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March and the Struggle for Historical Perspective Recognition

In January 2017, journalists reported that John Lewis, as well as other Democratic Congressional leaders, chose not to attend President Trump's inauguration. As a result of Lewis's decision, his award-winning March trilogy (Lewis, Aydin, & Powell, 2013, 2015, 2016), which recounts his part in the American civil rights movement, received much publicity and was championed by celebrities and public historians alike as a must-read. As teacher educators, we had been drawn to Lewis's work prior to Trump's inauguration and had begun discussions about its pedagogical utility with teacher candidates and their middle school students. Mike and Lienne were already using graphic texts within their teacher preparation courses for a variety of reasons, and all of us had considered the benefits and limitations of using them with young adults as part of our research interests. Our quest became to explore ways to use graphic texts in middle grade social studies classrooms.

Our review of the literature suggested that several social studies educators were already analyzing various issues surrounding the use of graphic texts (see, for example, Christensen, 2006; Clark, 2012; Mathews, 2011; Schwarz, 2002) and found them to be of help in various ways (e.g., studying social and political issues, incorporating graphic memoirs into the social studies curriculum, exploring new perspectives and points of view, providing students accessible views and representations of historical events and participants). Building on these insights, we decided to begin our exploration with middle grade social studies preservice teachers (PSTs)— primarily career changers—within a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program to see how they might respond to the idea of using graphic texts within their classrooms to help young readers develop empathy or understand a bit more clearly what it was like to be a participant within a historical period.

For our purposes of forging a working operational term, we chose to refrain from using historical "empathy" because of the varied common and academic associations that are attached to it. Instead, we embraced the cultural tool that social studies researchers are labeling as "historical perspective recognition" to capture the kind of thinking we seek to foster. Barton and Levstik (2004) define this type of historical thinking as consisting of five elements: 1) recognizing the existence of other ways of thinking and believing; 2) recognizing that those ways of thinking are valid; 3) recognizing that events and perspectives can be explained in the context of historical beliefs and values; 4) recognizing that at given times in history, people held specific beliefs and values; and 5) recognizing that people's own perspectives are dependent upon historical context. The researchers also suggested that historical perspective recognition is an essential skill for citizens in a pluralist democracy. As leaders within the field of social studies education who have helped shape the National Council for the Social Studies *C3 Framework*, they insist that "students practice moving beyond their own perspectives and [take] seriously those of others, no matter how foreign they seem" (p. 224). Building on Barton and Levstik's work, we asked: *Could teacher candidates begin to think about ways to use graphic texts within their classrooms in ways that help middle school students take seriously the perspectives of others, no matter how different*

those perspectives might be from their own? Is this asking too much of aspiring social studies teachers in a turbulent civic arena?

Shortly after beginning the project, we agreed that *March: Book One* (Lewis, Aydin, & Powell, 2013) would be a good graphic text to use as we invited teacher candidates to consider how graphic texts might enable readers to get a feel for or develop historical perspective recognition for diverse Americans who struggled within the civil rights movement. The March trilogy is a graphic memoir of John Lewis's experiences from his childhood to his involvement in the civil rights movement to his time as a United States Congressman. As such, it offers readers (through the combination of text and images) an accessible view of Lewis's life and role in fighting for civil and human rights. As teacher educators working in the Southeast, a region still rife with racial tensions, we anticipated the challenges that *March: Book One* might pose, but we believe that the text ultimately proves to be a legitimate graphic source for young adolescents. It is a memoir written by a reputable leader who was an active participant within the civil right movement, and its graphic format invites diverse readers to interact with it and appreciate the perspectives of various participants in the movement.

