance that followed through to their descendants, thus the amount of “working for” mobility may vary greatly.

Ashley and Katherine also stated the individual with the weapon maintained the dominant position in the artwork. When correlating the art to society and life within
society, Ashley associated dominance with money, and money with power. However, again similar to Makayla’s conception of class, she still referred to the mobility within classes as results of hard work and effort. Ashley stated, “But then there is the person who doesn’t want to work, and have a steady job, and be somewhere early in the morning, that’s getting support also, but could actually make their way.” In this statement, Ashley implied that some individuals are not willing to work, but instead, they would rather receive financial assistance from the government.

When asked to provide her perspective of class and how it effects academic success, Ashley suggested that although there are students who maybe homeless or without adequate food or supplies, there is no clear understanding within the school to help identify these students and help them get the resources they need. She stated, If they don’t have food at lunch, there is a clear pathway, but for those in need there is not clear pathway. So, you just do what you can, and a lot of the supplies that you loan, they get torn up, they leave the classroom.

When asked if students’ access to resources such as shelter, food, clothing, and technology affected their academic success, she commented, “absolutely”. Ashley recognized an economic disparity, achievement gap, and dominance, but she did not correlate them. Instead, her habitus perceived them as separate entities, disconnections, yet problematic.

Katherine also perceived class as a social structure and believed it was easy to transition between them, as long as a student puts much effort into schoolwork and maintains good grades. Katherine’s habitus of getting good grades being her primary
focus as a student influenced her perception of the world and her delivery of the curriculum. In Katherine’s perception of class and student achievement, she did not consider class to be an influential factor. When I asked Katherine if the amounts of resources available in the students’ homes affected their academic success, she stated, 

No, I don’t. Um, because I feel as teachers I feel we need to be more mindful and think about that. For instance, when we give homework assignments that require internet service, I ask, and I tell them that if they are not comfortable telling me that they do not have internet access, I tell them to come to me after school and I give alternate homework assignments and things like that. And it is on the teacher to inquire about the neighborhood. For instance, we have students that live near parks and libraries. So, when they use that excuse, we make them aware of their resources, and also to try to find alternate resources, because we don’t want them to how things as a crutch.

Katherine’s interpretive repertoire on class revealed her continued focus on homework completion and good grades. There is silence on incidents of food shortage, shelter, and the psychological complexities potential to individuals who have limited resources. Katherine’s perception of good teaching, in the face of class, was to promote technological and research facilities in the students’ community and encourage good grades and disciplined attention to school work. When observing Katherine teaching her class, I saw that students tracked her throughout instruction, and it was evident that the culture of the class was instruction. However, the silence on issues of power and societal correlation to the student’s academic success support Bourdieu’s (1989) concept of
teachers upholding the school field in such a way that they do not question the inculcation of mainstream values, continue to push doctrine without critical pedagogy, and in that regard, act as agents of social and cultural reproduction. Bourdieu (1989) stated, “... whether dominated or dominant, can submit to it or fully exercise its necessity only because they have incorporated it, they are of one body with it, they give body to it” (p. 3). Therefore, Katherine had incorporated the field’s structure in such a way that she legitimated it, despite the dominant-subordinate dichotomy required to uphold it.

Kinsey’s reaction to Native Carrying Some Guns, Bibles, Amorites on Safari was unique when compared to that of the first three participants. Upon first glance of the painting, she immediately spoke about dominance obtained with firearms for the purpose of colonization and the exploitation of certain groups of individuals for the class stratification. Kinsey stated,

But it looks like its referencing basically the commodification of people and other resources. But then, the colonies um, and colonization. I mean it looks a little bit like there is some, looks like some references to like African American slavery, there’s the Caribbean because Cortez, because when he colonized the Caribbean, and generally I think it can apply to any of the European colonization all across the globe.

Kinsey further commented on how colonization of African-American people led to the development of class structure, and how that class structure is evident within the sorting of students into general, high achievers and gifted-level classrooms, as well as behavioral
concerns. During the interview, Kinsey remembered and spoke about a student that she had mentored a few years ago. She stated that the student was an African American female who had been in trouble many times for bullying. Kinsey worked with the student one-on-one many times that school year. She told the student that she would give her a Christmas gift if she could decrease her bullying behaviors. When she asked the student what she would want for Christmas, the student replied that “she wanted a coloring book and crayons”. Kinsey’s reflection revealed the innocence of this particular student submerged under a tough exterior created from her own habitus and position within the field. Kinsey described the student’s sociocurricular position as “a very complex psychological thing”.

Throughout the interview, Kinsey made several other critical reflections on societal correlations and the ways they penetrate the school field. She also spoke of resisting the mainstream norms and priorities that she found consistently upheld among her coworkers by correlating societal power struggles and considering them when delivering her curriculum and instruction. Later, I discuss more of Kinsey’s critical reflections, her resistance to embodying the mainstream field of positions, and their influence on her students.

Renee’s response to the *Native Carrying Some Guns, Bibles, Amorites on Safari* and her perception of class was also unique compared to the other four participants. Upon her first view of the art piece, she assumed the individual who appeared to be subordinate was Chinese. When I asked Renee about her perception of class stratification and if she thought it was a legitimate practice in society, she did not condemn class
stratification. She instead offered a suggestion of how individuals of different classes could work to help each other:

In the perfect world, you have people with all of these luxuries, and then people without them. What’s supposed to happen is those who are well off with these luxuries or whatever should use the people as . . . what do I want to say . . . use them as resources to help them find jobs. So, at one point, the third world people can learn the trade so that they can to stand up on their own.

I showed the participants two images for each category under investigation.

When Renee viewed Banksy’s art, *Ghetto for Life*, her response to the word “ghetto” indicated her perception of several societal issues, including the correlation between class, race, and privilege. The art piece, *Ghetto for Life*, featured a little boy with an ambiguous skin tone, spraying the words “Ghetto for Life” on a concrete wall, as what appears to be his butler held a tray of spray paint for him. Renee’s responded,

One, I think I would question this White kid, “What do you know about the ghetto? You’re not dressed like, when I think about the ghetto I think about baggy pants, chains, kind of slouched over.” But this kid has a hat, kind of preppy, and you have this guy holding the can, you know, for him. That’s not what ghetto is, and if you take it beyond the ghettoness I guess of appearance, I feel like when a Black person talks about ghetto, um, I think there are struggles behind that word. They had to probably beg for food, like this building, it’s not going to be a nice building, not clean, they have rats, probably unsanitary, a horrible condition for a kid to live in.
Renee viewed the word *ghetto* as one represented by “baggy pants, chains, kind of slouched over”. Instead of a state of being, a class issue, she perceived ghetto as a cultural classification, one marked by particular clothing, but also a “slouched over” stance. When asked how this art reminded her of the school field, particularly her classroom, she reflected on “Black girls that are quote/unquote ghetto” and how they are difficult to reach in the classroom. She believed that these girls needed extra services to manage their anger effectively because their anger would sometimes be noticeable in the classroom, making it difficult to reach them with regard to instruction.

Additionally, she acknowledged that poverty is cyclical; however, similar to the first three participants, she believed that if a student felt as though they were overlooked or unfairly tracked, they could do something about it by working harder. Renee stated, “Yeah and that’s the thing—don’t just feel bad, do something about it; go home and study; you have the same opportunity that the gifted kids have”. Again, although Renee stated earlier that some individuals are born into more resources than others are, she did not correlate that to the sorting statistics of students into the gifted classes. Instead, she attributed the achievement disparity to a lack of studying.

Summary of finding one. Four of the five participants essentially viewed class as a cyclical incident that is unfair, yet despite the sometimes limited resources for survival of students from low-income households, students are expected to drop their excuses and pull themselves up by studying and getting good grades. It is evident that the participants understood the effects of having limited finances—the psychological influences and living conditions. However, there were repeated instances of contradictory assessments
of the students’ abilities to succeed in the educational field, despite their habitus and disposition to society. The discourse analysis revealed that as the teachers spoke on their disposition to class, their own position within the field was intertwined with their perception of everyone else, including their students and their students’ parents. Thus, instruction was affected because four of the teachers upheld legitimated ideals of class, established by educational institutions, despite their personal experience with students influenced by class in a variety of ways.

Finding Two: Gender Influences Strength and Behavior

Gender in the middle school environment is a significantly important feature to the students as it helps to shape their identity (Dumais, 2002; Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2007; Evans-Winter & Esposito, 2010; Farkas, Grobe, Sheehan, & Shuan, 1990; Morris, 2007). The gender expectations of the educators may shape students’ gender identity. To investigate the participants’ perceptions of the social norm of gender, I showed the participants two pieces of art: a painting by Frida Kahlo titled Little Dear and a painting by Pablo Picasso titled Les Demoiselles d’Avignon. This section provides an analysis of the interpretative repertoires of each participant in the sociocurricular position of gender.

Interpretive repertoires: Gender. Makayla offered many perspectives on various topics regarding gender. She generally felt that women could do anything that men could and that talks of inequality in pay and opportunities were false. Makayla believed that men were technically stronger, but women could do anything. She had corporate work experience; therefore, in her perspective, the notion that women do not receive the same
pay as men was a myth, despite researched statistics (Orr, 2011; Mickelson, 1989). Makayla stated that there were no advantages to being a man. In the work place, a woman could make as much and maintain the same exact positions if she was willing to work for it. Makayla then contradicted the previous statement by saying that women cannot have it all; that if they were willing to make sacrifices, they could have the same careers and salary as men. However, Makayla did not mention the need for men to make sacrifices.

Makayla stated that attempts to identify feminist concerns were media ploys initiated to segregate the population. To Makayla, feminists were empowered by “identity politics” to accuse many of discriminating against them, but they were going overboard. Makayla impersonated how she viewed feminist, or what she referred to as feminazis, “Yeah, it’s like if you don’t do exactly what we say you are a closet misogynist, you are a sexist”. Makayla believed that these individuals, who were advocating for gender equality, needed to become more resilient and stop reacting to “every little thing on the planet” and “get a skin”.

When asked about students exhibiting specific gender orientations, Makayla stated, as far as students were concerned, “Let the kid be a kid”. She stated they were too young to understand themselves and were still developing their worldview. Researchers (Eccles, 1999; Rhodes, Roffman, Reddy, Fredriksen, 2004) supported that this age group is still developing their view, but they also acknowledged the importance of the educator and family in the development of that worldview. When I spoke of the incidence of my teaching a student who identified as transgender, she stated, “Oh my God, okay, luckily
we haven’t faced that here. This is one of the reasons I hope to send my nephew to private school. With my sister, I’m like, I’m not kidding, this stuff is happening in schools.” Again, this statement contradicts an earlier statement about letting kids be who they are. Yet, she stated, “I mean 100 genders is ridiculous. There are only two biological genders; get over it”. When educators outwardly state their intolerance of difference within public schools and regard social issues as a lack of people having “a skin” or being too young to comprehend who they are in regards to gender association, they influence the curriculum, (Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004; Dumais, 2005; Fabiansson, 2015; Ferrare & Apple, 2015; Nasir & Saxe, 2003; VanKoughnett, 1996).

When I showed Ashley the image of the Les Demoiselles d’Avignon, she spoke of the physical attributes of the women in the painting, particularly that some appeared to have a masculine appearance. When I asked her what she thought Picasso meant by that, she stated, “He might feel that men might have some female tendencies, or maybe that they are creatures that are hard to understand.” I then asked her to reflect on her on childhood with her parents and their gender expectations. She stated,

. . . um, yeah, we had the mother and the father and the heterosexual upbringing. And although I had a cousin that was definitely gay, it was never discussed. He came to family events, we adored him, intelligent, funny, just absolutely a great person. And um, it was accepted, but never discussed.

This discourse revealed that silence was the response to gender variance in Ashley’s family. Therefore, when I asked her about how she reacted to students who were
homosexual and felt as though they were ostracized, she reflected on the behavior of a previous student and her perception of his actions.

Well, there was a gentleman last year that was sent down to sit in my room, who was very much flamboyant about making sure the class knew he had a different persuasion. It seemed to me to be more, uh, attention seeking than anything else. It wasn’t so much that he had to declare that he was gay, but more like “I need some attention and this is how I can get it”. . . . I wonder too, because he was funny and attractive and very adept at assessing a situation. He was definitely highly intelligent, but he seemed to need that attention. I remember thinking he would be really good at being a performer. Because basically that’s what it was. Ashley perceived that student’s behavior as an act and call for attention. His orientation was outside of the mainstream norm, and instead of providing him an outlet to discuss his own disposition in a supportive setting, Ashley, who was accustomed to silencing such norms, found his behavior to be a performance.

Ashley and I also discussed the incidence of females receiving equal pay with males in the labor force, as well as females occupying careers traditionally occupied by males. Ashley supported equal pay but did not believe in men and women occupying the same careers, and she used the military as an example. She stated, “I don’t really think that females need to be doing male jobs in the military. There are a few females I think that could handle that, not all.” She mentioned that, as a child, her parents expected her and her sister—not her brother—to do the cooking and cleaning of their house. She also mentioned that her parents allowed her brother to have more freedom and that he could
get away with things that they could not. This upbringing is not unique to Ashley, as Dumais (2002) indicated in her research. Parents often raise females to be dependent rule-followers and boys as independent and rebellious. Ashley’s habitus influenced her perception of the career choices of men and women, as well as individuals’ choices to address their sexual orientation verbally. This impacted her delivery of the curriculum in that her habitus carried preconceived gender expectations that she held as legitimate.

Of the five participants, Kinsey and Renee seemed to be the most indifferent to gender expectations. Kinsey stated that she had experienced her coworkers feeling very disturbed by male students exhibiting feminine behaviors. She stated,

I’ve seen where teachers are just really irritated by male students that seem feminine. Like to the point where I don’t understand it. That student can be a great kid, and I will see and hear teachers complain about the way he walked and the way he does whatever.

Kinsey mentioned the need to teach tolerance in the schools and tolerance for everyone. She suggested that the school should have a society or club dedicated to those students who felt as though they had been marginalized, and it should teach those who were marginalized not to marginalize others, what Freire (1970/2000) referred to as the oppressed becoming the oppressor.

Renee also stated that she was tolerant of different gender dispositions. She encouraged her students, both males and females, to participate in sports, and she was a regular attendee at the school’s sporting events. Renee did state that when she had physical tasks in the classroom, such as taking the trash out or lifting textbooks, she
usually asked a male for help. Renee believed males were naturally stronger, unless a female had participated in rigorous physical training. Therefore, her perception of strength was transcended in her teaching. However, she also stated that if a female really wanted to perform a physical task in her class, such as lifting textbooks, and asked multiple times, she would allow her.

Katherine did not mention much about her habitus towards men and women working the same careers for the same pay. However, when asked about the gender expectations she held for her students, she replied,

As far as expectations, I don’t think, because I hold all of my students to the same expectations, but I do find myself giving gender roles, so to speak. So, I do ask the gentleman to get the trash in the cafeteria, I will always ask the young men to hold the door. I will ask the ladies to clean off my boards and wipe my tables, but as far as academics, I hold them all to the same expectations.

This response indicates that Katherine felt as though she was unbiased in her gender expectations when it came to academics. However, I question the concept of academics. Students are constantly learning in the educational institution through the cultural norms established. Therefore, if Katherine was establishing male strength and female cleaning abilities within her classroom field, she was influencing the students’ sociocurricular positions and, thus, their identities. It is all academic; it is all knowledge.

