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The Curriculum of Cultural Reconciliation at West Virginia State University and the General Education Curriculum

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**THE CURRICULUM OF CULTURAL RECONCILIATION AT WEST VIRGINIA
STATE UNIVERSITY AND THE GENERAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM**

A dissertation submitted to
The Graduate College of
Marshall University
In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

In
Curriculum and Instruction
by

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Marshall University
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APPROVAL OF DISSERTATION

We, the faculty supervising the work of **Michael Carpenter Harris II**, affirm that the dissertation, *The Curriculum of Cultural Reconciliation at West Virginia State University and the General Education Curriculum*, meets the high academic standards for original scholarship and creative work established by the EdD Program in **Curriculum and Instruction** and the College of Education and Professional Development. This work also conforms to the editorial standards of our discipline and the Graduate College of Marshall University. With our signatures, we approve the manuscript for publication.

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examined the perceptions and experiences of the faculty and students involved in the creation and administration of the General Education program at WVSU. This study focused on the themes of the creation of the original General Education curriculum that included the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes, the redesign of the curriculum due to the state mandate, and how the new version of the General Education curriculum compares to the original. The findings provide insight into strengths and weaknesses of the program, faculty and student perceptions, government policy affecting education, and possible pathways forward to strengthen a diverse curriculum like the General Education program at WVSU. In particular, this study couches this curriculum within larger movements concerned with a “curriculum of reconciliation,” a new educational concept that has been developing internationally in places such as Rwanda and Australia. Curricula of reconciliation offer more comprehensive perspectives of history and culture that do not privilege the colonial perspective and provides an avenue for social and cultural reconciliation through education and dialogue in the classroom. West Virginia State University as an original 1891 Land-Grant Institution is a pioneer of reconciliation through education because it was established for the sole purpose of social and cultural reconciliation of African Americans after slavery. In the early 80s, a General Education curriculum was created at WVSU that included *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* that embodied the essence of the curriculum of reconciliation. The curriculum had to be totally reimagined due to a state mandate to lower credit hours for graduation in West Virginia. This study chronicles that process and seeks to address the role of change in this curriculum.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Historic Institution

West Virginia State University is a historic institution in the town of Institute, West Virginia. The unassuming bucolic setting of West Virginia, known to some locals as America's best kept secret, guards among its treasures the proud history of an institution that is historic in American history, and in the history of the civil rights movement as an institution of education that is, and has been through time, a bridge of understanding and reconciliation between people and cultures. West Virginia State University began as a love story of cultural reconciliation that begins with the forbidden love of a wealthy land owner named Samuel Cabell and his wife Mary Barnes. Samuel I. Cabell was a wealthy plantation owner and descendent of the influential Cabell family of Virginia who lived on the land called Piney Grove where the campus of West Virginia State University now resides (Haight, 1971).

When Samuel Cabell moved into the Kanawha Valley, he married one of his slaves named Mary Barnes and went on to father thirteen children with her. Samuel Cabell wrote a number of legal documents to ensure that his family would be freed from slavery and free to enjoy their vast inheritance in the event of his passing. The language of the legal documents implied that Samuel Cabell was in fear of his life and was involved in conflicts with other residents of the town who were not as tolerant of Samuel Cabell's social philosophy (Haight, 1971). Samuel Cabell was eventually murdered by seven men who were all acquitted in mysterious court proceedings that caused controversy in the community. The social circles of the community of Institute attributed Cabell's murder to racism and suspected foul play. Eventually, the legal documents Samuel Cabell left for his family were deemed valid by commissioners of

Kanawha County and Mary Barnes began the process of fighting for, and eventually claiming, her inheritance and the plantation where the family lived and raised their children (Harlan, 1968).

After the Morrill Act was put into place offering federal funds for states educating people of color in 1891, West Virginia lawmakers began looking for locations to create a school called the West Virginia Colored Institute for the education of people of color in the state of West Virginia after the abolition of slavery. After the proposal was angrily rejected by different communities around the state, particularly the St. Albans community, the descendants of Samuel Cabell and Mary Barnes sold tracts of the land that became the campus of the West Virginia Colored Institute (Haught, 1971). The spirit of the idea of a curriculum of reconciliation was in practice at the West Virginia Colored Institute with its educational offerings specially designed to minister to the unique educational needs of a minority population rising out of slavery, but the scope of the mission has grown to include all people and cultures in search of education and opportunity as the curriculum of reconciliation has grown at WVSU through the decades.

The Curriculum of Reconciliation is the philosophic use of educational curriculum to create a critical pedagogy that creates a learning environment in which a comprehensive exchange of experiences and ideas occurs where social and cultural reconciliation is possible. Marian Hodgkin (2006) in her work *Reconciliation in Rwanda* argues the following regarding a curriculum of reconciliation specifically for history in Rwanda:

Reconciliation is a process that involves the rebuilding of relations—both individually and collectively. It is not an activity that simply entails “being nicer to each other” but a long-term project that is based on the needs and interests of both groups. Long-lasting, deep and meaningful reconciliation will not occur in Rwanda without reconciliation with history. An open, democratic and participatory debate about a national history curriculum is not only necessary for reconciliation but, if conducted well, could further social reconstruction and cohesion (Hodgkin, 2006).

Hodgkin (2006) goes on to argue that

the habit of passive absorption that permeates traditional curriculum leads to some of the same blind spots and gaps in mutual understanding that cause conflict in society, and the creation of a “critical pedagogy” that encourages questioning and challenging of injustice will create the atmosphere where a true sense of community and cultural reconciliation is possible (Hodgkin, p. 205).

There is no direct tie to the curriculum of reconciliation in Rwanda but West Virginia State University as an Historically Black College or University has a particular legacy in that the institution of HBCUs began during a difficult time in history when inequality and segregation still existed as law in American society. The concept of the Historically Black College and University, or HBCU, exists because of America’s recognition of the power of education to uplift people of color in society after their emancipation. These institutions were chartered under a very narrow curriculum that focused solely on agriculture and trade, but the history and culture of what began as a small school for the colored at the Cabell family’s Piney Grove and grew to become the university known as the living laboratory of human relations suggests that the institution always had a destiny that transcended its original charter.