Graphic Texts in Social Studies

Multiple scholars have suggested the use of graphic texts in K–12 schools and within teacher education as a way to reconceptualize literacy instruction and foster critical thinking and questioning in students (Cervetti, Damico, & Pearson, 2006; Hagood, 2000; McVee, Bailey, & Shanahan, 2008; Schieble, 2011; Sheridan-Thomas, 2007). In fact, graphic texts have been used across content areas and curricula, including the study of historical events and participants. Moreover, they have been used to study social and political issues because the format (e.g., images paired with text) can help students better understand and engage with important issues. It is precisely this format that offers readers accessible views of history and culture through diverse points of view (Christensen, 2006; Schwarz, 2002). Chun (2009) has taken the argument one step further and suggested that graphic texts foster critical literacies and allow students to 1) critically analyze the perspectives of historical experiences, 2) connect to texts and concepts through intellectual and emotional engagement, 3) connect the stories they read to their own experiences, and 4) critically reflect. Others (e.g., Mathews, 2011) have pointed to the use of graphic novels in social studies teacher preparation as tools for offering students new perspectives on traditionally taught topics. Even more aligned with our interests, Williams (2008) has suggested that the graphic format could help students develop a sense of empathy (i.e., perspective recognition) and empowerment.

Using a Graphic Memoir to Foster Historical Perspective Recognition

Drawing on the research cited above, we decided to see if we could help a class of 16 mostly career-changing teacher candidates cultivate historical perspective recognition related to the civil rights movement, a historical period addressed within their South Carolina History for Teachers course that Beatrice taught. After our review, we had reason to believe that the middle grade readers these candidates plan to teach might be able to develop deeper perspective recognition within a historical era if they have room enough and time enough to transact with a graphic text; this genre offers not only the written narrative, but also the images that can help them build imaginative worlds in which they can vicariously enter into the life and times of the period. Of course, historical documentaries might be another and perhaps more accessible venue for helping students develop an imaginative landscape for a period, but as the research above has suggested, graphic texts enable readers to have more control over the reading process, since they allow readers the time necessary to at least begin to picture and experience life in a different era. This control over the images and text is what McCloud (1993) has referred to as "visual permanence." With videos, this reflective control is less likely, as the images keep rolling.

Rather than start with the middle grades students themselves, we chose to work with teacher candidates first to see how readily they could enter into the life and times of a civil rights movement leader and his cohort members by transacting with the first book in the March trilogy.

Unlike traditional undergraduate teacher preparation programs, the teacher candidates within this MAT

cohort tended to be career changers who had given up jobs in the corporate or public service sector. Several participants had degrees in History or the social sciences and had tried to find meaningful employment in the world of business. A few were fresh out of college and eager to get professional certification while earning graduate degrees. About a third were from out of state, but most saw themselves as Southerners. Six of the respondents are male, and five are female; two are African American, and nine are white. This cohort of social studies teacher candidates had been together for a full summer, so they had taken several shared classes, worked collaboratively on projects, and built up quite a rapport. Table 1 offers thumbnail sketches of the six PSTs whose responses we reference in our analysis below.

Instructional Approach

We provided all 16 participants a copy of *March: Book One* and had them read the entire graphic text within the context of a three-hour class session. All of them, therefore, had the same reading context and the same amount of time to transact with the text; this allowed for ready comparisons of their responses and helped minimize extraneous factors that might affect those responses. To support their reflective efforts, the 121-page graphic text was divided into roughly five equal passages of about 22–25 pages. Participants read through each passage individually, then paused after 20 minutes to compose written reflections (posted on Google Classroom) on these questions: *How did the graphic text help and/or hinder you in developing perspective recognition for those involved in the civil rights struggle? What methods were used to help you develop perspective on these characters?* As part of their reflections, the teacher candidates were also asked to reference specific pages and panels within the text that they felt best fostered (or hindered) their own perspective recognition and/or to point out the specific authors' and artist's methods they referenced. After

Table 1. Participant pseudonyms and descriptions

Participant Pseudonym	Participant Description
Benton	Benton, one of the two African American students within the class, had just earned his BA degree in History at a state university. His great-grandfather participated in the civil rights movement within the state, helping usher in integration despite massive statewide resistance. Benton was one of the younger teacher candidates and was not married at the time. He had strong aspirations to be an educational leader.
Bill	Bill, a white, male History major had traveled all over the Far and Near East while teaching English as a second language and had chosen as an adult to become a Muslim. Not from the South, he was a newcomer to the state. He liked to discuss controversial historical issues. Like many of the PSTs, he had a fine preparation in History at a major research university.
Canton	Canton, an African American male, was a practicing minister at the time of the study. He held a divinity degree from a prestigious Southern seminary. As a father, he was often eager to speak out about representations of African Americans within the historical narrative of the Standards documents. He came of age within the South as a devout Anglican.
Daniel	Daniel, a white male, came of age in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains and was proud to have recently earned a degree in History from a major research university. He felt comfortable wearing bib overalls to class and chewing tobacco as he considered positions on critical historical issues. He was passionate about state history and his future career as a coach.
Karen	Karen, a white Southern female, was a leader within her small college and was eager to become an educational leader, following in the footsteps of her mentor. She had a strong sense of mission and compassion toward others. She proved to be one of the best instructional designers within the cohort. Just out of college, she was not married.
Leah	Leah developed her own company as a historic preservationist and was paying for her graduate degree through a restoration project she had taken on locally. A single, white mother with several children, she was eager to move forward with her new professional role. Leah was the oldest member of the class, probably in her late 40s.