Summary of finding two. To some extent, four of the five educators interviewed held gender expectations. Each of the participants made statements that they were tolerant of students with gender dispositions outside the mainstream norms of behavior.
However, four of the participants also made statements that indicated how their habitus influenced their ideals of normal gender behavior. In the areas of career choice, career salary, classroom chores, and sexual orientation, these four educators indicated their intolerance in varying degrees. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, it is evident that the educators’ agency for dominant gender norms transcends throughout the culture of their classroom through their assignments or moments of silence and avoidance in the realm of resistance to mainstream gender norms exhibited by some of their students.

Finding Three: All Knowledge Has Value, But . . . the Most Valuable is the Knowledge Applied to Standardized Tests

The contradictions experienced by teachers in their relationship with the truth of their practice, which undoubtedly become more and more acute the higher they rise in the professional hierarchy, can be seen most clearly in the self-deceptive games they are forced to play when, in their role as graders they expect an essay designed for judging future teachers to be more than or anything other than a scholastic exercise (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 26)

Interpretive repertoires: Knowledge. When introduced to the pieces of art reflecting knowledge, the School of Athens by Raphael Sanzio, four of the five participants began discussing that there were men who appeared to be engaged in scholarly activity. One participant, Makayla, mentioned that the fact that they were all European-American men was “irrelevant”. Makayla added that the Greeks were the first to figure out geometry, the world as a sphere, and the power of light. She elaborated that because this was the western hemisphere, they influenced that hemisphere. I am curious,
though, about the neglected mention of the relevance of these individuals’ predilections and dispositions and their influence on our ways of thought. When I moved the discourse from the artwork to how Makayla perceived her own intelligence, there were several significant comments made within her interpretative repertoire of knowledge. She stated, “I’m weird. I come from a very high academic family. I come from a very academically achieving family. My mom and dad—all of us have very high IQs.”

Wetherell and Potter (1988) referred to statements as “I’m weird” as disclaimers, for they softened the arrogance of what is to follow. In this case, it was the fact that the participant’s “entire family had very high IQs” and that they belonged to a “very academically achieving family”. There is no question in this perspective about the validity of an IQ test as a fair assessment of knowledge, contrary to the findings of researchers (Ayers, 2001; Benson, 2003; Richardson & Norgate, 2015; Sternberg, 2007; Sternberg, Grigorenko, & Bundy, 2001). Therefore, here the participant legitimized her intelligence with the IQ test. She later continued to revere her academic prowess and that of any student with a high IQ:

It creates a lot of unnecessary problems, so I think a lot of teachers are afraid of those kids. I taught with teachers who did not want to teach those kids, ’cause they will ask a lot of questions. Because as soon as they smell blood in the water, they will start circling and they are vicious. They are way more vicious than a low-level kid could ever be.

The participant viewed kids who received the gifted label as predators of intelligence, preying upon those who are intellectually subordinate because of their IQ scores.
When asked her views on grouping based on perceived levels of intellect, Makayla advocated for grouping because of the benefits for the children with the gifted label. She viewed cooperative group work as placing too much responsibility on the child with the higher IQ, for the teacher expected that child to be the assistant teacher in a sense. Makayla elaborated,

I see that in meetings here: “Let the smart kids do it.” As one of those former smart kids, where I had to teach the group, and I had to carry the load, I hated the group work because I did it all.

I want to highlight Makayla’s use of the word “smart”. Its usage materializes the *them vs. us*, the *low vs. high*, the *smart vs. dumb* and the *winners vs. losers* mentality.

Renee, Katherine, and Ashley maintained the similar beliefs of tracking as a legitimate way to provide students the most rigorous instruction. Renee stated that she thought that tracking was “definitely unfair”. However, “it’s not fair for a student who understands easily to be in a class with someone that has such a hard time you know”. Renee also spoke about the population of students within the gifted and general classes and their behavior:

I feel like gifted students already feel like they are above, how they kind of approach me in terms of asking for help or they’re so quick to question what I do or point out that I’m wrong than checking their own work or things like that.

When I tell a general student they are wrong, then they are quick to accept they are wrong and um. . . they are quick to say they are wrong and figure out what’s
wrong and even give up. The gifted student—they are quick to say “Why is it wrong?!”

Yeah, I mean, it’s the system you know, and you can’t, you can’t satisfy everybody, and I hate that. And also, kind of going back to race and class, you see in a gifted rotation a lot more White students than Black. When I see those Black students, I’m like, not more welcoming, but I applaud them.

Despite Renee’s support of tracking and willingness to uphold the school’s culture of knowledge, she identified an achievement gap in correlation with race. Additionally, she recognized undesirable social traits created from tracking. Yet, she supported its overall presence in the field.

Standardized testing inevitably became a part of each interview as we discussed intelligence assessments and the push for standardized testing in the school, as well as their influence on academics. Standardized testing was used to group students and drive the curriculum in the two schools in which I conducted research. Four of the five of the teachers interviewed agreed with the practice. Two of the teachers mentioned the social effects of testing and grouping, such as dominance and reproduction of class stratification. However, when I asked the participants about the relevance of the tests to intelligence specifically, five out of five of the teachers thought the test did not validly measure intelligence, and they disliked teaching to the test. Still, four of the five participants believed in the necessity of achieving high passing rates and that it was a part of their job; therefore, they would promote it. So, the “you gotta do what you gotta do,
“it’s your job” mentality was a common comment throughout the interviews and even observations.

Legitimate knowledge was explored during the interviews as well. Four of the teachers felt as though academic knowledge, (mathematics, English language arts, social studies, and science) were of the most valuable types of knowledge. The word academic is attributable to any discipline taught within an instructional institution. However, the participants used the term commonly in relation to the mathematics, English language arts, social studies, and science disciplines. They spoke of courses such as visual arts and physical education as courses outside of academia and perceived skills in these courses as skills to be enhanced in high school and college. Those students who did not possess high IQ scores might go unnoticed as possessors of valuable knowledge because their skills were not assessed on the standardized tests given in Riverside and Winston. Thus, upheld by the field, the participants’ perception of valuable knowledge limits and influences the development of the students’ academic identity (Apple, 1993; Eisner, 2008; Rubin, 2007; Valentine & Collins, 2011).

Summary of finding three. When critically analyzing their interpretative repertoires, four of the educators’ discourses indicated contradictions of their perceptions of knowledge. This concept of the educator acting as an agent of a system that they do not fully support or understand indicates that they have negotiated their habitus within their occupation to reproduce dominant norms inculcated upon them. This incidence is the premise of the social and cultural reproduction of dominant norms (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).
Finding Four: Language is Culturally Based. However, Speaking Anything Counter to the Mainstream North American Vernacular is Unprofessional

When the participants viewed the art image illustrating an African-American child using African-American vernacular in the classroom and being “corrected” by her European-American educator, four of the five participants laughed at the image. All five participants expressed that they experienced similar situations with students and even friends using African-American vernacular. However, when asked if they considered it a legitimate or professional use of language, four of the five participants stated that it was not professional and that they would not expect it to be used in an interview.

The interview discourse then led to the questioning of the participants about their perception of English Language Learners (ELL). Every teacher participant was familiar with ESOL supports for students in need. However, the participants did not know specific strategies and the placement process for these students. Four of the five teachers stated that when their ELL students spoke “incorrectly”, they would correct them. One teacher, Kinsey, stated that instead of correcting their speech, she would correct their writing. Of the four who would correct the students’ verbal use of the dominant English language, Makayla also stated several times her feelings about the importance of assimilation into mainstream American culture, and that included language acquisition. The following section provides excerpts from the linguistic interpretative repertoires of each participant.
Interpretive repertoires: Language. Makayla stated,

Like I tell my kids, whatever culture, whatever customs you have from your
country you keep alive at home that’s fantastic, like we have German customs,
but I don’t expect it to be Germany outside the door, I’m glad it’s not. However,
a group gets here, if they are going to make a life here, if they want full access to
everything this country has to offer, they have to assimilate to some extent. Now
I have friends who call it White talk and they have the home talk when they “be
talking” they sound cool, but I can’t do it. But, if they want access to certain
things, there is a certain societal image that they have to hold. I don’t think it’s
wrong or right thing. That’s the way it is.

Makayla added,

Now with the African American vernacular, quote unquote, follows the rules of
the African language, so it’s like another language. So, like German, the order of
the sentences are reversed, in German the main verb goes second, they speak like
Yoda. I cannot go into a board meeting speaking like Yoda and expect them to
take me serious, they are going to be like whatever, I’m not giving her the
promotion. It is what it is, rather you think it’s fair or what it should be, it is what
it is.

Ashley contended, “Yes, without slang, without cultural changes. That would be
a more dominant language.”

Katherine commented on the artwork: “It looks like she’s speaking Ebonics.
Looks like she’s getting frustrated too, because that’s what she’s used to hearing and the
teacher is, without telling her she’s wrong wants her to sound out what she is saying.” In terms of using African-American vernacular in an interview, Katherine stated, “I think that that would definitely be against them in an interview, yes.”

Kinsey revealed,

In all honesty, I focus on what they write. Because people speak all kinds of ways. And I even pointed that out to a particular classmate, that you know as an African-American, educated blah, blah, blah, whatever, I speak a certain way when I’m at work, but when I’m at home, I say all kinds of things that are not grammatically correct, and it’s not because, oh, I don’t know how to speak English, it’s a dialect of where I grew up, and that’s a part of culture, it’s in artwork, in poems, its in . . . you know like every other dialect, so I focus on how they write. If something is misspelled, it’s misspelled. Because they may never be able to say, “sandwich” the same way as a European person might say it. We don’t expect Americans to speak the same way as British people. People just need to stop.

Renee stated,

How they speak at home or how they speak with their peers can’t be spoken everywhere. Um, I try to tell them when you go to an interview, um, people are going to automatically assume that you’re ignorant and uneducated because of the way you speak.
Summary of finding four. Based on a critical analysis of the linguistic discourses, the use of another vernacular for four of the five educators used in this study, contrary to the mainstream, elicits laughter and perceptions of ignorance. Even though all five participants understood language as a cultural characteristic, four of them deemed languages spoken in America that deviated from mainstream standards as unprofessional and to only be spoken at home. Therefore, the legitimate language, in four of the five classrooms in this study, is European-American English. Thus, the original cultural language of the student may be jeopardized in an attempt to gain social capital in these classrooms for upward mobility of their sociocurricular positions.

Finding Five: Race Does Matter

During the interview process, the participants and I discussed a variety of topics, but one topic that seemed to fit into almost every major theme of the interviews was the social construct of race (Apple, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Morrison, 1992; Omi & Winant, 1993). This social construct, deemed by physical characteristics, was referred to in the discussion of class, knowledge, language, and religion during the interviews. The interviews indicated that race is very much intertwined into the fabric of American society. The following paragraphs highlight the participants’ responses regarding race.

The first picture I showed the participants was titled *Native Carrying Some Guns, Bibles, Amorites on Safari* by Jean Michel Basquiat. It was an image of an individual carrying a cargo crate over his head behind a man holding a shotgun. The individual carrying the crate was black with eyes outlined in white, hair going in different directions, and a painted black body. The man holding the shotgun was outlined in black
but had no color. Around the two men were writings by the artist such as: *colonization: part two in a series, vol. VI, tusk, poachers, Cortez,* and *I won’t even mention gold.* I chose this art to represent the social reproduction of class, yet it shared many undertones of other social constructs. When the participants viewed this art, all of them presumed that the art related to some type of trade, but their perceived consequences of these trade transactions varied.

Interpretive repertoires: Race. Responses from each participant varied. Makayla commented, “Um, well, it seems to be illegal poaching or like blood diamonds in Africa.”

I asked, “How does this art relate to you, your background, culture, if at all?”

Makayla responded, “Not at all.”

Ashley responded initially with one word: “Colonization.” She added, Well, we studied poaching and how it endangers species, you know, related to science in Africa. The drawing is a little confusing. It seems to be a lot of different ideas on here. It seems to be a little negative towards the White person. That’s not necessarily the person that is doing the poaching.

Katherine stated, “It looks like maybe they were drawing on some type of war. Something that they went through personal. They put a lot in to with the different words and symbols.”

Kinsey commented,

But it looks like its referencing basically the commodification of people and other resources. But then, the colonies, um, and colonialization. I mean it looks a little bit like there is some, looks like some references to like African-American
slavery, there’s the Caribbean because Cortez, because when he colonized the Caribbean, and generally I think it can apply to any of the European colonization all across the globe.

Renee expressed, “I feel like there’s a . . . I’m trying to figure out why he shaded this guy so dark, he looks like an indigenous . . . African type. I actually thought he was Chinese.”

I asked, “You thought he was Chinese?”

Renee responded, “Yeah, but then I read poaching.” She added, “It looks like he has, because you know tusks are hard to find, expensive, rare. I know poachers sell them for money.”

I asked, “So, you think he’s dominating the resources?”

Renee replied, “Yeah, with his item . . . product, he’s selling it, these guys . . . I don’t know the relationship.”

Makayla taught sixth-grade social studies; therefore, she had a comprehensive repertoire of the history of poaching and colonization. She also mentioned that the man with the gun was the dominant force in the image. She did not tie this picture to race, although the man holding the cargo had been painted with black paint. She also did not make a correlation between populations of darker melanin forced to work by differing racial groups and the connection to racism. The silence here is interesting in that it represents her position in the field as a dominant figure in race who does not have the experiences in this area to draw upon and make correlations or as a dominant position, chooses not to believe it. Makayla focused on the trading logistics. She did not comment
on the phrase in the image: “Good money in savages”. When asked to use this picture to correlate to the class system and equality of present times, Makayla stated that class division is the “natural order”. She did not correlate the image to race, but mentioned that race was not a prevalent social construction during her childhood. She commented that she revealed her thoughts on race to her students:

> I tell my kids that this is just melanin, people are dying over melanin. All it means is that is where your ancestors lived the sun was hotter and more direct—that’s all it means, that’s the meaning of it, so to an extent, humans segregate themselves. You tend to be attracted to people that have a common interest.

Later in the interview, Makayla broached the recent events of a race riot in Charlottesville, South Carolina. She stated that in her experiences of the southeast region of the U.S., she had not encountered “legitimate racists”, but she had met minority groups that were agitating the issue. She commented,

> It’s like this whole thing that happened with Charlottesville, I mean mainstream news is just salivating, that are so excited, people died, I can’t stand it. So, this is a problem they have created. For a year and a half, they have not condemned violence on the left, and I don’t mean the true liberals. I mean the crazy left, the Marxists, that are running around, the fascists, Antifa fascists.

Makayla added,

> It’s been people outside the White groups that have been racist, it’s been the minorities, who are not minorities anyways. But from my experience, it’s the
other groups who are kind of whipped up by all this identity politics, so now you have the White groups getting whipped up, are you really that surprised by it? Makayla stated melanin did not matter. However, she defended individuals (White nationalists) who she perceived were defending themselves from the minority population and mass media. She also perceived race as just melanin. Therefore, one could assume how she approaches it in the classroom, with color blindness, or by defending White nationalists.