The idea of a curriculum of reconciliation has only been conceptualized as recently as 2012 and is now being studied and codified internationally, but the language of reconciliation through curriculum is similar and resonates in both cases. This study will connect the history and concept of the curriculum of West Virginia State University from its earliest beginnings with what is now being defined as the “reconciliation agenda” that has been recently occurring on the international scene and parallels the events that took place in America that led to the creation of WVSU and the institution of the HBCU. The reconciliation agenda in practice is known as the curriculum of reconciliation by educational professionals. The reconciliation agenda that spawned the curriculum of reconciliation being implemented in Rwanda, Canada, and Australia

is identical to the educational movement that occurred in the United States that led to the creation of the West Virginia State University as will be examined by this study.

I grew up in the Dunbar-Institute area and I felt the influence of West Virginia State University in the community. As a child, I attended math tutoring sessions in Wallace Hall. I attended summer sports camps at Fleming Hall and worked on the grounds crew as part of a youth employment program. I worked as a camp counselor on the campus for a Science and Math camp, and finally attended West Virginia State University as an undergraduate student where I worked in the Admissions office, Academic Affairs office, and the Drain-Jordan Library as a part of the work - study program. I sensed the historical significance of the university beneath the surface, walking the campus and hearing languages and dialects from all over the world. I noticed the old buildings lining the roads that looked to me like they would belong in a museum if they were not still teeming with students and activity. I recognized the privilege of my place in an institution that existed as a refuge for minorities in darker times in American history that eventually transformed itself into a bridge between all people and cultures.

I attended WVSU as a student under the administration of President Dr. Hazo W. Carter, Jr. For 25 years, Dr. Carter led one of the longest, and arguably one of the most prosperous presidential administrations in WVSU's history. Dr. Carter assumed the presidency of WVSU in 1987 and implemented an ambitious plan to regain federal land-grant status that had been lost after the university was integrated in 1954. Dr. Carter led a 12-year campaign that restored land-grant status back to then West Virginia State College by an act of Congress in 2001 (Harold, 2010). Dr. Carter also led the effort to bring West Virginia State College to university status, which his administration achieved in 2004 (Harold, 2010). It was as a student, employee, and

faculty member throughout these stages, including the achievement of university status that inspired me to delve deeper into the history of such a distinguished institution.

Problem Statement

This study is about the unique history of the curriculum of West Virginia State University through time and how that unique history continues through the General Education curriculum. West Virginia State University as an HBCU was created as an answer to a legacy of discrimination to educate people of color after slavery to help lift them up in society through education. West Virginia State University's curriculum as an HBCU has always been fundamentally different from traditional public colleges because the original curriculum of HBCUs was historically focused on trade and agriculture at the exclusion of comprehensive instruction in the arts and sciences. This study examines how WVSU through its curriculum and an institutional legacy of progressive educational philosophy, has transcended its original mandate and become the living laboratory of human relations.

The curriculum that was first introduced at the West Virginia Colored Institute during the Jim Crow era that grew into a collegiate institute that gained national attention for its efforts at integration, I will attempt to define as the curriculum of reconciliation and examine how that thread continues today through the General Education curriculum. The General Education curriculum consists of *Origins* and *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* which are two separate classes that could be described as courses in social philosophy. The *Origins* class has a focus on theological themes while *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* is focused more on social themes.

Since 1983 until a recent West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission mandate to lower credit hours for graduation, all graduates of WVSU had an experience with the *Origins* and *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes because of a requirement that all students

regardless of their major were required to take both courses. Enrollments in the courses produced an eclectic mix of students and ideas that created an atmosphere that made a significant impression with students. The General Education curriculum is undergoing drastic changes due to the WVHEPC mandate and this study will examine those changes and the significance of the *Origins* and *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes going forward.

Research Questions

1. What is the curriculum of reconciliation at West Virginia State University?
2. What is the history and significance of the curriculum of reconciliation?
3. How do the *Origins* and *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes continue the tradition of the curriculum of reconciliation at WVSU?
4. What is the current state and projected future of the *Origins* and *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes?

Methods

This study will encapsulate the concept of the curriculum of cultural reconciliation through time, and as expressed currently in the curriculum of the *Origins*, and *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* courses at West Virginia State University. The process will utilize the researching of original historical documents, official institutional communications, and in-depth conversations with administrators, educators, and students who have both designed and navigated the curriculum to gain participant perspectives on the culture of the curriculum (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The study relies upon data gathering methods that are within the range of qualitative research to understand the people, places, and events relevant to the curriculum with an aim of discovering and emphasizing the culture, giving it an ethnographic bend (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

The qualitative emphasis on descriptive data gives context and meaning to the daily assumptions of those who make and navigate the culture and curriculum (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This study is designed to express both the academically positioned narrative and the community positioned narrative through archival research and examining institutional documents, interviews/conversations with teachers and students, as well as incorporating my own observations having taken both classes as a student and having taught the *Origins* class as a professor (Lassiter L. E., 2005).

Significance of the Study

West Virginia Colored Institute was established on March 17, 1891, as a Land-Grant institution by the West Virginia Legislature based on the Morrill Act. The Morrill Act was created to educate people of color after they were freed from slavery to prepare them to contribute to society after the Civil War (Harlan, 1968). American culture was still wrestling with cultural strife and segregation but the development of West Virginia State University and the HBCU marks an interesting progression of an idea of reconciliation that was advancing in American society. The original curriculum of what was then called the West Virginia Colored Institute offered training in agriculture, teacher preparation, and offered the equivalent of a high school diploma (Withrow, 1991). James Edwin Campbell was the first principal, professor of mathematical science, and administrator when the institution first opened its doors on May 3, 1892, in the obscure location of “Piney Grove” in Institute, West Virginia (Harlan, 1968). James Campbell was a poet and a freelance writer as well as a mathematical science teacher and was instrumental in the development of the first administration building later named Fleming Hall. Fleming Hall is still standing on the campus today and is used for classes and student gatherings. James Campbell was the first in a long line of administrators who achieved much for the

institution during their individual tenures, and because of this, many have become heroes of civil rights as human rights, and have intermingled with other heroes of civil rights during the course of their work at West Virginia State University, such as Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, Cornel West, Robert Kennedy and a myriad of other men and women of renown (Withrow, 1991). Education as a foundation for social reconstruction and reconciliation is the legacy of West Virginia State University and has continued in philosophy and practice.