reading each segment and composing their reflections, participants engaged in 10-minute whole-class discussions where they shared their emerging transactions and considered those of their classmates. This, we hoped, would allow them to get a feel for what their peers were envisioning and would help the instructor steer the focus as needed toward recognizing the perspectives of distant historical others. To further support participants, Lienne served as a visiting instructor who gave a short overview on how to read graphic texts and offered a brief survey on ways graphic texts were being used in various middle school settings.

It is important to note here that one issue classroom teachers struggle with in similar pursuits is getting their hands on classroom sets of texts for their students. If attaining texts such as *March: Book One* proves to be an issue, there are a few options available. First, there are a multitude of teacher funding sites available online (e.g., Go Fund Me for Education) where teachers can receive financial support from anonymous donors for the purchase of classroom materials. Second, school systems can obtain permission to use digitally reproduced texts. While this might be a more viable option for teacher educators, it is worth exploring at the K–12 level as well. Additionally, school librarians often have funds set aside for purchasing class sets to put on reserve. Two other options available to teachers are to purchase half a class set and have students read the text in pairs or require that students purchase the texts as they begin to build their personal libraries. Students who have difficulty purchasing the texts could get support from various civic groups, parent-teacher organizations, or class fund-raising projects. Finally, teachers can use excerpts from texts to introduce their students to important moments and themes from selected texts.

Analyzing the Data

When the class was over at the end of the semester, we each individually read the written reflections to identify exemplar responses that demonstrated historical perspective recognition. Together, we compiled a list of the responses we all agreed were exemplars. We then developed simple codes for these responses according to their content. These codes were then refined within larger umbrella codes so that we could further analyze the portions of the text that seemed to evoke perspective recognition. We then addressed the themes and issues that we did not anticipate. We also reviewed the videotape of the class discussion to see if the conversations helped and/or hindered students' perspective recognition efforts.

What We Discovered

To a certain degree, most of the participants evidenced some historical perspective recognition as a result of transacting with the graphic text in an initial reflective way. Granted, we could have used a more traditional approach: ask participants to offer a detailed analysis of the text within a polished and rigorous essay, possibly as part of a larger project that could have been completed outside of class. In this case, however, our hope was to see how they would respond to the idea of using graphic texts in middle grade social studies classes to encourage perspective recognition and to get a feel for whether they would bother with graphic texts in a discipline less prone to using them. Thirteen of the participants provided evidence of perspective recognition. They grew to understand to a certain extent what it was like for young John Lewis to participate in the early stages of a civil rights struggle. The remaining three participants summarized the text or posted bullet points that they found interesting. They may have been involved in some perspective recognition, but they offered little evidence of it. Perhaps the directions for the reflections could have been clearer.

As teacher educators working in the Southeast, a region still rife with racial tensions, we anticipated the challenges that *March: Book One* might pose, but we believe that the text ultimately proves to be a legitimate graphic source for young adolescents.