Ashley viewed the picture *Native Carrying Some Guns, Bibles, Amorites on Safari* and commented, “It almost seems like a schizophrenic with a lot of ideas did it”. She also stated about the image, “It seems to be a little negative towards the White person” and seemed dismayed by what the image portrayed about European-American individuals and their involvement in domination. Throughout the rest of the interview, The mention of race occurred during the language segment in which Ashley described the African-American vernacular as “cultural”, but not the dominant language. However, when asked about her southern drawl, she mentioned that it is of the dominant language, just with an “inflection”.

Ashely again mentioned race towards the end of the interview when speaking about her African-American family housekeeper, whom she described as “Mamie in *Gone With the Wind*”. Ashley spoke with much adoration for her family housekeeper. Interesting to this reflective thought is the absence of a class and race correlation. Ashley spoke about her love for all and diversified values. However, through a critical lens, her habitus and the position she held in the field as a European-American woman of an upper
middle-class upbringing disallowed for a thorough understanding of the societal reproduction of dominance. As Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) stated,

Recognition of the legitimacy of a domination always constitutes a historically variable force which strengthens the established balance of power because, in preventing apprehension of the power relations as power relations, it tends to prevent the dominated groups or classes from securing all the strength that realization of their strength would give them. (pp. 14-15)

The field and its structure are contingent upon both the dominant and subordinate positions and their buy-in to the structure as legitimate. Without the ingrained belief that the system is legitimate, the system or field collapses.

Katherine did not view race as a factor in academic success. When asked about race affecting a students’ academic identity, “I don’t think it effects it to be honest. I think that more people try to associate the background and things like that, but I don’t think the race in general influences academic identity”. Katherine, an African-American female of a middle-class upbringing, raised in the southern region of the U.S., spoke about how her mother prioritized grades when Katherine was younger. Grades were a priority, and ascriptive characteristics were irrelevant to Katherine as a child and as a teacher. The habitus and position in the field is important here because it indicates that Katherine perceived success as hard work and motivation. She encouraged her students with positive adjectives but also by telling them no matter what resources they had at home, there were others available at the nearby libraries and parks. She told them, “no excuses”. These statements indicate Katherine’s views of the field as an easily
understood institution without many outside variables standing in the way of students’ success. The field, in her sense, is what you make it. Her disposition, her valued knowledge in math, and her childhood experiences with grades may have led to such an orientation.

When discussing class, language, and knowledge in their interviews, participants Kinsey and Renee introduced the subject of race many times. Kinsey addressed race when discussing *Native Carrying Some Guns, Bibles, Amorites on Safari*. She began her analysis of the art by discussing the prevalence of colonization; she then correlated it to dominance by the use of firearms and its long-lasting effects of dominance and maintenance of the upper class. Kinsey stated,

Um, well yeah, I think that’s how, right what I think we are dealing with now and have been for centuries. Um, you know, anywhere that has been colonialized by the Europeans or even where they are physically um is still really exploited. They exploit the people, the natural resources, um, and I think now it has just kind of translated more now into corporate practices. The same strategy and system is still prevalent in how things um, in Africa, the natural resources are still exploited for financial benefit of Europeans, European corporations.

Kinsey added,

The one thing about this school is it’s very diverse, and because each teacher teaches each *quote unquote* “ability level”, you know we have the gifted class, the high achievers, and the generals, but unfortunately, it’s a visual indication to see the gifted students are usually primarily Caucasian and high achievers, which I
will say I see more and more is mixed, um, but still in the general classes there
might be one or two Caucasian.

Kinsey further revealed, “Well, I will say unfortunately I’ve seen teachers, unfortunately
White teachers, and unfortunately Black teachers, be a lot tougher on Black kids.”

Kinsey spoke of race in reference to the effects of the domination of African
Americans and how it impacted their potential for success in school. Her habitus and
sociocurricular position in the field as an African American woman allowed for her
orientation towards race and dominance in the Black/White dichotomy.

Renee’s discourse on race, as mentioned earlier, also surfaced in the positions of
class, and knowledge. Two sections of critical interest to the subject of this study—the
reproduction of social norms—were how Renee referred to “ghetto” and individuals of
minority races who are attempting to assimilate dominant cultures. For example,

One, I think I would question this White kid, “What do you know about the
ghetto? You’re not dressed like, when I think about the ghetto I think about
baggy pants, chains, kind of slouched over.” But this kid has a hat, kind of
preppy, and you have this guy holding the can, you know, for him. That’s not
what ghetto is, and if you take it beyond the ghettoness I guess of appearance, I
feel like when a Black person talks about ghetto, um, I think there are struggles
behind that word. They had to probably beg for food, like this building, it’s not
going to be a nice building, not clean, they have rats, probably unsanitary, a
horrible condition for a kid to live in. Um, I also think about, what came to mind
is you have this White kid drawing on there, and he’s able to get away with it.
But if you had a Black kid do the same thing, he would get a harsher consequence.

Renee revealed,

I call it a special place for my heart for Black students who are somewhat troublesome. I don’t know I kind of worry for them. I see that they have so much potential. It’s just that when they go home it’s not like how I was brought up. When I came home, like my grandmother cooked, I didn’t have to, I mean I washed dishes and I helped her here and there, but she always said do your homework first.

Renee explained,

Yeah, I mean, it’s the system you know, and you can’t, you can’t satisfy everybody, and I hate that. And also, kind of going back to race and class, you see in a gifted rotation a lot more White students than Black. When I see those Black students, I’m like, not more welcoming, but I applaud them. Because I feel like those who are Black in a gifted rotation with, I guess, the White kids all day, so you tend to be more friendly, you may even be friends with those in that class. But when you go to P.E. or health where that generally doesn’t matter, you still need to, what’s the term? Because if you ignore the general kids who are Black, what’s the term? ’Cause in Korean we call it, we call them Twinkie, or to be White. You’re Asian on the outside and white on the inside, or a banana. Those that think they are, because when you start to hang out with White people you tend to look down on other Koreans, which is why they have that term. Um, I say
that to say um, Black students who are in a gifted rotation, I kind of um, I don’t want to say worry, but I feel that there is kind of another conflict that they need to deal with, when it is a class where everybody’s mixed. So, it’s like, “Do I need to talk to my hood friends or my White class friends?” So, yeah. . . .

Renee’s discourse indicated her perceptions of the ghetto, in that she associated it with African-American culture and African-American culture ultimately with struggle. She spoke of having a special place in her heart for African-American students and applauding African-American students for placement in the gifted rotation. Renee’s responses revealed that her habitus identified the dominated position of African-American students, and she attempted to teach with cultural relevance through sympathy and understanding. Still, she upheld the system that she perceived as unfair and discriminatory towards African-American students through her instruction and promotion of tracking and standardized tests.

Summary of finding five. Race was implicated multiples times throughout the interviews with each participant. Although the participants did not correlate the influences of race, language, knowledge, gender, and class, as I attempted to do as a holistic view of this study, several strong excerpts of discourse indicated the social construct of race as a significant theme in the sociocurricular position of students. Thus, the discourse on race by four of the five teachers indicated the construct appeared many times within their cognitive processes of dominance, in the school, and macrosociological (Fairclough, 2010) fields, whether they realized it or not.
The habitus is essential to understanding an individual’s disposition to reality. Therefore, the habitus of educators may influence the effectiveness of their instruction. In many cases, the data indicated that the structure of the habitus was contingent upon the occupied sociocurricular position of the educator. The following paragraphs provide a summary of the interpretative repertoires that give insight of how the participating educators’ habitus and position within the field influence their classroom instruction as dominant and legitimated norms are reproduced.

Makayla spoke a great deal on the importance of being an American by assimilating to dominant American culture. When asked about immigration and the tolerance for people who practiced cultural values outside the mainstream, Makayla offered in-depth insight of how her own sociocurricular position has influenced her reality. As an individual from a “very high academic family” and a “high social class” that legally migrated to North America, her disposition towards assimilation and immigration was influenced, and her perception of legitimate behavior was revealed many times throughout the interview.

We don’t need people coming in cutting the line who aren’t going to assimilate, who don’t really want to be here, who aren’t willing to learn the language. Like I tell my kids, whatever culture whatever customs you have from your country you keep them alive at home, that’s fantastic. Like we have German customs, but I don’t expect it to be Germany outside the door, I’m glad it’s not.
Makayla stressed the importance of upholding dominant American norms, and even though she encouraged her students to practice their customs in their homes, she advised them to assimilate to American traditions legitimated by European Americans in particular. She believed that, when moving to America, you must assimilate—that is key—and do not expect to see your culture represented “outside the door”. She stated that if you do not assimilate, you will not have full access to American opportunities.

Analyzing Makayla’s comments for legitimate American behavior through a critical paradigm, I counter the participant’s ideals of American citizenship. America is a melting pot of cultural diversity. Therefore, assimilating is not precisely the key to success. Her habitus and her comments to her students about being an American who only practices original cultural values in the home is very telling about her influence on what she perceives as legitimate academic identity.

Ashley’s habitus was most notable in her perception of gender. As mentioned earlier, she grew up in an environment that silenced homosexuality and gave more freedom and independence to the male children. Therefore, her reality of gender is that males and females have their positions of legitimate behavior. When students consider crossing these lanes, she stated that it is okay to “experiment”, but that they were too young to make permanent gender changes or to conceptualize their gender behaviors if they were outside of the mainstream norm. Ashley believed that she was tolerant of gender variables. However, she described a homosexual male student’s behavior as a “performance”. When asked about her opinion of a female playing on the football team she responded,
But if there was a girl who likes football and could play football and wasn’t worried about getting hurt, then I think they ought to let her play. And I think some of the boys, based on ability, would be accepting, and some of the boys would just treat it as a complete joke, as would some of the parents or coaches.

Because of Ashley’s habitus, her reality is that many people would find a girl playing football, regardless of her ability, to be “a complete joke”. Her perception of gender influences her expectations of her students. Thus, because she occupies an authoritative position, the influence on the gender behavior and expectations among her students was apparent.

Katherine’s habitus, in regards to the school field, was concerned with instructional discipline and good grades. She mentioned that, during her childhood, grades were very important to her and her mother. To Katherine, good grades and success in school was contingent upon work ethic in the educational field. In an observation of her class, her students recited a pledge, in which they stated, “Failure is not an option”. From a critical lens, failure is an option and a valuable learning experience that promotes critical reflection and growth (Lunkenheimer & Wang, 2017). Therefore, her habitus became the most evident in its influence on the value of knowledge.

Katherine’s natural strengths resided in her ability to manipulate equations. Therefore, her knowledge was one that had always maintained value and received supported from the social and educational fields as a prominent skill. Consequently, her habitus was situated in society with this intangible value. Thus, her habitus believed in
the field and its structure because of her valued position. Katherine’s agency to uphold the field and to legitimate success and failures of individuals was contingent upon her position and habitus. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) described this incident:

Given that (1) an educational system cannot fulfill its essential function of inculcating unless it produces and reproduces, by the means proper to the institution, the conditions for pedagogic work capable of reproducing, within the limits of the institution’s means, i.e. continuously, at the least expense and in regular batches, a habitus as homogeneous and durable as possible in as many of the legitimate addresses as possible; and given (2) that, in order to fulfill its external function of cultural and social reproduction, an educational system must produce a habitus conforming as closely as possible to the principles of the cultural arbitrary which it is mandated to reproduce. (p. 57)

Katherine’s habitus had been developed and nurtured through the mainstream educational system. She had found success in that system, so she was able to uphold the reproductive nature of the dominant, legitimated, and desired educational habitus and influence her students to do the same. Doing so suppresses those who encompass habitus that contrast the field.

Kinsey’s habitus was shaped by multiple experiences. Among them were transitions to different home environments. Kinsey lived with her mother until she was eight months old. She then lived in foster care from eight months old until she was eight years old. She lived with her mother again from age eight to eleven and from eleven to eighteen with her grandparents. She grew up in the Midwest and attended college in the
Northeast before moving to the Southeast. When asked if her childhood experiences had influenced who she was, Kinsey stated,

I think so, if someone would have asked me that 10 years ago, I would have said “no way”. But as I get older, and start being more self-aware, and realized it has played a big part on who I am. Like there’s good and bad about it, like it’s kind of a double-edged sword because I feel like I’m not really obligated to anyone. Because I’m thinking like yeah, if I grew up in a two-parent household and lived with them the whole time growing up, I would feel that connection. Because a lot of times people growing up feel that connection or if there’s issues or whatever they still feel like “oh I’m”, you know, but I just kind of . . . yeah.

Kinsey’s habitus and its influence on her classroom instruction became apparent multiple times throughout her interview and classroom observation. Throughout the interview, she spoke about class, gender, language, knowledge, and race unlike any other candidate in that she critically correlated the influence of each characteristic and deduced their influences in the school field. Because of Kinsey’s life experiences, her habitus placed her in disagreements and discontented feelings with some of her coworkers, who she viewed as upholding dominant cultural and social norms. She believed in tolerance of difference and consideration of the marginalized. When asked how she felt about America, she stated, “I am a very proud American; it’s the only country I know; it’s my home. And I can be critical of it, especially since it’s affecting my people”.

Renee’s habitus became very apparent when speaking of obedience to rules that promote social and cultural reproduction. She moved to the U.S. as a six-year-old child.
She mentioned that she grew up in a community that shared her ethnic background, as far as supermarkets, churches, restaurants, and a bowling alley. However, she also spoke of how her grandparents would often share with her that she needed to adjust her behavior when around European Americans. Renee stated her grandfather’s advice:

My grandfather always said, like be careful when you are around White people. You don’t want to make them upset. Like don’t be too loud and things, kind of like I had to be cautious. You are in their land kind of thing, um, and so, for him actually me working in a American school is a big, a proud moment for him. I remember growing up him saying, “It’s hard out there, so do the best you can, you know, but it’s still a White society.”

Her habitus within the American field was based on her race and immigration. In the classroom, I witnessed her habitus and orientation to following dominant rules impact her instruction. A student was wearing a hoodie in the classroom. Renee asked the student to remove the hoodie. The student replied, “Oh my God, it’s just a hoodie”.

Renee replied, “I know, I like wearing hoodies too, but it’s a school rule, ok”. Renee viewed social tolerance as a needed discipline in the school field, but she did not wish to resist school rules. In regards to the achievement gap, she mentioned that standardized testing was subjective, and tracking was unfair. However, in other statements, she exhibited an “it is what it is” habitus regarding inequality in the school, and if the students did not like it, they could study their way out of it. Renee’s habitus of being cautious and not being too obvious arose a few other times in her discourse on race, class, knowledge, and language. Each time, as mentioned in previous sections, Renee’s
cautiousness worked as an agent of social and cultural reproduction, albeit her social consciousness of the dominated.

I inquired each participant about their cultural beliefs, values, and access to resources as children. The study of the educators’ habitus is significant in that it speaks to their orientation to dominant social and cultural norms. Additionally, in some ways, it structures their reality and the reality that they expect to see. In this regard, the habitus and its correlation to power, rather in a dominant or dominated social position, are the location of one’s institutions of life (Bourdieu, 1989).