The Colored Institute began teaching agriculture, mechanical arts, horticulture, and basic science to what many considered the “cast off” and “rejected” populations of the nation at a time of extreme cultural dissonance. Military classes were added to the curriculum that grew into an R.O.T.C. program that achieved fantastic results that aided American war efforts in substantial ways including contributing cadets to the famous Tuskegee Airmen (Harlan, 1968). WVSU partnered with the West Virginia Schools for the Colored Deaf and Blind (WVSCDB) which occupied what is now the rehabilitation center next to the university. WVSU shared services and opened their campus activities to the WVSCDB, including an agreement that allowed student teachers from then West Virginia State College’s education program to gain experience teaching and mentoring WVSCDB’s students (Bickley, 2001).

The fall registration at West Virginia State College in 1954 was a crucial moment for the institution, then under the direction of Dr. William Wallace. The fall registration of 1954 was the first semester where integration was mandated across the country under the tenure of Dr. Wallace, who made a civil and orderly transition into a multicultural campus his personal mission. Dr. Wallace led during the tumultuous time with courage and integrity in the foreground-and in the background, dealing with deeply personal internal issues of faculty and staff which speaks to the spirit of reconciliation alive on the campus that was driving its

progression. It is my belief that the philosophical positioning of the institution made WVSU uniquely equipped to facilitate integration. The exemplary effort at West Virginia State College was held up as a model in a *New York Times* article published on January 6, 1957, that carried internationally (Harlan, 1968).

Designing a curriculum that was engineered towards building and reconciling a multicultural society using education as a tool of social cohesion and reconstruction has been a continuous thread throughout the history of WVSU and is the embodiment of the idea of a curriculum of reconciliation. Designing a curriculum that could articulate the importance of both a multicultural society and a newly integrated campus thus became a major thrust of WVSU in the coming years. In particular, classes like *Origins* and *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* would explore issues of culture and philosophy at WVSU that some students would not have had exposure to otherwise. The two classes have existed as the cornerstone of the general education curriculum at the institution since the early 90s. The courses were developed and designed by the faculty of WVSU for the general education curriculum and stand as shining examples of WVSU's commitment to cultural discovery, understanding, and reconciliation. The classes were unique in the general education curriculum because every graduate of the institution was mandated to take both of the courses at some point before graduation for the purpose of ensuring that graduates are well rounded culturally and philosophically.

This study is an attempt to define the curriculum of reconciliation at West Virginia State University to gain a sense of the benefit the institution has been to society and link that history to the *Origins* and *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes. This study examines the revolutionary curriculum of WVSU and examines the notion that the curriculum of reconciliation that is only being encapsulated in educational theory as late as the 1990s in Rwanda, Canada, and

Australia already existed in philosophy and practice at West Virginia State University. Some of the striking parallels that existed politically and socially that brought about the creation of WVSU and the idea of a curriculum of reconciliation internationally will also be explored. WVSU is an institution of enduring integrity that has weathered difficult times throughout its history as it is enduring difficult times right now.

State budget cuts to higher education has hit the small institution particularly hard, as it is not as well equipped to absorb the losses as easily as larger public institutions in the area. When changes in the curriculum become necessary because of government mandates combined with the lack of resources significant pieces can be lost. This study analyzes the historical and modern significance of these classes and how they add to the integrity of the learning environment.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 is an introduction followed by a literature review (Chapter 2), which will place the scope of this study in context of other literature relevant to the history and curriculum of West Virginia State University. Chapter 3 will detail the research methods that will be utilized throughout this study including research design and methods of data collection. Chapter Four will define the curriculum of cultural reconciliation at West Virginia University and how it has been expressed throughout the history of the institution, as well as the past, present, and future of the *Origins* and General Education curriculum at West Virginia State University as a continuation of the curriculum of reconciliation. Chapter 5 will conclude the study with a comprehensive analysis of the data and narrative, as well as thoughts on the implication of these research findings for researchers and scholars for continuing research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This study will define and chronicle the curriculum of reconciliation, including the *Origins* and General Education curriculum, from its earliest beginning at West Virginia State University. The institution was established upon the ideal of cultural reconciliation and has carried on the tradition throughout its history as a historically black college that has transcended that original calling to embrace and unite all people and cultures through its often repeated mantra of being a living laboratory of human relations. West Virginia State University has gone through many name changes that has corresponded with its status as an institution before becoming the university that it is today, and that work is a testament to the curriculum and educational philosophy of the people who have championed it through time. West Virginia State Colored Institute was the original name of the institution that went on to become West Virginia State University and was originally established in 1891 as one of the original land-grant institutions commissioned by the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890 (Withrow, 1991).

The concept of the HBCU was born due to the recognition within American society of the evil of racism and created the concept of the HBCU to redress and reconcile that legacy of discrimination for the purpose of creating equality and to move towards an integrated multicultural society. The Morrill Act was originally designed to support states willing to commit land and resources for “land grant colleges,” meant to further education in areas of agriculture and other skilled labor. The 1891 Act also included provisions for establishing historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), which were meant to target states’ African American populations during segregation (Harlan, 1968).