Some passages within the graphic text evoked more perspective recognition than others. The most evocative portion related to John Lewis's early childhood experiences growing up on a small family farm in rural Georgia. Altogether, 32 pages were devoted to his coming-of-age experiences, including 16 pages related to a detailed reverie about his love and care for

his family's chickens; this section bore resemblance to a Protestant children's sermon on Sunday morning as he described his love for the chickens while indirectly sharing his emerging altruistic sense of justice for diverse others. Lewis's other main coming-of-age reflection related to his trip up North, as he learned from his uncle how to protect himself and seek out restaurants and hotels for blacks only. The passage that received the second highest attention was related to Lewis's training and action within the Fellowship of Reconciliation (F.O.R.). The enduring F.O.R. is a group committed to the philosophy and discipline of nonviolence. *March: Book One* is filled with multiple pages of often shockingly violent, graphic scenes that reveal how the young civil rights activists were determined to move forward with their peaceful protests. The third major area of interest among participants centered on the generational conflicts that evolved among black leaders—something that seemed surprising for the respondents, as they tended to think that the civil rights activists were more unified.

March: Book One enabled [participants] to enter into a key component of the movement and gain historical perspective recognition about generational differences within an earlier period.

What follows is an analysis of some of the perspective recognition responses that were most evocative in terms of participants' efforts to grapple with the complexities that Lewis and his civil rights colleagues faced.

Generational Differences

Benton (see participant descriptions in Table 1) pointed out the generational tensions among the black community as expressed within *March: Book One* and highlighted the graphic page on which Lewis describes his conflicting feelings in response to the mayor of Nashville's proposed system of "partial integration."

As a result of Benton's engagement with the text, he wrote:

> The political nature of the movement is quite amazing. This is from one person's perspective, but it shows many ways to progression, and it seems within the different generations that there were different ways of moving forward.

Benton connected to the young activists' sentiments at the time in terms of a generational tension, as if he, too, had felt such angst in his own coming-of-age story. As a result of successful sit-ins and boycotts, the mayor of Nashville was willing to propose a system of "partial integration." Young 20-something Lewis was alarmed that two black presidents of two historically black colleges and universities supported the decision. For Lewis, this felt like **BETRAYAL** in all caps and bold font. It revealed to him the differences between the generations.

Young Lewis even questioned the wisdom of Thurgood Marshall, who had ushered in Brown vs. Board of Education a few years earlier when he spoke to the young activists at Fisk. The author and illustrator portray Marshall pointing his finger from a bully pulpit, strongly suggesting to the F.O.R. that members should take a get out of jail free card when they can: "Look, once you've been arrested, you've made your point. If someone offers to get you out, man—GET OUT!" (pp. 110–111). Lewis realized what a fine man Marshall was, but he became more convinced than ever that the revolt they were waging was as much against the traditional black leadership structure as it was against segregation and discrimination.

As readers flip the page, they discover that five days after Marshall spoke, the sit-ins continued. F.O.R. was not about to accept a partial integration. Benton's interaction with and analysis of the text suggest that he recognized the existence of multiple ways of thinking and believing about the same historical event, even for someone experiencing it firsthand. From his own contemporary perspective, he seemed to acknowledge that a variety of perspectives is valid, and he saw these events and perspectives in the context of multiple beliefs and values.

Another participant, Leah, also commented on this generational tension, stating, "The disconnect between the older and younger generations can be seen [on pages] 110–111, which is something we can relate to. Everyone has had a time when adults and parents were not progressive enough for us." She recognized Lewis's concern about generational differences, even though she is neither black nor of that generation. She expressed the tension that comes with both respecting mentors from an earlier generation and wanting to go further than they toward a meaningful vision. *March:*

Book One enabled both Benton and Leah to enter into a key component of the movement and gain historical perspective recognition about generational differences within an earlier period.

Support from Outside Mentors

Another response from Benton helped us better appreciate the significance of outside mentors in a time of deep need. In response to the panel on page 106 showing the voluntary involvement of Dr. Stephen J. Wright, the first black college president in the country to stand by the F.O.R, he wrote, "I can feel Lewis's pride as he said 'We were euphoric.' Such powerful words." As this *March* excerpt suggests, the F.O.R. activists were "euphoric" as they shook hands with the mentors from afar who had come to their aid. On a Sunday morning, Fisk President Dr. Wright addressed the students crammed within the large university chapel and declared that "I Stand with You." Within the same page, Lewis recalled that on the next day, three black lawyers came to their defense in court without charging a dime. One was Attorney Looby from the West Indies, who had recently worked with Thurgood Marshall.

Did it take an African American, such as Benton, to feel this pride? How important are ethnicity or race and gender in readers' abilities to cultivate perspective recognition? No other participant noted this same heartfelt joy.