Throughout the interview and observation processes, I recorded multiple moments in which the teacher’s habitus influenced the delivery of their curriculum. What is more, in many cases, their habitus worked as agents for social and cultural reproduction of dominant norms established in society and perpetuated through the educational field. The habitus is a manifestation of the social and cultural reproduction of norms that the participants have grown up experiencing (Bourdieu, 1985b; Bourdieu, 2002; Diamond et al., 2004; Nash, 1999; Reay 2004a). After analyzing the interpretive repertoires of each participant, I found that without critically reflective processes and critical insight as to how the habitus perceives its reality, resisting social reproductive properties in many cases seemed impossible. The next chapter draws further correlations of the data and provides suggestions for the academic field regarding the reproduction of social and dominant norms amongst middle school students.
CHAPTER 5

INTERPRETATION AND SIGNIFICANCE: TO REPEL GHOSTS

To repel ghosts is to resist the unwanted company of supernatural forces. For Jean Michel Basquiat, it may have represented the notion of avoiding portions of his past that he already extinguished. Similarly, I view repelling ghosts as preventing the repetition of moments of discontent. For the purposes of this chapter, “To Repel Ghosts” symbolizes the habits of minds of educators to negotiate the dominant spirits of legitimacy as they are embodied. The ghosts of reputable philosophical stances, the endoxa, have initiated the reproduction of norms that uphold dominance and standardization. These represent the luminous forces of reality that critical educators wish to repel.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the degree of agency for social and cultural reproduction within the habitus of middle school educators. The first chapter provided the rationale for this study, along with a historical introduction of the theoretical framework. Using the overarching theories of social reproduction, cultural reproduction, and resistance, correlations were drawn between these theories and their influences on the middle school student’s self-concept. Per Aristotle, those who have reputable and wise opinions of society, ta endoxa, have held philosophical standpoints and practices that have been used and reproduced as legitimate knowledge for centuries (Aristotle & Barnes, 2014). This reproduction of knowledge and societal norms challenges the
individualities of those who do not conform. The initiation of this research was due to my personal experiences and inclinations to the reproduction of knowledge as a critical artist. However, a review of the literature supports the notion that the education field operates as a systematic reproducer of legitimate norms, thereby compromising the individual uniqueness of the student’s identity.

To support the validity of this investigation, the second chapter of this study detailed the literature relevant to the incident of social reproduction from theorists who support its negative implications as well as the naysayers’ claims. Research suggests that the individuals viewed as wise and reputable have been overrepresented by European and European-American males of high class, who are heterosexual, native speakers of the dominant language (Apple, 1993; Handsfield, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Orr, 2011; Reay, 2004b; Reay, 2006). Thus, these individuals are the legitimators of behavior and holders of power. Consequently, their values have been socially reproduced and inculcated upon others in ways that indicated dominance and subordinance. Hence, this arbitrary hierarchy of power influences the habitus of both the dominant and dominated (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). This incidence transcends into the school field as positions of hierarchy, contingent upon students’ ascriptive characteristics and their access to social capital (Bourdieu, 1967, 1969, 1985). Accordingly, sociocurricular positions are formed (Friedkin & Thomas, 1997). Students who embody dispositions of the desired norms of class, gender, knowledge, language, and race maintain higher levels of social capital, thereby higher field positions (Friedkin & Thomas, 1997). The educators’ influence is relevant in the incidence of sociocurricular positions because their habitus and perception
of legitimacy are intertwined within their delivery of the curriculum (Ferrare & Apple, 2015; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Kincheloe, 2008; Riley, 2010). Therefore, those educators who maintain habitus of dominance may function to advocate the dominant norms in subtle yet pervasive ways that indicate to some students that their dispositions are devalued (Ferrare & Apple, 2015; Kincheloe, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1997). Consequently, the understanding of self, which undergoes critical developmental processes during middle childhood (Eccles, 1999; Rhodes, Roffman, Reddy, & Fredriksen, 2004), is subjected to the habitus of the educator and their negotiation of legitimated norms. This occurrence may correlate to the academic success of the student (Dumais, 2002; 2005; Fabiansson, 2015; Ferrare & Apple, 2015; Nasir & Saxe, 2003; Rhodes et al., 2004; Riley, 2010, VanKoughnett & Smith, 1996). Additionally, the students’ pursuit of goals throughout the rest of their lives may be influenced as they continue to negotiate their positions within a variety of fields, such as careers and relationships (Dumais, 2002; Orr, 2011; Warrington, Younger, & Williams, 2000). Despite the noted incidents of social and cultural reproduction, a study has not been conducted to analyze the intersectionality of positions, to what degree of agency are middle school educators involved, and how do they process the influence of their habitus using a visual methodology. Therefore, this investigation, with the support of the literature, was conducted to determine the degree of agency for sociocurricular positions and the indications of the development of self-concepts of the students.

Critical to this investigation was the methodology. To investigate the reproduction of norms of the endoxa and the ways they influence the school field
properly, a qualitative methodology that analyzed multiple perspectives was necessary. The third chapter was committed to explaining the process of choosing the most effective and conducive methodology. After careful consideration of the problem, and my own disposition as the researcher, I chose the critically visual bricolage methodology. Critical bricoleurs analyze problems through the observation of multiple lenses. The methodology is unorthodox, for it draws upon multiple sources of data and multiple orientations of the struggle for power. The effects of dominant reproduction were analyzed as they operate through the characteristics of class, gender, knowledge, language, and race. Each of these characteristics was infused into the analysis, as their intersectionalities were upheld by individuals through a multitude of combinations. Additionally, a visual nature was also added to the methodology. Works of art, as perceived through the eye of the beholder, imply the viewer’s reality of the world, and his or her position within it (Amburgy, 2011; Higgs, 2008; Knoblauch, Laurier, Petschke, & Schnettler, 2008; Pink, 2013; Rose, 2016). Therefore, I presented artwork to the participants as the point of entry text (POET) to elicit responses that drew implications of their realities within sociocurricular positions (Kincheloe & Berry, 2008). The art either upheld dominant mainstream norms or resisted them, and it was repeatedly looped into the interviews as a tool of correlating the participants’ dialectical discourses. I then recorded the responses to the art and analyzed the responses by using critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis is a system of analyzing the language used by participants in hopes of understanding their cognitive processes of social phenomena (Fairclough, 2010; Foucault, 1972, 1973). To investigate how teachers perceive
systematic dominance and even notions of hegemony, it was important to analyze their language as they spoke their understanding of each of my research characteristics. Thus, Chapter 3 ended with a description of the participants and school sites. I intended to interview six teachers from two different schools. One of the schools for the study offered an international baccalaureate program; the other school offered a traditional comprehensive program. Both schools featured diverse student populations. I chose to focus my study on schools that were diverse, yet with differing curriculums, to analyze the influence (if any) of the curriculum design on the dispositions of the educators. The methodology, site locations, and data analysis procedures were critical in investigating my research questions. After detailing the methodology and study design in Chapter 3, I implemented the plan in the field and yielded results for the inquiries. The next section briefly describes Chapter 4, the findings of this investigation, and the major themes that emerged.

The findings of Chapter 4 indicated five major implications for the purposes of this study. Under the sociocurricular positions of class, gender, knowledge, language, and race, five middle school educators were interviewed using a critically visual bricolage methodology. Their interviews were then analyzed using critical discourse analysis and interpretive repertoires. When creating the interpretive repertoires of each participant regarding their disposition to sociocurricular positions, it became evident that societal dominance is reproduced through individual orientations to the established legitimacy. Particularly of interest in this study were middle school educators’ negotiations of the reproduction of dominant norms in the presence of students who
display resistance. My position in this study as a critical theorist was to analyze the roles that power and exclusion play in the reproduction of legitimate knowledge by way of the authoritative individuals in a school field.

Through an analysis of discourse, a critical theorist is able to draw critical insight as to how social and dominant norms are reproduced, legitimately to some, despite the consequence of inequality. Using Fairclough’s (2010) semiotic conditions, the discourse of the participants was critically analyzed for language of hegemony. The findings indicated that teachers’ habitus towards society, influenced by their social positions, affect their consciousness of societal legitimacy in class, gender, knowledge, language, and race. Therefore, the agency to uphold dominant norms transfers from the educators’ orientations to their understanding of legitimate knowledge within the school field. Since the educators hold authoritative positions in the school field, their endoxa is reproduced through their curriculum and instruction. Thus, as a result, dominant norms continuously cycle through, and notions of legitimacy remain rarely challenged.

Provided are the research questions that guided this investigation. Following the research questions is a discussion of the specific findings and their significance in answering the research inquiries.

1. To what degree of agency do middle school educators uphold mainstream norms of legitimacy in the sociocurricular positions of class, gender, knowledge, language, and race?
   a. How do teachers respond to images that appear to resist the dominant cultural norms?
b. How do teachers respond to images that appear to uphold the dominant cultural norms?

2. How does the cultural habitus of middle school educators influence the delivery of their curriculum and instruction?

Interpretations and Implications for Question One and Question Two

An analysis of the data revealed implications for the reproduction of social and cultural norms. Additionally, an analysis of the educators’ habitus exposed significant implications for pedagogic action. The following sections present discussions of the agency for curricular positions and the influence of the habitus in order to answer the guiding research questions and provide literature on its prominence in the educational field.

The Agency for Class and the Influence of the Habitus

I introduced the social construct of class to the participants by showing them a piece of art titled, *Native Carrying Some Guns, Bibles, Amorites on Safari* by Jean Michel Basquiat (1982). The painting featured an individual, painted and filled with the color black, carrying a crate box above his head. In front of the man carrying the cargo was another man, not filled in with any color, only outlined with black, carrying an armed weapon. The image also included writings such as “colonization: part two in a series, vol.vi”, and “good money in savages”. Thus, the conversation that arose from all five participants were their dispositions to colonialism. Within the discourse, each participant indicated that the individual with the armed weapon would be the dominant individual in the picture because he was capable of inducing violence.
Historically, this world has undergone violent battles for territory, strikes in the name of religion, and wars fought for legitimate prescriptions of various nominations to be upheld and reproduced. Many of these disputes were handled with weapons, and the winners gained dominion of the land and customs. Thus, the plunder of battle resulted in levels of hierarchy, reproduced through multiple generations of descendants. Those who had the disposition to take dominion by force garnered their superiority. Its sustenance allowed for the privileged positions of those related to them. Therefore, the physicality and orientations to battle for legitimacy resulted in a struggle for power. The following paragraphs provide the implied interpretations of the educators’ agency to reproduce legitimate class positions and their negotiations of the habitus to justify the existence of sociocurricular positions.

Four of the five participants did not correlate the weapon and violence to the onset of cycled dominance. Later during the interviews, I asked each participant how they felt about the presence of class stratification in North American society. One participant, Kinsey, correlated colonial history and the force of power by weaponry to the creation and division of economic classes. The other four participants did not make such a correlation, but instead provided reasons for class division that relied on the willingness of an individual to work. When asked if they thought class was a mobile construct, four of the five participants stated that class was contingent upon the amount of work ethic an individual was willing to emit. Therefore, regarding instruction, these educators were of the habitus of mind to acknowledge the presence of a class structure, and at times its unfair implications on children. However, they expected their students to surpass
economic influences by not holding them as a crutch and to continue to strive for their goals. These four educators indicated that if a student needed resources, they would find them various means to access them, granted the child was in good standing with the teacher. Although at times they upheld the notion of “pulling yourself up by your bootstraps”, there were also many comments made by four of the five participants, regarding the pervasive unfairness of the class system (Drotos & Cilesiz, 2014). One participant acknowledged an unfair nature about the class structure. However, she agreed with that, as long as the majority of society did. Thus, four of the five educators interviewed upheld the mainstream norm that class is about willingness, regardless of its moments of unfairness and inescapability. Despite stating that class seemed to serve as an unfair advantage for some of their students, they still felt that class mobility was possible and that work ethic was the chief cause for class division. Four of the five participants stated their belief that individuals typically found themselves in low-class positions because of their laziness. However, one of the participants, Kinsey, suggested that class is an issue that has been reproduced through years of humanity, resulting from aggressive force used by entities to gain land and power, referring back to the incidence of colonialism. Thus, Kinsey differed from the other participants because she believed that class was cycled through dominant individuals who benefitted from hostile takeovers, and their descendants reaped the societal power.

Historically, class has been used among many societies to categorize individuals into positions of access to resources (Farkas, Grobe, Sheehan, & Shaun, 1990; Giroux, 2001; Reay, 1995; 2004). These positions have resulted in three main denominations of
class: low, middle, and high. This hierarchy of class positions allows some individuals to hold, maintain, and reproduce their social capital because they are in positions that allow them to have more access to resources and opportunities (Farkas et al., 1990; Giroux, 2001; Reay, 1995; 2004). Within the school system, education was once thought of as a means to gain class mobility. However, students who were once excluded from school institutions because of their low-class status and treated as the external other became the internal other as they were continuously labeled and perceived for that status (Beckman & Cooper, 2005; Reay, 2004b, 2006). Through the demonization of individuals with low-class status, many upheld the opinion that those of low-class statues deserved to be in that position, neglecting the historical reproduction of power. These individuals of the upper echelon upheld that they were legitimately low-class because of their lazy work ethics (Beckman & Cooper, 2005; Reay, 2004b, 2006). This investigation was conducted to analyze to the degree of influence the educators’ natural orientations towards class stratification had on their teaching. The next paragraph details my findings related to this influence.

The nature to uphold class structure, yet acknowledge its unfairness, was a striking juxtaposition found within the interpretive repertoires of my participants. As I interviewed each participant, I asked her to provide a brief description of her class backgrounds. One of the participants was from an upper-class family structure, one was from an upper middle-class family structure, two were from a middle-class family structure, and one was from a foster care environment. The participants’ childhood
experiences concerning their class positions came up several times as they worked to process their views on class during the interview.

Makayla stated that her family was of the upper-class status. When she viewed the artwork mentioned earlier, *Native Carrying Some Guns, Bibles, Amorites on Safari*, she spoke of the individual carrying the gun as the one who held dominance. Later Makayla also spoke of her family ancestry, some belonging to fascist organizations in the 1940s, and others were antifascists. She spoke a great deal about her family and their experiences with World War II, the holocaust, and the power of the Nazis, which eventually caused portions of her family to flee. Her family was able to enter other European countries illegally in search for safety and a new life. Makayla perceived the benefits of having some of her family in those dominantly dangerous positions during the war as legitimate. She also perceived the idea of some of her family having to escape illegally to safe havens as a legitimate and necessary actions.

However, when speaking of her students, their class positions, and the positions of individuals who were new to the country by illegal means, she found these notions illegitimate. She stated that class stratification is “the natural order”, and that without it, “we would all be stuck in the mud together”. She also stated, regarding illegal immigrants, that they were breaking the laws and had no right to claim American citizenship, or “jump the lines” for safety and benefits. These comments imply that Makayla viewed her families’ previous actions and statuses as legitimate. However, members of other cultures attempting similar actions are dangerous and ill willed. Furthermore, Makayla proclaimed that class stratification was a natural occurrence.
Thus, this “survival of the fittest mindset” may influence her perception of her students who are members of the low class. The theories of social and cultural reproduction because of the habitus are upheld here, in that Makayla plays her dominant position in the field, and accommodates the happenstance of class in contradictory modes (Bourdieu 1967, 1969, 1977, 1985a, 1985b).