The Curriculum of Reconciliation and the Legacy of Research at WVSU

Reconciliation in Rwanda: Education and the State (Hodgkin, 2006) is a study chronicling the development of a new curriculum of reconciliation in Rwanda following the genocide that occurred against the Tutsis and moderate Hutus by extremist Hutus in 1994. The curriculum of reconciliation in Rwanda is parallel to the idea and language of reconciliation that occurred at WVSU. A commission of reconciliation was established soon after the cessation of violence that sought to promote cultural and social unity through a new educational curriculum for an entirely new educational administrative system that for the first time, was equitable to all Rwandans. The text outlines the history and educational philosophy of the curriculum of reconciliation as it evolved during the process of creation and implementation. The spirit of the curriculum of reconciliation within the educational philosophy of WVSU from conception in 1891, is clearly seen within the example of Rwanda's implementation of the curriculum as Hodgkin (2006) states:

Educational reforms, however, have attempted to go deeper than this admirable administrative and operational transformation. The whole ethos and philosophy of schooling has had to change. The general government policy of national unity, reconciliation, and healing has been firmly instituted within the educational system, From the national to the local and community levels, the aims of education, the learning agenda, and the hidden curriculum have been systematically reformulated (p. 203).

Education for Reconciliation: Creating a History Curriculum after Genocide (Freedman, Weinstein, & Longman, 2017) is a report on the efforts of researchers from the University of California to aid in the development of a curriculum of reconciliation for history in Rwanda and Yugoslavia after genocide and ethnic cleansing. The project brought together curriculum experts and government officials from Rwanda, community stakeholders, and a nonprofit group "Facing History and Ourselves" that specialized in teaching the history of the holocaust and was expanding to genocide and ethnic cleansing. The research dealt with the premise that history can

be manipulated and become a point of conflict in their efforts to develop a model curriculum that examined the role of retributive justice in rebuilding societies and,

increasingly became aware of the importance of the schools, both in the events leading up to the violence and the possibilities inherent in education as one pathway to rebuilding communities that practice tolerance, respect human rights, and contribute to the development of a social identity that transcends ethnic group affiliations (Freedman, et al., 2017, p. 2).

Taking Education Seriously as Reform: Curriculum Policy Research and Implications for Study (Chan & Law, 2011) is a study conducted to design and implement a curriculum for Cultural Studies in post-colonial Hong Kong. The study examines dynamics of teaching and learning within a Cultural Studies program that incorporates the perspectives of the various stakeholders in light of political, cultural, and social tensions. The ways in which teaching and learning strategies, as well as the lived experiences of teachers and students contributes to educational outcomes was a focus of the research. The authors saw achievement of the objective as possible with a reconfiguration of power and culture in the existing educational system, and pragmatically cultivating the talents and imaginations a livable social future would call for (Chan & Law, 2011).

The Teaching of History of Rwanda: A Participatory Approach (Freedman, et al., 2006) is a comprehensive workbook for teachers in Rwanda who will be teaching history under the new curriculum of reconciliation. The text outlines the research process, the curriculum of reconciliation for history classes, and important information regarding the specific facts of ancient tribal customs and practices unique to the history and society of Rwanda. The text offers a brilliant historical summary of the clan-based kingdoms that existed and governed Rwanda before colonization and outlines the government and social hierarchy of a clan-based society in clear terms. The curriculum itself is outlined in exquisite detail and consists of four modules that

contain an overview for each historical period, reference materials and sources for each case, cross-cutting themes and their interferences, comments and historical details for the teacher, and other themes relevant to the historical period with each module containing two lessons.

The learning modules cover the history of pre-colonial Rwanda from origins to 1897, colonial era from 1897 to 1962, and the postcolonial era. The postcolonial era is broken up into two modules: the first being the postcolonial era from 1962 to 1990 and a second postcolonial era from 1990 to 1994. The authors state the following regarding the evolution of the time periods and the curriculum,

This evolution which takes into consideration the system reference of the colonial fact, takes as a priority the gaps brought about by the colonialists in all aspects of the Rwandan society and which still continue to affect it on a long-term basis (Freedman, et al., 2006, p. 5).

John C. Harlan was Associate Professor of History at West Virginia State College at the time of the writing of the *History of West Virginia State College (1890-1965)* (1968), and was the first author to publish a complete history of the institution. Although the author admits that segments of the data is scattered due to lost records through specified time periods, Harlan delivers a solid referenceable narrative of the institution that cites archived sources and often presents the raw data as illustrations. *History of West Virginia State College (1890-1965)* chronicles the timeline of the institution from its inception in 1890 through its evolution growing from an institution that graduated students with the equivalent of high school diplomas as the West Virginia Colored Institute to a distinguished institute of higher education as West Virginia State College in 1965. The *History of West Virginia State College (1890-1965)* captures the spirit of what I hope to accomplish in this study with a scholarly approach to the chronology of the curriculum Harlan alludes to in his preface as a curriculum that was constantly being reorganized to meet the new challenges of society in order to contribute to all segments of society, which, for

the purposes of this dissertation, I define those programs and courses created and administered for that purpose as the curriculum of cultural reconciliation.

Another important source for this dissertation study is *From the Grove to the Stars: West Virginia State College (1891-1991)*, a book written by retired WVSU faculty member Dolly Withrow (1991) in time to celebrate the institution's centennial. Dolly Withrow was a professor of English when *From the Grove to the Stars (1991)* was written with Elizabeth Scobell - who was acting director of the Drain-Jordan Library on the campus of West Virginia State College. *From the Grove to the Stars (1991)* reflects on the growth and early milestones of the institution as covered by Harlan (1968) in *History of West Virginia State College (1890-1965)*, and picks up where he left off in 1965 and carries on the chronicling of the history to 1991. *From the Grove to the Stars* is designed to be an entertaining and accessible work that presents a chronological narrative that is very similar to *History of West Virginia State College (1890-1965)* - so much so that it reads like a sequel.