Values of the Author

Bill evidenced that he was following the authorial intent of John Lewis when he shared the following after reviewing the first few pages of *March*: *Book One*:

> John Lewis's journey began with a historical event that spanned generations . . . civil rights. It set up where he'd been and the magnitude of the day that is coming. A student may not understand the gravity of walking into a US Congressman's office . . . even in the early hours of the day. Work ethic and accessibility are being displayed for students to emulate. A sense of no one is better than another is being set up, too . . . not even the chickens. Hard work all around gets results. Everyday actions can get results, too. Black and white of the text sets a tone in itself.

From the get-go, Bill got inside the head of the master storyteller, and he began to realize what a story Lewis is about to share. The graphic panel on page 19 is just one of several that begins to create the significance of the day as Lewis, a life-long civil rights activist, prepares to attend the Presidential Inauguration of Barack Obama in 2008.

When Lewis arrived in his Congressional office on that chilly morning, young Jacob and Esau from his home state of Georgia, as well as their mother, greeted him. They had stopped by because the mother wanted her boys to see their history: "She wanted them to know" (p. 19). Congressman Lewis invited them into his office and began to share a little of the history that was connected to the framed photographs on his wall. He pointed out, for example, his meeting with President Kennedy when he was 23 years old. He also directed attention to his picture related to the march on Washington when he heard Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. give his "I Have a Dream Speech." In his excerpt above, Bill shared his belief that, through this passage, Lewis indirectly modeled work ethic and accessibility. After all, it was early when Congressman Lewis arrived. He had a big day before him, but he took the time to welcome the young boys and their mother from his home state, and the images he showcases reflect a lifetime of planning, commitment, and plain hard work. As his reverie unfolds, we realize that Lewis must have spent quite a bit of time with the young Georgians that morning. He spoke to them as if they were his kin. Bill, through his response, pointed out Lewis's belief that there is little sense in one chicken thinking it is better than another. Here, he connected with the chicken story to build moral insight into the character of John Lewis.

How important are ethnicity or race and gender in readers' abilities to cultivate perspective recognition?

Personal Connections

Karen made a personal connection to *March* that suggested she had developed some perspective recognition as well. Surprising us, she shared her personal connection with the graphic text as she reflected upon the passages related to F.O.R. training and activities, specifically the lunch counter sit-ins.

Karen opened up as she shared her feelings, writing, "For me personally, these pictures connect on a very personal level, as my husband's grandmother was involved in sit-ins in South Carolina." Her use of

the words "connect on a very personal level" suggests perspective recognition. She knows her husband very well and probably his family as well, so she is able to perhaps imagine more readily just how tough it was back then to stand up for something you really believed in, despite the cost. White activists were included in the images throughout the text, so she could have been drawn to them more readily than other white readers because of this bond she had, though distant, to someone like her who was white and who had fought for freedom's sake.

Another participant, Canton, offered personal insight that also included perspective recognition in terms of his thoughts about Lewis's history:

> Here I was reading about Justice, when there were brave people out there making it happen. (Doing things with a theological foundation), John Lewis was interested in doing more than just understanding. Likely from his parents and their lack of action.

It could be argued that Canton imposed his own perspective onto Lewis's, but it would be hard to refute that Lewis was interested in doing more than just studying. He did not remain within a theological seminary, although he aspired at one point to be a preacher. Canton may have projected an erroneous motivation on Lewis, but he proffered as a possibility that Lewis was rectifying his parents' decisions to not take action. Lewis certainly hinted within the text that he was disappointed in his family's choices, but that he certainly understood them.

Resistance to Historical Perspective Recognition

We were concerned to find open resistance toward perspective recognition via *March: Book One* with one participant. Daniel described how the text marginalized him and his family in negative ways because they were white. While trying to honor the value of the accessibility of the graphics, he wrote,

> This graphic novel presents the civil rights movement in a very accessible way through pictures. The graphic novel begins with a scene where police are prohibiting a group of black people from Marching (pp. 6–9). While it is very likely this event occurred, it also begins down a slippery slope of marginalizing white people in the South during the civil rights movement. While there were some, probably most, prejudiced police officers, this graphic novel appears to be taking the stance that all white police officers were racist. I am very interested to see if this trend continues throughout the book. I feel that by beginning the text with such a heavy-handed message, that I, as a white person, will need to adopt the persona of the "bad guy," since I share the same skin color as those portrayed, unanimously, as the "bad guys."