Ashley, whose habitus was oriented towards an upper middle-class background, viewed class with countering perspectives. On one hand, she stated that class stratification is an unfair concept. On the other hand, Ashley suspected that many individuals occupied low class positions because of a lack in their work ethic. Katherine, who was also from a middle-class background, also believed that class stratification was a mobile social structure that can be manipulated simply through hard work. Here, listening to these two educators speak of class without the correlation to historical acts that have given some groups of individuals more social capital, made me reflect on studies that suggested that class is based on a “pulling yourself up by the bootstraps” mentality (Beckman & Cooper, 2005; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Drotos & Cilesiz, 2014; Reay, 2004b, 2006; Tyler, 2011). Intriguing to this concept of class is that those who hold dominance naturally perceive the impoverished as a group of individuals who deserve their position. Although Ashley and Katherine viewed the image Native Carrying Some Guns, Bibles, Amorites on Safari with the cognition of power, violence, and class, they disregarded the correlation when speaking of their realities within the class structure.
This discourse suggested that these educators accommodated socioeconomic status so that it seemed reasonable to their position within such a system. To view class as consequence of luck and battle would demote their merits and hard work, or their perception of hard work. Therefore, those in a lower-class position must deserve it. Theorists of social reproduction suggest that dominant norms are reproduced because of the acceptance of all participants within the field (Abrahams & Ingram, 2013; Bourdieu, 1967, 1977, 2002; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). The knowledge of injustice is accommodated by the mind in such a way that it legitimizes the oppressive nature of some of the field positions (Bourdieu, 1967, 1977, 2002). Therefore, the negotiation of social and cultural reproduction transcends to the delivery of curriculum and instruction as these teachers accommodate the presence of students and their parents who are in low class positions in a status that they self-garnered.

Renee spoke to her accommodation on class, and through her responses, it became evident how it influences her position towards her students. When shown an image created by Banksy, which featured a spray-painted clause “Ghetto 4 Life”, Renee yielded a telling reaction that implied the influence of her habitus towards her agency for upholding stereotypes and expectations. The painting featured a child spraying the phrase “Ghetto 4 Life” on a brick wall. Next to the child was what appeared to be a butler, holding a tray of additional cans of spray paint. Renee commented that she was offended by the painting because it did not exemplify the ghetto. She seemed angered that the kid dared comment about the ghetto when, because he was dressed in a miniature suit, he knew nothing about the ghetto. Renee correlated the word ghetto to baggy pants,
dirty conditions, and a lack of food. The fashion correlation indicated that she perceived a cultural preference of baggy pants to dirty conditions and a lack of food. On the contrary, the little boy who was spraying the wall was immediately associated with a higher class because of his dress code, and race. He appeared to be of a light complexion; therefore; the participants assumed he was European American. Class then, is essentially correlated to race and cultural choices. Assuming that the dress choice is a class phenomenon and not a cultural choice implies that Renee associates African-American cultural choices as impoverished.

Kinsey’s reactions to the class photos were remarkably different from the other four participants. Upon seeing Native Carrying Some Guns, Bibles, Amorites on Safari, Kinsey made correlations between what she perceived as European colonialism and its generational effects on class stratification. She spoke of how she saw the advantage of violent weapons during colonialism for the ones enforcing their dominance. Kinsey also drew correlations between the dominance incurred through violent raids of land by applying it to the current class system of the United States. She suggested that the incidence of high, medium, and low classes are consequences of dominant and dominated individuals reproducing their positions.

Kinsey also indicated that the stratified class system could be witnessed within the school system through the precedence of tracking students. She noted that mostly European-American students, perhaps descendants of previous dominant position holders, populated the classes deemed “gifted”. A gaping educational disparity could be noted when she spoke of the “general” class population, which was almost always
entirely African American. These acknowledgments are significant for two critical reasons. The first reason is that Kinsey correlated class disparities to race and identified that relationship within the curriculum structure. The second reason is that Kinsey acknowledged that once students are tracked into leveled classes, the expectations of the teachers vary for the students, contingent upon their leveled position. Therefore, if a student is placed in a “gifted” class, they are expected to achieve. If a student is placed in the “general” class, the student is expected to come from a low-class environment and thereby expected to fail. These acknowledgments indicate Kinsey’s perspective of the field and its reproductive nature.

The Agency for Gender and the Influence of the Habitus

The sociocurricular position of gender was undertaken in this study to analyze to what degree of agency middle school educators uphold traditional and mainstream gender roles. A review of the literature suggested that the school field often operates to uphold legitimated gender-based behaviors (Dumais, 2002; Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2007; Evans-Winter & Esposito, 2010; Farkas et al., 1990; Hovart & Antonio, 1999; Ispa-Landa, 2013; Morris, 2007; Orr, 2011; Warrington et al., 2000). Historically, male students have been influenced to act as risk-takers who often participate in physical activities. Moments of childhood rebelliousness and independence is often encouraged within the male students (Entwisle et al., 2007; Farkas et al., 1990; Hovart & Antonio, 1999; Ispa-Landa, 2013; Morris, 2007; Orr, 2011; Warrington et al., 2000). Additionally, participating in activities that induce diverse cultural thinking, such as fine arts, is discouraged for fear of evoking a feminine disposition (Entwisle et al., 2007; Farkas et
Contrarily, research suggests that female students are encouraged to embody characteristics that starkly contrast male expectations (Entwisle et al., 2007; Farkas et al., 1990; Hovart & Antonio, 1999; Ispa-Landa, 2013; Morris, 2007; Orr, 2011; Warrington et al., 2000). The female students are often fostered to be dependent, rule-followers who rarely participate in athletic activities. Females are also encouraged to participate in the fine arts, and emotional expressions are welcomed. These gender norms are often applied to children at a very young age within their household, and continuously reproduced and supported within the school system and society at large. Consequently, male students may be limited in their opportunities to participate in legitimated feminine behaviors and activities sometimes deemed too academic (Orr, 2011; Warrington et al., 2000). Female students may be limited in that they are expected to depend on norms and guidelines without the use of critical thinking and resistance (Evans-Winter & Esposito, 2010; Ispa-Landa, 2013; Morris, 2007; Warrington et al., 2000).

Therefore, societal structures influence the behavior of students, contingent on their gender, and consequently their academic identities. Boys are traditionally expected to act rebellious and act as risk-takers who negotiate the value of specific academic courses and activities. Fighting and getting into trouble are just symptoms of “boys being boys” (Warrington et al., 2000). Girls are traditionally expected to engage in cultural activities obediently and studiously (Evans-Winter & Esposito, 2010; Ispa-Landa, 2013; Morris, 2007; Warrington et al., 2000). They are viewed with disapproval if they exhibit
aggression or loudness (Ispa-Landa, 2013; Morris, 2007). If perpetuated and fostered throughout childhood, these gender expectations may have significant implications for salary and career disparities. The research indicates a significant difference in gender among the degree types sought (Dumais, 2002; Jacobs, 1996). Therefore, students who succumb to mainstream gender expectations are not only limited within their academic identity, but they also may be adversely affected in their attempt to pursue their career path. The following paragraphs provide my interpretations of the educators’ agency to reproduce legitimate gender expectations, as well as their negotiations of the habitus to justify the incidence of the consequent sociocurricular positons.

For this investigation, the educators’ habitus regarding gender were significantly intertwined with the expectations of the students. The educators viewed two pieces of art that evoked the opinions of gender: Les Demoiselles d’Avignon by Pablo Picasso and Frida Kahlo’s Little Deer. Picasso’s Les Demoiselles d’Avignon features a group of five humans that appear to be female. Their distorted faces almost resemble tribal masks. Kahlo’s Little Deer features a deer struck several times with arrows in the middle of a forest. The head of the deer is not that of a deer, but it is actually the face of the artist, Frida Kahlo. Picasso’s painting has implications regarding the female, her behavior, and her perception by man. The Kahlo’s Little Deer portrays aspects of the female struggle within a male-dominated society with characteristics of feminism. I chose these two pieces of art because the Little Deer appears to challenge mainstream ideals of gender, while Les Demoiselles d’Avignon upholds mainstream ideals of gender, for it portrays five women in the nude. This feature upholds the nature of exposing the female body in
art, which is also particularly visible in visual culture and mainstream media (Amburgy, 2011; Mitchell, 2002).

*Les Demoiselles d’Avignon* and *Little Deer* received varying reactions from the participants, yet these pieces of art initiated significant interpretive repertoires with implications of the educators’ habitus of gender. Makayla, upon viewing *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon*, immediately spoke of her disregard for the art featuring women in the nude. She believed that Picasso painted the women in such a way because he was a womanizer. She viewed his art as his expression, and she stated because it was his perception, she was unbothered by the piece. Critical to this interpretation was Makayla’s need to state that these types of portrayals did not influence her thinking because she “has a skin”. Makayla stated several times throughout the interview that aspects of mainstream culture attempt to identify people’s differences, thus separating the population in negative ways. However, she believed that because “she had a skin”, she maintained a habitus that was unaffected by societal portrayals. In other words, her tough outer shell resisted cultural implications. Thus, when the media portrays information that is purposely produced to denigrate or belittle a subgroup, Makayla claimed that she was completely unbothered by it. This portion of Makayla’s interpretive repertoire is significant in that it suggests her agency for sociocurricular positions as a critical educator.

However, several times in the interview Makayla contradicted that thinking with comments that indicated that she, too, upheld mainstream norms that ostracized subgroups of people, but subgroups to which she did not belong. Because Makayla was a
female, it seemed that art that may have dominated females was disregarded, and she had little to say on the subject. However, it opened the door to her perception of individuals who were outside the traditional genders of male and female and introduced her habitus on students who view themselves as transgender. Immediately, the “other” came to surface during her interpretation of the art as she spoke of her vehement disbelief of the existence of humans that claimed to be anything other than male or female. Makayla suggested that individuals who consider themselves transgender are confused about their biology.

When I asked her about her feelings of transgender students in the classroom, she stated, “Oh my God, ok, luckily, we haven’t faced that here. This is one of the reasons I hope to send my nephew to private school”. This comment is significant because earlier, Makayla stated that people should “get a skin” and avoid identity politics. However, when presented with the idea of her nephew attending a school with students who identify themselves as transgender, she immediately resisted. Makayla’s interpretive repertoire of gender revealed many facets of her habitus and the ways it influenced her reactions to students with differing background experiences. While she appeared to be against feminist movements, transgender identity, and unequal salaries in the workforce, she also indicated moments that addressed her own disposition within her reality of gender, which included implicit bias towards certain students.

When Ashley viewed the art that symbolized gender roles, it evoked her habitus regarding young women and how they are raised with less freedom than young men are. She reflected on her experiences growing up. Her reflections included incidents of her
parents allowing her brother to spend more time with his friends at events unchaperoned. She also reflected on her brother having different household responsibilities, which featured less cleaning than her and her sister.

When the interview solicited how Ashley viewed the current work force regarding gender equality, she spoke of her feelings regarding female and male roles within certain careers. I asked her about her perception regarding females maintaining careers traditionally held by males, such as militaristic positions. Ashley shared that she did not feel that women should hold positions historically held by men. Thus, although Ashley felt that her brother unfairly received more freedom as a child, she upheld the notion of disallowing females to maintain traditionally male jobs. Despite Ashley’s experience and disgruntlement with gender inequality as a child, it appeared that she upheld a variance of her childhood experience in respect to career aspirations. This has implications for her curriculum and instruction as she may encourage or discourage roles to which students aspire because of their gender.

Another instance that had significant implications for Ashley’s habitus of gender, was her mention of homosexual students. When discussing the artwork of Kahlo and Picasso, the incidence of sexual orientation among the students arose. Ashley reflected on her childhood, when it became apparent that a cousin of hers was homosexual. She explained that her entire family was aware of her cousin’s disposition. However, no one ever spoke of his disposition. Everyone in the family asked him about marriage to a woman, but never mentioned his actual apparent orientation. Ashley commented that she wondered why her cousin’s mother would choose to ignore or remain silent about his
disposition. Shortly after this insight, Ashley spoke of her discontent with students of a homosexual orientation who announced their disposition during class time. She felt that a middle school student may be curious about their sexual orientation and may be prone to experiment. However, she was concerned with students who had pronounced themselves homosexual and felt the need to blurt it out during class. This moment is significant to Ashley’s habitus towards gender norms because she earlier spoke of her families’ tendency to remain silent about her cousin’s sexual disposition, or to ignore its incidence and attempt to encourage the mainstream gender expectations upon him. Thus, Ashley had experience with silence regarding resistance and difference, and I perceived traces of this silence about gender when she spoke of her students wishing to verbalize their own dispositions.

When Katherine viewed the art pieces that symbolized gender, she was rather taciturn about her perception. After a few scenarios were posed about gender disparities in college major choices and within the salary ranges of certain occupations, Katherine introduced her habitus, which differed from Ashley in that she did not verbalize her desire for boys and girls to have gender specific jobs as adults. However, Katherine did mention that she gave gender-specific jobs to her students. She mentioned that her female students received cleaning jobs within the classroom, and that her male students were expected to hold the door for student access and lift classroom objects.

Katherine emphasized during the interview that she did not hold any gender expectations for academic work. She specifically used the word *academic*. Katherine viewed student responsibilities and positions outside of textbook knowledge as
I would like to argue that the gender roles that she upheld are indeed nonacademic, and they work to limit students’ potential as the students become accustomed to her anticipations. The roles that Katherine viewed as nonacademic can be viewed as a part of a hidden curriculum, in which her dispositions are intertwined within the identities of her students. Therefore, the sociocurricular position of gender in the expectations of girls versus boys is inevitably being reproduced.

Of the five participants, Renee seemed to resist the mainstream norms regarding gender. Upon several prompts to illicit Renee’s habitus regarding her students and gender expectations, she responded as a critical educator in that she did not hold expectations of her students’ behavior contingent on their gender. Nor did Renee advocate for the agency of students to behave as prescribed gender norms would suggest. Renee also stated her active involvement with the athletes of the school. She supported male and female athletes by attending their sporting events and rooting them on.

Despite Renee’s apparent critical position regarding the behavior of females and males, she did provide her perspective of females and males fighting. She mentioned that she did feel as though males are naturally stronger than females, and she was concerned that females of the current time and society are more willing to entice males into physical altercations. She stated that she was unsure of why that was the case, but females seemed to be more aggressive than ever and that they were enticing males to fight them, as if they had equal physical strengths. Renee commented that she would often tell females not to incite males into physical altercations. This comment is significant in that, although Renee appeared to imbibe critical agency when initially discussing gender disparities, she
later placed societal blame on females and their overtly aggressive behavior without the intention of addressing the social structure that may be influence these actions.

Kinsey had a similar reaction to Renee. She discussed aspects of the feminist movement that she felt were counterproductive. During the interview, after viewing the Kahlo piece of art, we discussed characteristics of the current wave of feminism. Eventually, Kinsey shared her concern that females were attempting to “have their cake and eat it too” during the most recent feminist phase. For example, Kinsey mentioned how feminists may discourage men from using language that downgrades women. However, women are allowed to freely use such language when communicating with each other without such reprimands. Kinsey was concerned that feminism was not so much a call for equality but a shift in power.