From the Grove to the Stars (Withrow, 1991) chronicles the leaders and presidents of the institution from its creation in the style of Harlan's work but it also features glossy, visually pleasing presentations of exhibits and portrait illustrations of newsletters, year book photos, and other artifacts from the 1965 - 1991 period. *From the Grove to the Stars* places special emphasis on anecdotal stories of distinguished individuals in the "State" community who have moved the institution forward through their work, influence, and their personal philosophies that give life to the ideals the institution was created to realize. Their work and accomplishments echo the sentiments and ideals of the curriculum of reconciliation retrospectively. *From the Grove to the Stars* tells the story of the people in the community who were in the background and out of the

spotlight, but played a large part in the “State” family and the success of the institution throughout its history.

Dolly Withrow and Elizabeth Scobell (1991) echoed the sentiment of John Harlan (1968) in their preface to *From the Grove to the Stars*:

Every literary effort has its limitations. Much of my research was based on interviews. Often, the stories I heard conflicted in details with those I heard from others. Memories are like that. Sometimes, I found conflicts in the printed materials. As is true with most research, I sometimes found records to be incomplete or nonexistent. There are necessarily many omissions-both of events and people. Time and space constraints, as well as lack of firsthand knowledge, have, undoubtedly, prevented the inclusion of the names of many persons that should have been included. For that, I apologize and ask the reader to understand the enormity of the task (pg.v)

History of West Virginia State College (1890-1965) and *From the Grove to the Stars: West Virginia State College (1891-1991)* are currently the definitive accounts of the history of West Virginia State University and are typically the first sources of information for anyone interested in the recorded history of the institution. John Clifford Harlan, Dolly Withrow, and Elizabeth Scobell were all distinguished members of the faculty, former students, and have all professed a personal affection for the university that has moved them to hope to discover and preserve its history. I share some of the attributes in common with the aforementioned authors, except that I am vastly deficient compared to that distinguished group in all the areas I mentioned related to skill and experience.

My deficiencies compared to Harlan, Withrow, and Scobell makes their warning about the difficulties they had gathering and validating data all the more imperative for me to consider for this study to be successful. It is a reminder of the absolute necessity to access as many resources as possible to ensure the narrative is accurate, which makes collaboration with other researchers on the campus of WVSU who have already gone through the process of gathering data relevant to the historical curriculum extremely important to the process. Dr. Michael

Workmen is a current faculty member and researcher on the campus of West Virginia State University who has experience researching the history of the institution and will assist in the process.

Dr. Michael Workman is an assistant professor of history at WVSU and has done extensive research through his career on specific educational programs at WVSU throughout its history related to programs that fall within the definition of the Curriculum of Cultural Reconciliation. Dr. Workman has provided a study he recently completed titled, *The African American Experience: Company Towns in the Smokeless Coal Fields, Nuttallburg & Helen* (Workman, 2017), which chronicles the history of African Americans in the once bustling mining industry in West Virginia and recounts the role West Virginia State University played in an attempt to educate and train African Americans to become coal miners.

Another important source is Dr. R. Charles Byers, who was the first Provost of WVSU, and recently retired after 41 years of service to the institution. Dr. Byers began as an Art professor and under the administration of WVSU President Dr. Hazo W. Carter, rose up the ranks to become the Vice President of Academic Affairs and eventually the university's first Provost.

Byers was instrumental in the design and implementation of some of the greatest milestones of President Carter's administration including West Virginia State College's reclamation of land-grant status, and his leadership role in a campaign designed to move West Virginia State College to university status by adding master's degree programs to the curriculum. The plan also involved coordinating with the Student Government Association to mobilize students and alumni to lobby West Virginia lawmakers to grant the institution's request to change from college to university status, which prompted a final name change from West

Virginia State College to West Virginia State University. Dr. Byers has a private collection of records that he has shared with me as well as setting up a running dialogue of interviews to inform this study.

Ancella R. Bickley is another example of a distinguished graduate of WVSU who was moved to reflect on what the history of WVSU, and its restorative curriculum, has meant to the small community of Institute, West Virginia. Bickley graduated *Magna Cum Laude* from West Virginia State College with a Bachelor's Degree in English. Ancella Bickley is a prolific writer and has written numerous publications on the history of the state of West Virginia including *The History of the WV State Teacher's Association* (1979), but Ancella gives special attention to the history of West Virginia State University and its curriculum of cultural reconciliation in association with The West Virginia Schools for the Colored Deaf and Blind in her work, *In Spite of Obstacles: A History of The West Virginia Schools for the Colored Deaf and Blind 1926 - 1955* (2001).

The West Virginia Schools for the Colored Deaf and Blind occupies space where the now defunct West Virginia Rehabilitation Center stands on the campus of West Virginia State University. The actual structure of the original WVSCDB is now simply referred to as "Building C" on architectural blueprints of WVSU's campus. Before it was established the only choices for custodial or hospital care for the colored handicapped populations of West Virginia were to go to white-only institutions where they received care in segregated facilities or they had to go out of the state. Before the school opened on the campus of WVSU in 1926, deaf and blind African American children were at a particular disadvantage in terms of education because the only school that would accommodate them was in Maryland, and charged three hundred dollars per student for their special education (Bickley, 2001).

In Spite of Obstacles: A History of The West Virginia Schools for the Colored Deaf and Blind (Bickley, 2001) is the story of the partnership that existed between the West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and Blind and WVSU serves as a shining example of the curriculum of cultural reconciliation at West Virginia State University that Ancella Bickley describes as a “cooperative relationship” between the two institutions that extended beyond merely sharing services. Students majoring in special education at WVSU had the opportunity to student teach at the WVSCDB. The partnership allowed for handicapped students to attend classes at WVSU in an early form of a program to integrate the handicapped into society called “Mainstreaming” and WVSU opened the main campus to the students of the West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and Blind allowing them to attend social and sporting events. These innovations created a culture in the community that bound together the students of both schools (Bickley, 2001).