Daniel expressed frustration about what he read as a gross generalization about the lack of restaurants for black people in the South and his belief that Southern whites were overly stereotyped in demeaning ways in the text. He built a lengthy but important defense for his position:

> This section of the book depicts the protagonist riding to New York from Alabama to visit family. While I understand that this would have been a tumultuous time for blacks to travel through the South, I again feel that the text is marginalizing white Southerners. The text says, "There would be no restaurants for us to stop at until we were well out of the South" (p. 38). Again, I'm sure that in some, if not most, cases, that would be true. However, my daddy is 60 years old and can remember restaurants in our hometown that allowed blacks as customers. Yes, they were directed to sit apart from whites, but they were admitted, and there was no rioting in _____. The text continues this marginalization by inferring that there would be next to no bathrooms or filling stations that would allow them to use the restroom or fill up with gas. On page 44, the text changes its outlook on white people as a whole, and transitions it to just Southern whites. The man behind the candy counter gives the protagonist a bag of Neapolitan candy. The man behind the counter is white, and he is smiling. The text offers no evidence that the man treated the young boy unjustly or refused to serve him because of his skin color. This is supported by the author saying, "[I]t wasn't until we got to Ohio . . . I relaxed . . ." (p. 41). I will offer no argument that there was a serious and horrible racism problem in America during the civil rights era. I will not argue that much of that took place in the Southern United States. However, this book is seeming to continue the stereotype that all white Southerners were racist, are racist, and will remain racist. I feel like this does more damage than good because it paints whites as a unison group who all mask themselves in racism, when in fact, that is not true. My grandparents would have been in their 30s/40s during this time and would have, and did, accept black people in to their home, workplace, church, or anywhere else. They were not, are not, and will never be prejudice people. This text appears to make a different assumption.

For Daniel and perhaps for other Southern whites, *March* may not be the best graphic text in terms of encouraging historical perspective recognition, since it may come across to these readers as denying their sense of integrity or identity.

Yet the graphic text includes multiple examples of whites and Southern whites coming to the aid of civil rights activists during the time. The most notable example is perhaps the Southern Baptist minister Will Campbell, who earned almost a full page of graphic text. He spoke to the F.O.R. on the morning of February 27th, 1960, just as the group had received word that members would be arrested if they continued to protest. Campbell, who had been run out of Oxford, Mississippi, for playing ping-pong with a black man, shared what he had heard from his contacts in the white community. He warned them that the business community, local officials, and authorities would pull back and let the rough element of the white community come in and beat them.

Paul Laprad was also cited by name and included in the protest graphics, as were other unnamed but pictured white males and females. White broadcasters and newsmen brought public awareness to the protests. Even Mayor West of Nashville was given considerable graphic coverage as he eventually developed the moral courage to suggest that lunch counters should be desegregated, although he offered a disclaimer that it would be up to store managers to decide. Yet by May 10, 1960, white store owners in Nashville let paying black citizens eat at their counters. Daniel was unable, within the context we offered, to appreciate Lewis's notice of these white Southerners' efforts, though few in number.

It is important to note that by the time Daniel had composed his fourth reflection, he had begun to moderate his perspective. He again complimented the text, this time for not overly sensationalizing some of the horrific events, and he offered a way that he could engage in more perspective recognition within a text such as this:

> I feel that this section furthers the racial divisions between whites and blacks today. I am aware that this event happened and that it was very painful—mentally and physically—for all involved. I do appreciate that the author stayed with facts instead of sensationalizing the event for entertainment. I believe the events depicted are very difficult to look at, and could use more inclusion in their depictions, but overall this would help one become more empathetic.

At this point in the course, Daniel had listened actively to several of his peers whom he deeply respected. He seemed to be engaging in a process of revising or moderating his tone and was perhaps conceding that some of the text might even help a Southerner like him develop historical perspective recognition.