When discussing the incidence of transgender and homosexual students of her classes, Kinsey portrayed the agency of a critical educator. She did not discriminate or encourage students to behave as she wished because of their disposition and her comfort level with such positions. However, she did discuss the notion of other teachers on her team, traversing their habitus towards homosexuality in negative ways that discouraged their students’ identity. She stated that some of her peers were especially discouraging towards male students who appeared to exhibit what they believe was feminine behavior. These teachers could be seen admonishing students for exhibiting such behavior in the hallways and classrooms. Kinsey also mentioned that these teachers’ incredible levels of discomfort and their disdainful gossip for these students when the students were not around inherently bothered her. Thus, Kinsey shared information during the interview
that indicated she critically perceived students for their uniqueness and exhibited concerns with the negotiation of power even as a female within a wave of feminism. However, she also provided significant insight regarding the dispositions and reactions of her peers towards students who maintained the arbitrary mainstream norms of gender embodiment.

The Agency for Knowledge and the Influence of the Habitus

The sociocurricular position of knowledge encompasses multiple considerations. For the purposes of this study, I focused on investigating the types of knowledge that were of most value within the school field. A review of the literature suggested that specific types of knowledge have been made legitimate (Apple, 1993; Bourdieu, 1984; Eisner, 2008; Ferrare & Apple, 2015; Rubin, 2007; Valentine & Collins, 2011). Thus, these types of knowledge are reproduced under the guise of supremacy and officialism, and their position of dominance deems all other forms of knowledge illegitimate and uncivilized (Apple, 1993; Ferrare & Apple, 2015). Forms of knowledge such as mathematics and language arts have taken precedence as official types of knowledge, particularly through their prioritization on standardized tests (Aydeniz & Southerland, 2012; Musoleno & White, 2010). Students who have natural dispositions toward knowledge that do not correlate with the desired cultural arbitrary may suffer academically since they are encouraged to appropriate specific types of knowledge as dominant and others as subordinate (Bourdieu, 1984). Thus, their academic identities are jeopardized for the sake of the official knowledge, deemed only by the endoxa as legitimate.
The incidence of standardized testing helps to maintain the dominant position of mathematics and language arts, and to a certain extent, science and social studies. Standardized testing also places pressure on teachers to perform well because their teacher-evaluation scores are often contingent upon the success of their students on the tests (Aydeniz & Southerland, 2012; Donegan, & Trepanier-Street, 1998; Musoleno, & White, 2010). Thus, federal and state mandates operate as the endoxa, for academic institutions legitimize, reproduce, and uphold these mandates. Currently, within the region that I conducted the investigation, the mathematics and language arts sections of the standardized tests are scored the most critically. Thus, these subjects are held as the most legitimate. When conducting the interviews, I was interested in accessing the teachers’ negotiations of finding value for their subjects taught and the value for students’ unique skill sets under the mandates and pressures of standardized testing. In the following paragraphs, I provide interpretations of the educators’ agency to reproduce legitimate knowledge, and their negotiations of the habitus.

For this phase of the interview, the participants again viewed two pieces of art. This time the art focused on the perspective of valued knowledge. One of the pieces of art was *The School of Athens* by Raphael. The other piece of art was *No Ball Games* by Banksy.

When Makayla viewed *The School of Athens*, she initially mentioned that the fact that the art featured only European men was irrelevant. I am not sure what prompted her to begin her interpretation with that comment. However, I found it significant to indicating the components of her habitus and the ways she upheld societal norms. Earlier
when speaking of gender, she commented that identity politics are unnecessary and statements meant to disturb did not affect her because she “has a skin”. It struck me as what Wetherell and Potter (1988) referred to as a disclaimer, a claim made to assert her position and neutralize her interpretation of the art. However, I feel that the aforementioned comment exposed her habitus to the dominance of European and European-American men throughout multiple societies. Counter to the literature that suggests that arbitrary norms of culture are reproduced through dominant figures, her perspective was that dominance is happenstance and work related.

When I asked Makayla about her experience with knowledge and the value of knowledge in the school field, she shared with me that “I’m weird. I come from a very high academic family. I come from a very academically achieving family. My mom and dad—all of us have very high IQs”. Makayla upheld the mainstream norm that such assessments accurately measure individuals’ intelligence and correlate with academic success. The literature suggests that tests used to measure individuals’ intelligence are highly subjective and often skewed (Ayers, 2001; Benson, 2003; Gould, 1981; Stenberg, 2007; Sternberg, Grigorenko, Bundy, 2001). Despite that literature, standardized testing is continuously prioritized in reference to the students’ intelligence, teachers’ abilities, and the school’s overall identity (Aydeniz & Southerland, 2012; Donegan, & Trepanier-Street, 1998; Musoleno, & White, 2010).

Makayla upheld testing as a precursor for success. However, I am concerned about the students who may not do well on such tests, due to a variety of reasons, such as subject matter, and natural inclinations. Of all the participants, contradictions were made
between their perspectives of the test, how they taught, and how they viewed themselves teaching it. To some extent, Makayla, Katherine, Ashley, Renee, and Kinsey stated that the test did not fairly measure their students’ knowledge. However, they taught for successful test scores, and prioritized the test within their curriculum and instruction.

We also discussed the incidence of tracking students into classes and paths designed to serve them at the appropriate levels of rigor. Multiple sources of literature suggest that these track designs have negative implications on the students’ self-concepts (Apple, 2015; Ferrare, 2012; Friedkin & Thomas, 1997; Halliman & Oakes, 1994; Heck, Price, & Thomas, 2004; Lomax, West, Harmon, Viator, & Madaus, 1995; Riley, 2010; Schmidt, Burroughs, Zoido, & Houang, 2015). Students who score well on assessments are placed on tracks deemed gifted or advanced. Students who do not score well on the tests are placed on tracks deemed general or developing. Students who are aware of their track and label attribute their intelligence to it. Frequently, this has led to self-concepts that reject new challenges for fear of not appearing smart, thereby developing a fixed mindset (Dweck, 2007; 2008; Kitsantas, Bland, & Chirinos, 2017; Moon, Brighton, & Callahan, 2003; Park, Callahan, Ryoo, & 2016; Peters, 2016). Conversely, the track may lead to deflated self-concepts in which students believe that their knowledge is not of value, leading them to believe that they are unintelligent, thus perpetuating a self-fulfilling prophecy (Aydeniz & Southerland, 2012; Donegan & Trepanier-Street, 1998; Heck et al., 2004; Lomax et al., 1995; Musoleno & White, 2010; Riley, 2010; Schmidt et al., 2015). Therefore, one could speculate that standardized testing, tracking, and student self-concept are correlated.
Makayla stated that standardized tests are biased and limited. However, when asked about her own intellectual understanding, she suggested that she was highly intelligent because of her test scores. Renee provided a similar habitus of testing when I asked her about her thoughts on tracking because of test scores. Renee stated that she did not like teaching for the test, but that the test was productive in screening students to be placed on their designated tracks. She then later spoke of her discontentment with her gifted classes having more European-American students in them, but countered that thought by mentioning that if students had a problem with the tracked courses, they should study more. When it came to the value of testing and the test scores, four of the five participants seemed to make continuous contradictory dispositions to the incidence of legitimate knowledge being reproduced. Four of them also stated that they disagreed with the notion of testing and its influences on the students’ identities. However, they claimed that it is their job to teach for the test, so that is what they were doing. These contradictory habitus on the value of knowledge suggest that the educators had attempted to negotiate and accommodate the value of their curriculum, although it was obvious to them that it had adverse influences on the identities of their students. These cognitive processes of the culture of testing inculcated upon and accepted by the teachers is necessary to reproduce the mainstream norms of knowledge and maintain social hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1990, 1989).

The Agency for Language and the Influence of the Habitus

This study involved analyzing the discourse of interviews with five participants to assess the habits of their minds that involved the concepts of dominance and
subordination. I chose to analyze the discourse of the interviews because the semiotic understanding of the unstructured interviews induced rich insights and cognitive accommodations of the participants that they made to justify their dispositions. Language is the verbal context established by a group of individuals to indicate meaning. However, it may also be used to identify cultural differences. For the interview, the semiotic conditions of the discourse were significant in understanding how the participants cognitively processed hegemony.

I was specifically interested in the cultural variances of the English vernacular and their legitimacy as upheld by the educator participants. I showed the participants two pieces of art that suggested the agency or resistance for mainstream English vernacular. One image was *Misses Cooke’s School Room* by James E. Taylor. The other art piece was *I Said Samich!,* by Zeal Harris. *Misses Cooke’s School Room* featured a classroom of African-American students and an European-American educator. *I Said Samich!* featured a classroom of students, and one student, an African-American girl, is standing up addressing the European American educator with, “I said samich”. The first picture was chosen to analyze the participants’ habits of mind for the assimilation of individuals and their acquisition of a new language. By assimilating, notions of one’s cultural heritage and linguistic characteristics may be suppressed in the name of the legitimated practices of the dominators. The second picture was chosen to investigate the habits of mind of the participants towards the use of African American vernacular within the classroom and their agency to uphold or discourage its use. In the following paragraphs,
I will provide the interpretations and implications of the educators’ agency to reproduce legitimate linguistics and their negotiations of the habitus.

When the participants viewed Misses Cooke’s School Room, they offered little dialectic critique. Instead, they acknowledged the image and its contents. It did not incite much verbal understanding of their perception of the picture. There was a significant degree of silence. Some may consider silence an insignificant indicator of a concept. However, I would like to expound upon this silence with a review of the literature, since silence is a very loud indicator of both accommodation and resistance (Mazzei, 2004; Zingaro, 2009). My perceptions of this silence for Misses Cooke’s School Room are that this imagery upheld the normed occurrence of culturally irrelevant teaching since the reconstruction era.

The participants’ analyzation of the I Said Samich piece was more verbally pronounced. Makayla viewed the piece of work and began her critique by analyzing the student who was addressing the teacher in the class. She concluded that the teacher had corrected the student, and the student was probably speaking her cultural dialect, which was not viewed appropriate by the teacher in the art. Makayla stated that she thought that the teacher may have been wrong for correcting the student in front of the entire class. However, Makayla also stated that while the student’s linguistic characteristics were “cool”, they were only appropriate within the confines of her home. Makayla compared the female student to her own cultural background and stated that while she enjoyed her cultural ancestry and characteristics of language, she did not find it suitable to bring those aspects outside of her household door. Makayla added that she also encouraged her
students to use mainstream American English vernacular. Additionally, Makayla emphasized that the use of the legitimated vernacular is professional and taken seriously in the career force. Although Makayla felt that the legitimization of a specific form of English vernacular was unfair, she upheld this dominated norm by stating, “It is what it is”.

Ashley and Katherine viewed *I Said Samich* as a familiar experience in their classrooms. They acknowledged that these forms of linguistic expression derived from cultural inclinations. However, they both emphasized that, although they might not go as far as to attempt to embarrass a child who speaks that way in front of the class, they would discourage this speech and admonish its use in professional environments, such as interviews. Renee also made similar comments. She stated,

How they speak at home or how they speak with their peers can’t be spoken everywhere. Um, I try to tell them when you go to an interview, um, people are going to automatically assume that you’re ignorant and uneducated because of the way you speak.

Katherine and Renee discouraged the use of culturally derived vernacular because they found its use illegitimate and unprofessional. Therefore, this implies that they not only upheld the legitimacy of the dominant vernacular, but they encouraged the reproduction of its legitimacy within their classroom instruction. Multiple perspectives may be taken when viewing *I Said Samich*. However, one perspective related to the purpose of this study is the agency of the educator to make the child feel lesser than, or ignorant, because of the usage of their native dialect and speech. Research suggests that language is a
powerful tool in the struggle for dominance (Graff, 1987; Handfield, 2006; Handsfield & Jimenez, 2009; Jantrasakul, 2010). It is an immediate indicator that the other is present.

Kinsey provided a unique reaction towards *I Said Samich* in that it differed from the other four participants’ responses. She acknowledged that the students’ use of language in that art piece was cultural and that the teacher should not have made her feel insignificant because of her language use in front of the class. However, Kinsey’s reaction differed markedly, when she discussed the other. Kinsey noted that when the other is of the dominant European origin, the cultural variances in linguistics are accepted, such as they are with the African American vernacular. She specifically addressed the dialectical differences of individuals from the United Kingdom, and that in their use of the English language, there exist obvious accents and intonations. However, they are not held to the same low position of unprofessionalism when they use such vernacular. Thus, Kinsey suggested that the other is only marginalized and made illegitimate when it is not of European descent.

The Agency for Race and the Influence of the Habitus

When I undertook this investigation, I wished to analyze the reproduction of hegemony as it relates to the positions we monopolize within the social order. Using multiple lenses to investigate social reproduction, the social construct of race was included, for it has historical precedence for discrimination in the name of legitimacy. In an attempt to measure intelligence and distinguish human beings, some of the earliest scientists and philosophers marked those that were not of European descent as essentially an illegitimate subhuman species (Agassiz, 1850; Morton, 1844; White, 1799).
Experiments were conducted in the name of scientifically proving that of the human races, some were intellectually inferior. These scientific findings have been strongly refuted (Gould, 1981). However, these beliefs of racial difference were upheld and reproduced by some, thereby legitimizing the incidence of slavery and oppressive tactics systematically employed to divide positions of power and liberty (Gould, 1981). Race then, has historical presence as a social construct that was possibly created to divide the human species into hierarchal denominations (Apple, 2015; Giroux, 1997; Gould, 1981; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Morrison, 1992; Yosso, 2005).

To analyze the habits of mind and agency for racial constructs within the middle school classroom, I employed artwork again to initiate such discourse. Two pieces of art served for the agency of race. The first piece of art was *The Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci. The second piece of art was *Immigration* by the artist known as Banksy. Both pieces of art were used to expound upon the realities of the participants as they perceived race as a social construct for power. The following paragraphs provide interpretations of the educators’ agency to reproduce legitimate race, and their negotiations of the habitus.

*The Last Supper* yielded significant discourse with moments of prominent silence. The reason this piece of art was chosen, which features a portrayal of Jesus Christ and his disciples, was because some scholars have suggested that the portrayal of Jesus in art indicates racial undertones of the struggle for dominance, power, and legitimacy (Kelley, 2002; Park, 2017; Siker, 2007). When I showed it to the participants, there was significant acceptance of the imagery. All of the participants accepted that the art represented Jesus Christ and his disciples eating their last meal before the crucifixion of
Jesus. There was no mention of the representation of Jesus and his disciples as European men. This silence, or acceptance, of the imagery could indicate that the dominance of the European male has been reproduced in religion to the extent that it was completely embodied by the viewers. Thus, social and cultural reproduction may operate through the visual culture of an influential system of thoughts such as religion by successfully upholding the powerful hierarchy of specific groups and visually representing them in such a way (Darts, 2004; Kelley, 2002; Park, 2017; Rey, 2007; Siker, 2007).

The second piece of art, *Immigration*, featured six birds perched on an electric cable. On the left side of the picture, five of the birds held signs that read the following comments: “migrants not welcome” and “keep off worms”. This picture elicited concerns primarily regarding immigration. Four of the five educators felt as though they would like to encourage immigration policies within the U.S. because they valued diverse populations. Conversely, Makayla shared that she was against immigration policies that allowed for numerous individuals from other populations to enter the United States. She repeatedly stated her discomfort with individuals traveling from the Middle Eastern portion of the world because she felt as though these inherently dangerous individuals were allowed illegal access, taking precedent over American citizens with special privileges.