Still another important source for what follows is Dr. Jeffrey Pietruszynski, the current department chair and coordinator of the General Education program at West Virginia State University. The General Education program at WVSU houses the *Origins* and *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* courses which I believe to be two important classes that represent a continuation of the Curriculum of Cultural Reconciliation in the recent history of WVSU and are a central focus for this study. The *Origins* and *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* courses were originally designed by the faculty and feature textbooks written by the faculty that are updated annually. I can say from my own experience as a student and teacher of *Origins* and student of *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* that the classes leave a lasting impression on the students and the teachers alike. This lasting impression is in part due to the fact that every student who graduated from WVSU was required to take the courses regardless of their academic discipline, which created an eclectic atmosphere that represented a large spectrum of culture and perspectives.

Both teachers and students are core stakeholders and were interviewed for this study to get their thoughts on the significance of the classes.

Recently, the General Education curriculum at WVSU has undergone drastic changes due to a policy by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC) that mandates institutions of higher education must lower their graduation credit hours to 120 for the purpose of increasing the number of graduates, and to limit the financial burden on students incurred from curriculums that require an excessive number of credit hours (Force, 2012). WVSU offers degrees through four colleges that include: Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Arts and Humanities, Professional Development, and Business and Social Science. Dr. Jeff Pietruszynski, along with selected faculty members from each college at WVSU, have been working from the announcement of the policy in 2012 to the present to amend the General Education curriculum in accordance with the mandate. Dr. Pietruszynski was a valuable source of information because of his central role as chair of the General Education department in providing interviews, personal communications, and department newsletters relating to the history of the General Education program, and the tracked changes it has undergone in response to the H.E.P.C. mandate.

Finally, Dr. Richard Ford is the Associate Professor of Biology and Program Coordinator of the Biotechnology program at WVSU. Dr. Ford served as the representative for the College of Natural Science and Mathematics on the General Education Committee and helped design the new curriculum. Dr. Ford is a stakeholder influential in the process who provided his insight from the perspective of a board member during the curriculum redesign. Dr. Ford will provide his overall opinions on the policies, changes to the curriculum, and how those changes impact the integrity of instruction in higher education.

Summary

West Virginia State University is the story of an institution of unique historical value because of the special work that has been done there throughout its history providing first rate education and services to people and cultures facing social and economic discrimination during one of the darkest chapters of American history and played its part in the nation's healing over time. West Virginia State University, along with the other original 1891 Land-grant Institutions, symbolized one of the nation's most successful and enduring attempts to heal the deep social and cultural wounds brought about by the inequality and discrimination in American society at the time. That same spirit of reconciliation and the effort to achieve it through education that began in 1891 is only recently being captured in theory and philosophy around the world in places like Rwanda, Australia, and Hong Kong. The story of West Virginia State University has not had the benefit of being told by a President Emeritus, as typically happens for institutions of higher education, but the task has been taken up by former students and teachers of the institution who have a personal love and admiration for the school and its work that has moved them to attempt to preserve its history through their research.

It is this same spirit of admiration held by the aforementioned authors of WVSU's history that moves me to closely examine the history of the curriculum of West Virginia State University and how that curriculum has contributed to influence modern society. While other institutions of higher education in the region have far more fame and resources, West Virginia State University and its people have a legacy of quietly and humbly going about the work of educating and enriching the lives of untold numbers of individuals who otherwise may have never had the chance to have an education and realize their full potential.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

West Virginia State University is an institution that has deeply held bonds with the surrounding community of Institute West Virginia. The institution holds an important place in the community - for many, a symbol of pride - because of the affection and goodwill it has won from generations of education and community enrichment. West Virginia State University is lionized nationally because of its heroic efforts and educational philosophy that became a model of integration for other institutions. WVSU lives through the relationships it has developed over time with those it has served, and its sons and daughters have carried their skills and educational philosophy forward to achieve great things in the world. West Virginia State University's philosophy of culture envelops the institution, is inclusive of all without reservation, and is maintained by the diversity of people who walk the campus grounds every day. The culture here is defined by the interactive exchanges that take place in the hallways and classrooms, within the scholarly frames of challenging curriculum.

It is my belief that the curriculum and educational philosophy of West Virginia State University was ahead of its time as recent theories coalesce around the concept of a Curriculum of Reconciliation in educational circles that is being developed and implemented around the world. These parallels are worthy of examination because of the special purpose behind the founding of the institution of WVSU. WVSU's special status as an 1891 Land-grant institution only exists because the need for cultural reconciliation through education was recognized in America after the abolition of slavery. WVSU was commissioned and designed to make cultural reconciliation a product of the curriculum, and it is a commitment that has been reaffirmed through time by the historical leaders of the institution. West Virginia State University was a staple of much of my childhood growing up in the Dunbar and Institute communities, and some

of my earliest childhood memories took place on the campus grounds when the President's Mansion was completed in 1990 (WVSU Archives, 2017). My first memory of the institution was going to a homecoming game at Lakin Field on the campus. Homecoming was then, and is now, such a big event every year at WVSU, where I had an opportunity to go to a "meet and greet" at the newly constructed President's Mansion with my family.

I met WVSU President Hazo W. Carter Jr. for the first time as he hosted us in his mansion along with a party of members of the Dunbar and Institute communities. He led our party through a tour of the President's Mansion and talked with us over refreshments about his plans for the institution. It was an unforgettable experience. The sitting President of WVSU has always been an important and influential figure in the Dunbar and Institute communities because the programs and activities that take place at an institution the scale of WVSU have a tremendous impact on the small community. Local community members discuss the President of WVSU around the dinner table with the same interest as they discuss the local politicians, and my household was no different, which made meeting Dr. Carter a very memorable experience for me. I felt as though I was meeting a local celebrity when I met this tall and charismatic WVSU president along with his wife Judge Phyllis Carter, and their baby daughter Angela. The first family of WVSU was like the first family of the Dunbar and Institute communities.