These gains were tempered, however, as evidenced by Daniel's continued critique of the text. He concluded his reflections by suggesting that the theme of *March* was divisive and that it should have ended with the results of the successful civil rights movement. (Note that the book opens with Lewis preparing to attend the inauguration of the first black president in American history.) Perhaps one of the strongest arguments to help mitigate Daniel's position is to point out that Lewis's coauthor and the text's illustrator are white. The photograph at the end of the full commercial text shows the three men in a clearly collegial pose and light.

We were concerned to find open resistance toward perspective recognition via *March: Book One* with one participant.

In Daniel's defense, his resistance began very early in his transaction with the text. By the end of the text and after actively listening to the conversations among his respected peers, Daniel had shifted his stance, if ever so slightly, toward appreciating more fully the plight of distant others rather than letting his fears of being forced to be the bad Southerner erase all potential of a move toward historical perspective recognition. Daniel did not share his perspective during the class conversations that centered around comments about the text's power to aid in his peers' historical perspective recognition. However, the text and method for introducing it did seem to lead to a small degree of historical perspective recognition within the project's most resistant participant.

As teacher educators and teachers, we need to continue to reflect on such reactions when a controversial graphic text is considered. This one response makes our discussion of potential uses of graphic texts for historical perspective recognition more complicated. Now in the wake of the Presidential election, will offering *March* to middle school readers be a suggestion of a preferred political persuasion rather than a fine memoir and source for the exploration of a historical period? The resistance described above represents a real reaction many white students may have

when responding to texts (not just graphic texts) and events in more conservative portions of the country. Likewise, it echoes many of the conversations taking place today and represents a reality for teachers. For example, students may argue that Lewis is insensitive in his graphic memoir by labeling all police and all whites as racist.

One way to help teacher candidates and inservice teachers think through how to handle these student reactions is by utilizing an introductory list of readings and proactive approaches to help students think about their own perspectives and privileges in relation to others. A few texts we believe to be powerful include:

- *Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* (McIntosh, 1989) offers the author's discussion of her white privilege and the ways it manifests itself and can remain unattended.
- *Complicating White Privilege: Poverty, Class, and the Nature of the Knapsack* (Gorski, 2012) includes Gorski's argument that the concept of white privilege has been often oversimplified and should be explored more fully by those in education, specifically those who are white in education.
- *Bringing Students into the Matrix: A Framework for Teaching Race and Overcoming Student Resistance* (Ferber, 2011) presents a discussion of the challenges associated with teaching about race and the author's suggestions for reframing, acknowledging, and addressing the race-related baggage students bring into the classroom.
- *White Power and Privilege: Barriers to Culturally Responsive Teaching* (Glimps & Ford, 2010) suggests the need to prepare future (transformative) teachers for understanding and teaching within the ongoing historic context of white privilege.
- *Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence: Understanding and Facilitating Difficult Dialogues on Race* (Sue, 2016) addresses existing resistance to racial dialogue and argues for the need for these difficult conversations about race to take place in ways that challenge assumptions, stereotypes, and myths.

Additionally, the academic journal *Understanding and Dismantling Privilege*—a forum for examining issues of privilege, inequity, and activism—and the documentary *Mirrors of Privilege: Making Whiteness Visible* (Butler, 2006)—a discussion of recognizing and addressing one's own privilege and racism—can be useful, as they too contain a wealth of information on recognizing and addressing whiteness and white privilege. Excerpts from each of these texts can also be used to guide middle and high school students through the process of questioning their own notions of whiteness and white privilege.

Suggestions for Using Nonfiction Graphic Texts to Encourage Historical Perspective Recognition

One important consideration when using texts such as the March trilogy to engage students in developing perspective recognition relates to our discussion above—the issue of controversial responses. Our classrooms are diverse places, and our students bring with them diverse backgrounds, stereotypes, and truths. As such, educators can and should expect wide-ranging responses and reactions to the perspectives of others. Teachers must take the necessary time to teach students how to engage with diverse perspectives and how to turn a critical eye to our own lived experiences and assumptions. This, we admit, can be a complicated process, but one well worth the time when it helps students develop and hone these critical thinking skills. It is equally important to fully evaluate any text before incorporating it into the classroom. This includes being proactive and anticipating and planning for potential issues (e.g., resistance and censorship from those in and outside the classroom).