These comments were followed with her habitus towards the racial structure that currently exists in the United States. Makayla believed that racism is actually overstated in the U.S., since she had not had any experiences of European Americans indicating discriminatory practices towards minority groups. To support her claim, she then
detailed her perception of the recent events of a race riot in another state. She stated that
groups that proclaimed themselves White nationalists derived as a defense to minority
groups that had demonstrated a threat towards them. Makayla also stated that she
believed groups such as the Ku Klux Klan formed recently because of the false news in
the media and that their intentions were not to act as hate groups. This excerpt from
Makayla’s interpretive repertoire of race was valuable. As a social studies teacher, she
possessed theories of racial constructs that are relevant in explaining historical disputes.
Her habitus for race relations presents a significant understanding of her concept of the
reproduction of power.

The pieces of art intended to induce discourse regarding the educators’ habitus for
race in sociocurricular positions were significant. However, an unintended theory of
racial constructs was made prevalent throughout the investigation. It became apparent
that race was within the interpretive repertoires of almost portions of the discourses,
regardless of the sociocurricular positons under discussion. It was relevant to class when
discussing the influence of colonialism. A discussion of race occurred when speaking of
gender expectations. Race was infused into the concept of valuable knowledge and
tracking. Lastly, it was mentioned regarding the linguistic characteristics of cultural
groups. The concept of race essentially held a significant presence within the habitus of
all of the educators interviewed. Thus, the academic achievement of students of all
populations under the authority of these educators may be subject to influential
expectations geared towards the agency for, or the resistance against, the struggle for
racial dominance and justification.
Significance and Implications

After a review of the data collected and their implications on the self-concepts of middle school students, this section highlights recommendations for the significance of the analysis. The purpose of this study was to analyze the discourse of participants for insight on the reproduction of power and legitimacy. The study utilized a critical lens to draw correlations between the habitus of the educator to uphold sociocurricular positions and the self-concept of the middle school student. It is an important exploration that the addresses implications for culturally irrelevant teaching that serves to reproduce arbitrarily inculcated norms, thereby organizing students into positions of social capital. Additionally, this study’s results alluded to the notion of legitimacy-based teaching that lends to academic achievement disparities among diverse student populations. This study is significant in that it addresses the gap in the literature regarding teachers’ pedagogic actions when considering social and cultural reproduction and its curricular implications for the growth of the students as individuals. This section will emphasize the significance of the data analysis, suggestive practices, and their addition to the literature for the sociocurricular positons of class, gender, knowledge, language, and race within the middle school.

Results concerning the sociocurricular position of class suggested that educators transcend the embodiment of class to the work ethic and position of their students. Four of the five participants correlated class position to the willingness to work among students. Historical incidents that included acquiring land and capital by violent force and maintained through generations of dominance and cultural reproduction were
unknown or ignored by the participants of this study. Thus, most of the participants legitimized and upheld the stratification of individuals of society into populations of haves and have-nots. This is significant to the study as it supports the theoretical framework of the social and cultural reproduction of high-class groups of individuals because of the perceived legitimacy of their field positions (Bourdieu, 1985; Farkas et al., 1990; Giroux, 2001; Reay, 1995; Reay, 2004b).

This major theme is also significant to the literature because it addresses the habitus of the teachers within their agency to uphold and reproduce norms that legitimatize class stratification through the delivery of the curriculum. Historically, class order has been reproduced to the extent that individuals within may feel confined to the position, with little chance of mobility. As individuals of high class are continuously upheld as those legitimate position holders because of their hard work ethic, lost is the essence of their rise to dominance through generational access to social capital and resources. Therefore, students who maintain high-, middle- or low-class positions may be compelled to believe, through the habitus of the teacher, that their status is contingent upon the dutiful labor of their ancestors and not the reproduction of powerful groups deemed by the endoxa as legitimate. Thus, the premise of academic success in the academic field hovers on truths that contradict a review of the literature. To address incidents of the reproduction of class power, and the lack of opportunities and resources that it may accompany for some students, the pedagogic action of the teacher would have to function as a critical action that challenges class disparities instead of legitimating them through mainstream and normed opinions.
The sociocurricular position of gender, as perceived through the habitus of the middle school teaching participants, indicated that dominant gender norms are being reproduced through classroom tasks. Two teachers specifically spoke of giving gender-based classroom responsibilities, and they did so because of gender-based mainstream norms of behavior. Three of the five participants upheld notions of expected behaviors dependent upon an individual’s gender. This belief also extended into the career aspirations of students in which one teacher felt as though some careers were gender based. One of the participants also revealed that she felt as though the incidence of transgender students in her school was something that she luckily did not have to encounter. However, the discussion prompted her to want to send her nephew to private school to avoid such dispositions. Thus, the discourse of four of the participants was significant in that it revealed the degree of agency that the educators held as social functionaries who reproduce gender based norms within the confines of their classroom. The educators admitted to upholding their gender dispositions, yet when they also acknowledged how their gender dispositions influence the culture of their classroom, they neglected to acknowledge that their gender-based expectations became part of the instruction. They were indirectly instructing the students to fulfill their orientations towards gender. One of the educators interviewed noted that she specifically asked females to clean up the classroom, but she did not consider her division of labor based on gender as an academic property. I would suggest that as a leader, teachers are encouraged to consider that all tasks and skills dictated and legitimated by the educator is by nature academic. Perhaps a more thorough understanding of the hidden curriculum
and the power of the teacher’s disposition to sociocurricular positions is necessary within
teacher preparation programs. These findings of the sociocurricular position of class are
significant in that they imply that the long-held and mainstream ideals of gender-based
behavior continue to be reproduced within the school field, thereby influencing the
academic identity of the students.

The sociocurricular position of knowledge, as perceived through the habitus of the
participants, indicated that the knowledge on standardized tests appears to be the
knowledge of most worth in the school field. Four of the five participants spoke of
specific incidents where they thought that the formation of tracked courses was
legitimate. This contradicts parts of their interpretive repertoires in which they also
stated that standardized tests are invalid forms of assessments. Thus, when examining
the teachers’ habitus, it seemed that their dispositions to testing were to incorporate it into
their classroom through the curriculum and deem the test valid measures for track
placements. However, they all also stated that the tests are ultimately invalid
measurements that placed negative pressures on the teachers and students. Therefore,
portions of the interviews featured moments of disdain for standardized tests, while other
moments included supporting it for tracking purposes. This exhibits Bourdieu’s notion of
social reproduction in that it works through the embodiment of the habitus. Despite the
individual’s conflicting orientations about the cultural element that is to be reproduced,
they essentially respect and uphold the dominant-subordinate orthodoxy (Bourdieu, 1967,
It was also determined that forms of knowledge not assessed in standardized measures received less focus within the educator’s instruction. One participant mentioned that although her schools’ curriculum did not offer fine arts, she felt confident of the possibility that students’ high school or college experiences would provide access to this type of knowledge. This statement implies that certain types of knowledge are othered, or they are considered to such a lesser extent that structured curriculum and guidance in those skills are outside of the formal types of training that would be implemented in the school field at an elementary level. One could challenge that types of knowledge, such as the arts, that induce wide-awakeness and self-identity are forms of knowledge that should be introduced and continued throughout a student’s entire childhood curriculum. Studies suggest that forms of knowledge not assessed using standardized measures (e.g., arts, social consciousness, health, computer science) are critical to fostering a child’s divergent and critical thinking skills (Amburgy, 2011; Chin, 2013; Greene, 1995; Higgs, 2008; Knoblauch et al., 2008; Pink, 2013; Rose, 2016). Thus, one could argue that because it has been socially reproduced, some types of knowledge that are not most valued cause the uniqueness and individuality of students’ self-identities to diminish (Giroux, 2013; Pinar, 2012). I propose, with the support of the literature, that promoting all types of knowledge would enhance the self-concept of students and perhaps lower incidents of disengagement.

The sociocurricular position of language, as perceived through the participants, implied that although cultural varieties of standardized English vernacular are in existence, they produce an unprofessional and illegitimate presence. Four of the five
participants indicated that if they were to hear an individual using the natural inclination to language developed because of the cultural orientation outside of the mainstream norm during an interview, they would deem the individual unfit. When examining the participants’ habitus and linguistic backgrounds, two of them spoke native languages that were not of the English vernacular. However, these two participants indicated that their native language was only intended to be used within the confines of their households, and that to use it outside of that environment would be unacceptable. Thus, a characteristic as remotely ingrained in the habitus as language is disregarded for its cultural perceptions. This discourse is significant because it implies that individual cultural identity is illegitimate and disallowed if it contrasts the mainstream norms. This is meaningful in that the habitus of these teachers restricts their own individuality and self-concept. Thus, as they transcend instruction, their habitus influences the perceptions of the cultural identity and expression of their students.

These results are significant for the literature because they address how the habitus of teachers correlates to the developing habitus of the students. To enhance learner identity, I would suggest that teachers use reflective practices that identify their orientations and address the limitations they may provide when educating students of different disposition (King, 1991). I would also suggest that leaders provide their educators with safe places to discuss their teaching experiences in which bias is a factor and exchange effective methods with other educators to counter the bias in the classroom (Necochea & Cline, 2008). This is especially critical for the development of the self-concept and individualistic integrity (Dumais, 2002; 2005; Fabiansson, 2015; Nasir &
Saxe, 2003; Rhodes et al., 2004; Riley, 2010; Scott, Murray, Martens, Dustin, 1986; van den Bergh, Denessen, Hornstra, Voeten, & Holland, 2010). Within their authoritative positions, educators may act as effective critical educators who essentially denounce the reproduction of norms that limit academic identities (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Giroux, 2001; Kincheloe, 2008 Ladson-Billings, 1997; Reay, 2004a), or they can use their authoritative positions as social functionaries to reproduce norms that alienate individuals for their cultural differences (Kincheloe, 2008).

The sociocurricular position of race yielded significant and unpredicted results. As mentioned earlier, within every sociocurricular position discussed with the participants, the social construct of race was intertwined. The position of race was undertaken for this investigation because significant literature indicates that the achievement disparity within academic instructions of the U.S. is racially correlated. Thus, a driving inquiry was to determine the degree of educator involvement in achievement disparities and the disengagement of their students as it related to race. To conduct this investigation regarding this social construct effectively, the critical discourse analysis was the most useful in assessing the cognitive collections of thought surrounding racism in the academic field. A review of the literature indicated that teachers often unconsciously reproduce the subordinance of African-American and Hispanic-American students because of their unrealized agency to uphold arbitrarily legitimated attributes. Thus, to examine the habitus towards race, the interpretive repertoires provided significant vignettes of how the participants negotiated race as a social construct.
Wetherell and Potter (1988) explained the importance of the interpretive repertoires for this topic,

When dealing with racist explanations, this means that we come to understand the various interpretative repertoires through which racist explanations are constructed and warranted, and can start to understand the techniques through which these explanations can be undermined and transformed. (p. 183)

The interpretive repertoires revealed that three of the educators negotiated race in ways that held suggestive notions of hierarchy. There seemed to be a disconnect among the understanding of racial differences and the underpinnings of racial tensions. This is significant in acknowledging what King (1991) referred to as dysconscious racism. I would like to suggest that in some instances, this dysconscious racism is reproduced without the awareness of the educator. However, the implications for the academic identity of the student are subliminally and negatively influenced if the reproduction of hierarchy is a legitimated and unchallenged disposition. Therefore, strategies such as teaching with critical pedagogic action can unearth and address disclosed biases of the educators’ habitus and liberate students from the reproduction of norms that restrains their individualities (Bajaj, 2011; Canlas, Argenal, & Bajaj, 2015; Grant & Gibson, 2013; Novak, 2002).

Recommendations for Future Research

For future research conducted on sociocurricular positions, I recommend that researchers attempt the instigation by considering the following: (a) investigating the variances in analysis contingent upon different institution types; (b) analyzing teacher
preparation programs; (c) and analyzing the degree of agency of social reproduction upheld by other stakeholders, such as principals, students, and parents. Analyzing the reproduction of legitimated norms in the contexts of academic institutions that differ in cultural expectations and organization (such as schools with religious premises) would allow for a different perspective of the reproduction of legitimacy. Additionally, this type of examination would address the role the school type plays in upholding a field of normed thoughts and standards. Analyzing the degree of emphasis in critical pedagogic action in teacher preparation programs may provide a better understanding of educators’ abilities to reflect on the influences of their habitus on the academic identities of their students. Lastly, conducting this study with different stakeholders, such as the students’ agency or autonomy for agency to exist within sociocurricular positions, would allow for greater insight from the student or other stakeholder’s vantage point to achieve a more holistic overview of the happenstance of sociocurricular positions and its influences.

Limitations

As with all qualitative studies, this investigation had limitations. Despite the findings and correlations made during this exploration, I understand that my methodology presented limitations. The habitus of the individuals as investigated through the visual bricolage were specific to their experiences. Therefore, these habitus and agency for sociocurricular positions of this study may not be generalizable to other educators in the field. Additionally, the use of the prescreening Bicultural Integrity Scale limited the choice of participants by targeting specific dispositions to mainstream norms. Therefore, this investigation did not include the discourse of other educators with potentially useful
perspectives of the reproduction of legitimated norms in the school field. In addition, only two institutions served as sites in this study. Thus, the analysis of these findings may differ if other fields are under investigation using a similar model and methodology. Lastly, the intrinsic habitus of the researcher influenced the translations and correlations of the critical discourses; therefore, the implications may differ contingent upon the habitus and social position of the analyzer.

Conclusion

This research study used Pierre Bourdieu’s theories of field, habitus, and social and cultural reproduction to identify the agency of middle school educators to maintain legitimated norms. Participants were identified through a cultural integrity screening survey that implied their habitus upholds mainstream cultural norms to a higher extent than their original cultural orientation. This incidence limits the academic identities of students because of their placement and maintenance of sociocurricular positions. The participants were interviewed using a visual elicitation method to trigger predisposed thoughts of the habits of mind and elicit ingrained beliefs regarding legitimacy. These preexisting orientations were then applied to the educators’ dispositions towards their students. Upon a review of the literature, the reproduction of mainstream norms in the categories of class, gender, knowledge, language, and race, restricts the identity of some and limits resources. Related to this notion, the academic disparity among students of the U.S. schools was correlated to the limitations of individuality because of prescribed mainstream norms. To investigate how students may be influenced to conform to standards deemed legitimate, the habitus of educators was analyzed. Specifically,
educators of the middle school field participated in interviews because the literature also indicates that the middle-aged child undergoes highly influential processes that develop the self-concept (Blakely-McClure & Ostrov, 2016; Eccles, 1999; Harter, 2006; Kurtz-Costes, Rowley, Harris-Britt, & Woods, 2008; Rhodes et al., 2004; Rosenberg, Schooler, & Schoenbach, 1989). Thus, the results of this study have critical implications for pedagogic action and the intricate function of social and cultural reproduction.