Today, as I reflect, I feel that experience gave me an early sense of the opportunities for success that were possible within the local community and made me aware of what inspirational impressions institutional leaders of the past must have had on the students that viewed them as role models and mentors. The formula that has made the WVSU experiment such a success lies somewhere within the synergy created by the interaction and partnership between the institution, the administration, and the extended learning community, which happens on a personal,

experiential level. It is stories and anecdotes like these, and the positive experiences and impressions they create in individuals that cannot be easily quantified by statistics.

The history of WVSU is the history of the surrounding community, and each family within the community has their own experiences and perspectives to share. West Virginia State University is the story of the success of a small institution in a local rural community, one that caused the reach of that institution to grow to gain national and international acclaim for its historical legacy of achievement in educational society and beyond. WVSU is a beautiful example of an institution of higher education as a vehicle for cultural and social reconciliation because of the interaction of cultures and ideas that occur on the campus and in the classrooms on a daily basis.

Research Design

With my own experience in mind - as well as that of others who have attended or worked at WVSU - this study will employ a qualitative approach to the research of documenting the narrative of WVSU and its relationship to the learning community by examining its influence on social change through the academic curriculum, and recently through the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes. This study examines the possibility that the historical curriculum and philosophy of West Virginia State University that began in 1891 was far ahead of its time as a model of the idea of education as a tool for social change, social cohesion, and social mobility which is the core philosophy at the heart of the modern reconciliation movement in education. The philosophy of reconciliation within an educational curriculum has only recently began to be conceptualized as a tool for peace building and operationalized post conflict analysis from an academic perspective, and the gap between theory and practice is vast due to the relatively few empirical studies in the field (Brouneus, 2007). Qualitative research is the

scientific approach to the study of the human context around a particular idea or phenomenon. Mason (2002) defines the strengths of the qualitative method as providing an approach “to explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world, and imaginings of our research participants, the ways that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings that they generate” (p. 1).

The process required an empirical phenomenological framework combined with elements of ethnography to define the Curriculum of Cultural Reconciliation at WVSU. Patrick Aspers (2009) defines the goals of empirical phenomenology in his work *Empirical Phenomenology: An Approach for Qualitative Research* as the following:

It aims at being practically useful for anyone doing qualitative studies and interested in safeguarding the subjective perspective of those studied. The main idea of empirical phenomenology is that scientific explanation must be grounded in the first-order construction of the actors; that is, their own meanings and words. These constructions are then related to the second-order constructions of the scientist (p. 2).

The qualitative research method provides license to gather the existing data and place it within the context of the thoughts and experiences of administrators, teachers, and students for the purpose of creating a more complete record of the history of the cultural curriculum of WVSU. The empirical phenomenological framework will also factor in elements of the social sciences existing theory and unintended consequences of the phenomenon (Aspers, 2009). This study was designed to be flexible to allow for new observations, interpretation, and emerging understandings of the data and context. This study made use of archival data for analysis, as well as the private administrative documents of previous leaders of the institution who played key roles in creating and facilitating the Curriculum of Cultural Reconciliation at WVSU.

Interviews and informal conversations were utilized to get the first order constructs of the creators and the participants of the general education curriculum at WVSU. The first order

constructs of key administrative players will provide an overall strategic picture from the perspective of an administrator, as well as the first order constructs of teachers who teach the general education curriculum, and the students who receive the instruction. Archival analysis and a combination of interviews and observation will be utilized to understand and interpret the first order constructs of stakeholders within the context of the study. According to Aspers (2009):

Through this process of communication, experience, and interpretation that ego and alter are involved in, one reaches the meaning level of other actors and understands the way they construct ideal types, theories, codes, habits, words, and other aspects of their daily lives (p. 5).

Settings & Methods: Archival, Interview, and Participant-Observation Research

The setting of this study will be the historic campus of West Virginia State University in the small rural community of Dunbar West Virginia. The location represents the historical backdrop of the institution and the diverse community provides some context to the people and culture the institution serves.

An important part of developing the institution's historical backdrop is the use of archival materials. This study will thus depend heavily on archival data for analysis, as well as the private documents of previous leaders, faculty, and students of the institution who played key roles in creating and facilitating the curriculum of cultural reconciliation at WVSU. Importantly, the papers of key administrative figures will figure prominently in the following discussion and will be used to triangulate the data to frame the study's narrative. I have already conducted a careful survey of the contents of the WVSU Archives. There I have reviewed letters from former presidents including Dr. John W. Davis and the complete archive of Dr. Hazo W. Carter Jr. The data will be buttressed by additional supplemental information from the papers of Dr. Orlando McMeans and Dr. Charles Byers, who have both offered personal files as a source for this study, which are not currently housed in the WVSU Archives. Correspondence with key faculty

members involved in the process of creating a new curriculum for *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes will also be included in the record.

The archival data relevant to the creation of the general education curriculum will be combined with the data collected from the field to be sorted and organized for the purpose of preparing the data for final literary and theoretical analysis and comparison. Interviews with current administrators, faculty and students will also figure prominently into the study. First and foremost, informal conversations and preliminary interviews will be utilized to apprehend the first order constructs of the creators as well as the participants of the curriculum. These preliminary interviews with key administrative and faculty personnel will help to provide an overall strategic picture from the perspective of administrators and faculty, those who designed and taught the cultural curriculum.

In particular, professors and instructors will provide the valuable perspective of what it was like to create and maintain the curriculum, including designing a new General Education curriculum, and the process of implementing the curriculum in the classroom. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the student perspective will provide insight from current students and alumni who have navigated the curriculum, particularly the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes, and will include their perceptions of what they learned and experienced while taking those classes. These key stakeholders, along with relevant archival data, will be utilized to paint the picture of the story of the curriculum of cultural reconciliation at West Virginia State University through the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes.