While *March*: *Book One* served as a particularly useful text for our participating teacher candidates, there are many other graphic texts available that could lead to similar historical perspective recognition development. Other biographical texts that can introduce students to the civil rights movement include Anderson's (2005) *King: A Comics Biography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, Helfer and DuBurke's (2006) *Malcolm X: A Graphic Biography*, and Gunderson and Hayden's (2011) *X: A Biography of Malcolm X*. Gene Yang's (2006) *American Born Chinese* can help students better understand the perspective of someone struggling to find one's place within two competing cultural worlds. Two other books by Yang, *Boxers* (2013a) and *Saints* (2013b), provide readers competing perspectives into the Boxer Rebellion. Satrapi's (2003) *Persepolis* and Spiegelman's (1991) *Maus* are

also frequently taught texts, and both can be used to foster perspective recognition—*Persepolis* of a girl during the Iranian Revolution and *Maus* of Jews and Nazis during World War II. There are also multiple examples of nonfiction or informational graphic texts that might prove worthwhile, such as Jacobson and Colon's (2006) *The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation*, which makes accessible the heavily discussed 9/11 Commission report.

This is certainly not meant to serve as a comprehensive list of options, or even a list of those we heavily recommend. Ultimately, teachers are best suited to select the texts for their students, so we encourage teachers to read widely and to research the myriad texts available for these purposes. Here, it is also important to note that within social studies classes, one major criterion for text selection is the feasibility of the text to serve as a legitimate historical source, whether primary or secondary. Although historical fiction might encourage historical perspective recognition more readily than many other nonfiction texts, teachers must consider factors such as the text's legitimacy and the author's reputation as a historian or informant within a period. The March trilogy works quite well because it offers readers an accessible eyewitness historical account from a reliable source and his seasoned collaborators.

Finally, it is vital to take the time to teach students how to interact with graphic texts. Many students are unfamiliar with the graphic format and may struggle with how to read and talk about these texts, which can lead to difficulties in making meaningful connections and developing perspective recognition. There are many good resources available for teachers on this topic. McCloud's (1993) *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, Saraceni's (2003) *The Language of Comics*, and Rudiger's (2006) "Reading Lessons: Graphic Novels 101" are user-friendly resources for introducing students to the form, helping them understand how to read graphic texts, and fostering development of the language necessary to talk about graphic texts. Additionally, there are excellent resources for teachers, many that offer classroom applications, handouts, glossaries, and so forth. Three examples that we have used with our own students include Monnin's (2013) *Teaching Graphic Novels: Practical Suggestions for the Secondary ELA Classroom*, Bakis's (2012) *The Graphic Novel Classroom*, and Carter's (2007) *Building Literacy Connections with Graphic Novels*. Much of the content of these resources can easily be tweaked to fit the social studies classroom and to engage students in the development of historical perspective recognition.

Our ultimate goal in this project was to utilize a graphic memoir to help middle grade social studies teacher candidates develop historical perspective recognition as they interacted with distant historical others via texts. Likewise, we wanted to provide participants meaningful opportunities to consider textual and pedagogical possibilities for their own future social studies classrooms. Most of our participants demonstrated historical perspective recognition through their reflections, specifically with regard to early childhood experiences, training and action for F.O.R., and generational conflicts. Additionally, we shared the struggle one student experienced when reading and attempting to connect with the text and the experiences Lewis described. Taken together, this group of aspiring teachers largely found *March: Book One* to be a useful tool for considering the perspectives of historical others. As instructors, we believe the text holds merit; it is a well-written, well-respected, and relevant account of an important contemporary figure and his role in the civil rights movement, and it provided our teacher candidates with opportunities to connect to and to think deeply about these experiences.

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Texts such as the March trilogy are not only timely, but they are powerful sites for and sponsors of historical perspective recognition. Thus, there is much promise for graphic texts in social studies and ELA classrooms. Based on this initial investigation, however, we realize the need for more research on how and why graphic texts help and/or hinder historical perspective recognition. It is equally vital that, as

teachers, we explore new instructional methods for fostering these experiences with teacher candidates, teachers within our middle schools, and middle school students themselves.

Note: The authors attempted but were unable to secure cost-free permission from Top Shelf Productions to include images of the graphic panels referenced in this article.

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