First, this study identified the formation of individuality and identity as it exists within social networks. Bourdieu (2002), Giroux (2001), and Reay (2004a) are among multiple philosophers who suggest that the disposition (habitus) of individuals is formulated as a combination of cultural norms and norms of expectation upheld by the dominant cultural arbitrary. The dominant cultural arbitrary deems certain forms of knowledge and individual characteristics as legitimate. Thus, if the characteristic of an individual is not of the dominant legitimate status, it may be perceived as illegitimate behavior, and that individual has less social capital (freedom) to move about and explore societal opportunities. Therefore, in effort to gain social capital, the habitus is influenced to adapt to exhibiting the legitimated norms in search for upward social mobility. Consequently, the natural inclinations are lost, as individuals shift to conform to the norms of those viewed with supposedly reputable opinions—ta endoxa (Bourdieu, 2002; Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004; Dumais, 2005; Nash, 1999; Reay, 2004a; Riley, 2010; Rubin, 2007). Societies vary on their chosen dispensers of legitimacy. This study analyzes the legitimated values of the United States society, specifically those of the southeast region. Much of the literature supports the notion that individuals who are
high-class, heterosexual, European-American, male speakers of the dominant English vernacular are appropriated to the positions of legitimacy (Apple, 1993; Ayers, 2001; Handsfield, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Orr, 2011; Reay, 2004b, 2006). Therefore, if one possesses dispositions that are outside of the boundaries of the dominant persuasion, their social capital and acceptance may be in jeopardy.

Secondly, this study bridges a gap in the literature that correlates Bourdieu’s theories of field and reproduction to the academic identity of the student placed in sociocurricular positions of limitation. The school operates as a field of thought and normed behavior. Additionally, the school field has implications for reproducing mainstream societal norms. Within this field of thought, students have been placed in positions because of their ascriptive characteristics (Friedkin & Thomas, 1997). The positions in which the students hold because of their habitus may limit their ability to achieve in the academic field because of the perceived illegitimacy of their inclinations from the authoritative figures. Thus, in an attempt to correlate academic achievement to the freedom of expressing the natural habitus, an investigation was undertaken to determine how the curriculum and instruction are influenced through legitimated norms being reproduced in the academic field.

The findings from this exploration support the incidence of social and cultural reproduction, specifically within the middle school field. Furthermore, the findings indicated that the habitus of the educators, conditioned under the norms of mainstream society and recycled through the school field as legitimate traits, uphold sociocurricular positions. The findings also indicated that although four of the five educators acted as
functionaries to uphold legitimated norms, thereby, sociocurricular positions, their interpretive repertoires contradicted in ways that indicated that their agency for legitimated dispositions was unconscious, or what King (1991) referred to as dysconscious. The participants generally upheld norms that restricted the natural inclination of their students’ identities in the characteristics of class, gender, knowledge, language, and race. However, their discourses provided significant cognitive processes where the educators identified moments of inequality outside of the school field in which they were uninvolved but had difficulty attesting to their roles within positions of hierarchy within the school field. These findings correlate with Bourdieu’s (1967, 1969, 1977, 1984, 1985a, 1985b, 1989) theories of arbitrarily reproduced and inculcated dominance amongst multiple position holders within a field.

Lastly, the findings of the study highlight the need for professional development that addresses the incidence of inequality in the form of social and cultural reproduction within the school field. Reflective and critical strategies may be necessary for educators to address the incidence of students’ academic identities subtly yet pervasively funneled into positions of hierarchy contingent upon their inherited social capital. Educational stakeholders, such as institutional and district leaders, educators, parents, and students may benefit from the implications from this study. For the leaders, this research revealed a need to implement critical pedagogical practices to subvert notions of dominance reproduced at the expense of some positions within the field. In other words, educators may be more effective within the classroom if they become aware of the incidence and underpinnings of social capital. For the educators, this research revealed that the
orientations of their habits influence the way they implement their curriculum. Thus, if
the educators withhold habitus that support the arbitrary domination of particular norms,
then they will inadvertently transfer their norms onto their students as legitimate. For the
students and parents, these findings are significant in addressing causes of disengagement
within the academic field that may result in self-defeating resistance. In conclusion, this
exploration was committed to bringing the critical value of the students’ self-identity to
the surface. Sociocurricular positions jeopardize the integrity and freshness of self.
Thus, it is essential to liberate the individuality from societal conformity to enhance the
development of the students’ self-concept, which begins with the self-concept of those in
authority.
REFERENCES


White, C. (1799). *An account of the regular gradation in man, and in different animals and vegetables; and from the former to the latter.* London, UK: C. Dilly, In The Poultry.


APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL
Tuesday, April 18, 2017

Ms. Toni Bailey
Mercer University
Tift College of Education - Atlanta
3001 Mercer University Dr
Atlanta, GA 30341

RE: A Critically Visual Ethnography of the Agency for Sociocurricular Positions in the Middle School Classroom (IR1704128)

Dear Ms. Bailey:

On behalf of Mercer University’s Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research, your application submitted on 17-Apr-2017 for the above referenced protocol was reviewed in accordance with Federal Regulations 21 CFR 56.110(a) and 45 CFR 46.110(b) (for expedited review) and was approved under category[es] 6, 7 per 63 FR 60364.

Your application was approved for one year of study on 18-Apr-2017. The protocol expires on 17-Apr-2018. If the study continues beyond one year, it must be re-evaluated by the IRB Committee.

Item(s) Approved:
Visual Ethnography: Educators’ instruction will be observed. Educators will also be interviewed. Educators will be observed for two 45 minute sessions during instruction.

NOTE: Please report to the committee when the protocol is initiated. Report to the Committee immediately any changes in the protocol or consent form and all accidents, injuries, and serious or unexpected adverse events that occur to your subjects as a result of this study.

We at the IIB and the Office of Research Compliance are dedicated to providing the best service to our research community. As one of our investigators, we value your feedback and ask that you please take a moment to complete our Registration Survey and help us to improve the quality of our service.

It has been a pleasure working with you and we wish you much success with your project! If you need any further assistance, please feel free to contact our office.

Respectfully,

[Signature]

Ave O. Chambers-Richardson, Ph.D., CIP, CIOM
Associate Director of Human Research Protection Programs (HRPP)
Member
Institutional Review Board

"Mercer University has adopted and agrees to conduct its clinical research studies in accordance with the International Conference on Harmonization’s (ICH) Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice."

Mercer University IIRB & Office of Research Compliance
Phone: 470-301-4101 | Email: ORC_Mercer@Mercer.Edu | Fax: 470-301-2329
1501 Mercer University Drive, Macon, Georgia 31207-0001
APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT
Dear Participant,

I am currently enrolled as a doctoral student at Mercer University. As a requirement for my degree, I will be conducting a research project entitled “A Critically Visual Bricolage of Sociocurricular Positions”. The purpose of this research is to analyze educators’ habits of mind concerning social and cultural norms, and its correlation to the deliverance of the curriculum. The project will begin on approximately July 15, 2017 and end on approximately January 15, 2017. You are being asked to participate in this research study. Before you give your consent to volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigators
Toni Bailey, M.Ed., Mercer University, Education
3001 Mercer University Drive, Atlanta, GA 30341, 770.862.3977

Faculty Advisor: Wynnetta Scott-Simmons, Ed.D, Mercer University, Education
3001 Mercer University Drive, Atlanta, GA 30341, Office Phone: 678.547.6582

Mercer University Tift College of Education

Purpose of the Research
The purpose of this study is to investigate the agency of middle school educators to support mainstream cultural norms in the classroom. I am interested in exploring to what degree are sociocurricular positions upheld through the deliverance of the curriculum and instruction. You will participate in a survey (Bicultural Integrity Scale) to determine if you will move forward in the research study. Those individuals who are chosen to move forward to the next step, will be requested to participate in two classroom observations and one interview. I will be using a visual bricolage method with six educators to explore their dispositions to cultural norms in the areas of class, gender, knowledge, language, and race. I will use an art elicitation method to analyze the responses of educators to specific works of art. I will then code and analyze the data for common themes that
emerge. The findings for this research will be used to close a gap in the literature, suggest methods of critical pedagogy, and potential uses in teacher preparation programs.

**Procedures**
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a Bicultural Integrity survey. If chosen to move forward from the results of the survey, two classroom observations and an interview will follow. With your permission, I will also tape record your interview.

Your participation will take approximately:
- 1 survey (approximately 15 minutes)
- 1 interview (approximately 20-30 minutes)
- 2 class observations (45 minutes)

**Potential Risks or Discomforts**
Your participation in this project is voluntary. You will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you are entitled if you decide that you do not wish to participate. There is the risk that you may find some discomfort regarding the questions that are sensitive to your job conditions. You have the right to discontinue participation, either temporarily or permanently.

**Potential Benefits of the Research**
This research may be beneficial to understanding cultural norms are delivered through the agency of the educator, and the effects it may have on student achievement.

**Confidentiality and Data Storage**
The records of this study will be kept confidential. The data gathered that is used to generate a report will not contain any information that identifies you. The investigator will be the sole person to have access to the tape recording, it will be transcribed within approximately two months of your recording and the tape will then be destroyed. The research report will be maintained as a locked file. The investigator and advisor will have access to the data, and the data will be stored at Mercer University for at least 3 years after the completion of the study.

**Participation and Withdrawal**
Your participation in this research study is voluntary. As a participant you may refuse to participate at anytime. To withdraw from the study please contact Toni Bailey at 770.862.3977, Toni.Marie.Bailey@live.mercer.edu

**Questions about the Research**
If you have any questions about the research, please speak with Toni Bailey (the investigator), 770.862.3977, Toni.Marie.Bailey@live.mercer.edu or Wynnetta Scott-Simmons (faculty advisor), 678.547.6582, scottsimm_wa@mercer.edu.
Audio or Video Taping
I request permission to audio record our interview session.

This project has been reviewed and approved by Mercer University’s IRB. If you believe there is any infringement upon your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Chair, at (478) 301-4101.

You have been given the opportunity to ask questions and these have been answered to your satisfaction. Your signature below indicates your voluntary agreement to participate in this research study. Please return signed informed consent to Toni Bailey by August 8, 2017.

Signature of Research Participant  Date

Participant Name (Please Print)  Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent  Date
**Class**
Title: Native Carrying Some Guns, Bibles, Amorites on Safari
Artist: Jean-Michel Basquiat
Date: 1982
Medium: Pencil on canvas

Title: Ghetto 4 Life
Artist: Banksy
Date: 2013
Location: 153rd Street and Elton Avenue (The Bronx)
Medium: Paint on concrete

**Gender**
Title: Les Demoiselles d’Avignon
Artist: Pablo Picasso
Date: 1907
Medium: Oil paint on canvas
Retrieved from: https://www.pablopicasso.org/avignon.jsp

Artist: Frida Kahlo
Title: Little Deer
Date: 1946
Medium: Oil Paint
Retrieved from: https://www.fridakahlo.org/the-wounded-deer.jsp

**Knowledge**
Artist: Raphael
Title: School of Athens
Date: 1510
Medium: Fresco
Retrieved from: https://www.fridakahlo.org/the-wounded-deer.jsp

Artist: Banksy
Title: No Ball Games
Date: 2009
Location: London
Medium: Spray Paint on Concrete
Retrieved from: http://www.banksy.co.uk/faq.asp
Language
Title: The Misses Cooke’s school room
Artist: James E. Taylor
Newspaper: Frank Leslie’s illustrated newspaper, v.23, 1866 Nov. 17, p.132
Date Created: 1866
Place: Freedman’s Bureau, Richmond, VA
Medium: Print from wood engraving
Retrieved from http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98510871/

Title: I Said Samich! (Left Panel of Diptych)
Artist: Zeal Harris
Date: 2008
Medium: Oil paint on canvas
Retrieved From: http://www.zealsart.com/Socio-Political-Commentary/I-Said-Samich-Diptych

Race
Artist: Leonardo da Vinci
Title: Last Supper
Date: 1498
Medium: Tempera on Stone
Retrieved from: https://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/davi/project/history.htm

Artist: Banksy
Title: Immigration
Date: 2014
Location: Clacton-on-Sea, England
Retrieved From: http://www.banksy.co.uk/
APPENDIX D

PERMISSION TO USE CRM-BS
Good morning Dr. Cortes, my name is Toni Bailey. I am conducting research for my doctoral degree in education at Mercer University. I am an educator, and my research will center on the sociological dynamics of the middle school classroom. My title is: A Critically Visual Ethnography of the Agency of Sociocurricular Positions in the Middle School Classroom. I am interested in using your Bicultural Integrity Scale and scoring guide as a tool to select my participants. I will use the scale to select the teachers that appear to be acculturated. I will then interview those individuals using a visual ethnographical methodology to gain insight on their agency of social norms, and how it relates to their delivery of the curriculum and instruction. I have searched many scales, and I find your Bicultural Scale to be the most effective for screening my participants. I plan to start my data collection fairly soon. Therefore, I am requesting your permission to use the scale, and fully provide your credentials of the scale in my dissertation, which I am also hoping will lead me to more publications and scholarly writing.

Thank you so much for your time, and I look forward to your response. Your research has inspired me, and I truly appreciate all that you do.

Toni Bailey

-------- Forwarded message --------
From: Dharma E. Cortes <decortes@aol.com>
Date: Thu, Apr 6, 2017 at 12:20 PM
Subject: Re: Request for permission to use Bicultural Integrity Scale
To: tmgraham7@gmail.com

Dear Toni,

Of course you can use the Biculturality Scale. Thank you for sharing the details about your study. Good luck with it and let me know if I could be of any help.

Best,
Dharma
Dharma E. Cortés, Ph.D.
"To unlock a culture, you need to understand the untranslatable words." Salman Rushdie
"To have another language is to possess a second soul." Charlemagne, Emperor of the Holy Empire
APPENDIX E

MODIFIED CRM-BS
**Table E1**

*Bicultural Integrity Scale (CRM-BS)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Quite A Bit</th>
<th>Very Much</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How much are your ethnic values a part of your life?</td>
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<td>2. How important is it to you to celebrate holidays in the</td>
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<td>tradition of your ethnicity?</td>
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<td>3. How important is it to you to raise your children with</td>
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<td>cultural values?</td>
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<td>4. How comfortable would you be in a group of people who do not</td>
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<td>speak English?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. How proud are you of being your ethnic identity?</td>
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<td>6. How much do you enjoy speaking your native language?</td>
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<td>7. How much do you enjoy TV programs that represent your ethnicity?</td>
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<td>8. How much do you like to eat food that represents your ethnicity?</td>
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<td>9. Do you think your ethnic group is kind and generous?</td>
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<td>10. How important would it be to you for your children to</td>
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<td>have friends of your ethnic group?</td>
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<td>11. How important is it to you to celebrate holidays in the</td>
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<td>mainstream American way?</td>
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<td>12. How much are mainstream American values a part of your life?</td>
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<td>13. How comfortable would you be in a group of mainstream Americans</td>
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<td>who don’t speak your native language?</td>
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<td>14. How important is it to you to raise your children with</td>
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<td>mainstream American values?</td>
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<td>15. How proud are you of a mainstream American identity?</td>
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<td>16. Do you think mainstream Americans are kind and</td>
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<td>generous?</td>
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<td>17. How much do you enjoy mainstream American TV programs?</td>
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<td>18. How much do you enjoy speaking English?</td>
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<td>19. How much do you like to eat mainstream American food?</td>
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<td>20. How important would it be to you for your children to</td>
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<td>have mainstream American friends?</td>
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*Note:* Cortes, Rogler, & Malgady (1994)