These preliminary interviews provide context to conduct follow-up and more intensive interviews. All interviews will be conducted face to face, by telephone, or by email correspondence. The communication will be reciprocal and continual throughout the duration of

the study to maintain integrity and accuracy. Importantly, each individual perspective will have a unique value to the study for the purpose of finding meaning across the interactions and relationships of the institution to the learning community. These interviews will be semi-structured to create opportunities for participants to reveal new and emerging aspects of the narrative. Aspers (2009) states that, “the phenomenologist interested in social life does not study an objectively existing world, but a phenomenologically experienced world... a social institution is always perceived or valued by someone, and people tend to see things differently” (p. 5).

This combination of informal and formal interviews will thus be utilized to understand and interpret constructs of stakeholders as the study unfolds. Finally, the participant observation strategy will also be employed to collect data for this study. The participant observation framework will prioritize the meaning and interpretations of the individuals and the circumstances they are encountering on the ground. The process will require extensive fieldwork on location at the campus of WVSU making observations relevant to the study. Meticulous field notes on the contents of field observations will be required that provide as much detail as possible about the people, places, and events that make up the phenomenon of WVSU for comparison and analysis. Aspers (2009) states the following regarding participant observation in qualitative research:

The traditional approach to participant observation and fieldwork, which originates from anthropological fieldwork, includes long-term presence and meticulous field notes that clearly separate the researcher’s opinions and feeling from what is observed and said by the people studied. Interaction is a virtue, but in cases when one cannot interact verbally, observation should be undertaken. This means that field notes should be objective and give a good account of the situation (p. 9).

These qualitative methods - archival, interview, and participant-observer research - are designed to reveal and accentuate the human element and reinforce the idea that the social world where human beings interact does not exist in a vacuum but is constantly being created and

recreated through the interactions of individuals and their exchange of culture. Along these lines, collaborative ethnographic principles will be utilized in the design of this study to address the emphasis on the emergent nature of understanding. Collaborative ethnography is a qualitative method that allows both researcher and research participants to engage in multi - directional and multi - transformational exchanges where they both co-interpret and co-theorize the events or phenomenon they are investigating (Lassiter & Campbell, 2015, p. 6). The historical campus of WVSU is also an ideal setting for the observations and first-hand experiences that will inform the research.

Jennifer Mason (2002) counsels researchers involved in any kind of ethnographic research to draw reflexively on their own perceptions and experiences to include as part of the data and analysis. One must keep in mind, though, the challenge of ensuring that you are doing so in sensitive and meaningful ways with reason and justification, rather than over-imposing one's own experience on the interpretation of ethnographic materials (Mason, 2002). The final analysis will thus be facilitated by the process of triangulation where the data derived from archival documents will be combined with the qualitative data derived from field notes, observations, and interviews to advance overall validity for the study. Triangulation will ensure that the final analysis of the data is consistent with the goal of capturing the genuine experiences and perceptions of the stakeholders of the curriculum of cultural reconciliation at WVSU. The process of triangulation is designed to protect the voice of the stakeholders to make certain that they are properly represented in the interpretation and presentation of the data (Mason, 2002).

Summary

This study has relied heavily upon qualitative methods of research with an emphasis on principles of collaborative ethnography to establish the data and veracity to construct a narrative

of the curriculum of cultural reconciliation at WVSU with a focus on the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* component in the modern era. Key administrators, faculty, and students instrumental in the process of creating, facilitating and navigating this curriculum have been commissioned to participate in the process of gathering the data, creating the narrative, and bringing the study to a successful conclusion. The observations and input of my interlocutors throughout this process will put into practical use the collaborative ethnographic philosophy that states, “as we learn about others, we learn about ourselves; as we learn about ourselves, we learn anew about others; and when we are open to what we learn about others and ourselves, we change” (Lassiter & Campbell, 2015).

CHAPTER 4: THE HISTORY OF THE CURRICULUM OF RECONCILIATION AT WVSU

The education system in America was segregated by race and ethnicity in the 19th century to the mid-1800s following the abolition of slavery. Only three public colleges in the country could be said to allow admittance of African American students. The second Morrill Act compelled states to either integrate their public schools or create schools to serve their African American population. Instead of integrating their schools, many states opted to create a system of institutions that was completely separate and independent of the mainstream public system (Freemark, 2015).

Local African American leaders, the African American religious community, and European philanthropists worked together to create a network of over 100 institutions of education that were known as historically black colleges and universities to provide for the primary and secondary education of an African American population newly freed from slavery and hungry to learn and make a place for themselves in an evolving American society. “Even today,” writes Samara Freemark (2015), “HBCUs may be over-performing in producing certain kinds of graduates. Though black schools represent a tiny percentage of American colleges – around 3 percent of schools – they produce 24 percent of black STEM grads and confer almost 35 percent of all bachelor’s degrees earned by black graduates in astronomy, biology, chemistry, math, and physics” (p. 2).

West Virginia State University is a product of the historic HBCU community lineage that has withstood the test of time fulfilling and expanding its mission to educate African Americans to open, in the modern era, its doors to any student eager to learn without regard to race, ethnicity, or status. Dr. R. Charles Byers, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs at

West Virginia State University had this to say regarding the legacy of WVSU and Land-grant institutions:

The rich history of West Virginia State University (WVSU) is unique among Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The creation of the 1890 Land-Grant Act which was a partnership between state and federal governments to educate the descendants of African slaves placed WVSU in the ranks of now 19 land-grant institutions. Today, it is one of 107 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). This very small school on the banks of the Kanawha River located in what was known as Piney Grove (now Institute) has grown in prominence and service. Today, it is a regional university serving all students as a multiracial, multigenerational, and multicultural highly accredited school of higher learning (Letter, July 25, 2017).

The philosophy of education for reconciliation in post-conflict societies is undeniably present in the narrative of WVSU and the agenda for reconciliation worldwide. For example, the effort to create a new curriculum for history in Rwanda after genocide mirrors the effort to create an educational curriculum for people of color in America in terms of the achievement of reconciliation as a stated goal of the curriculum. The environment that inspired government policy changes in America that set the stage for the creation of WVSU after slavery, and the social upheaval that created the conditions for a Reconciliation Agenda in Rwanda after genocide are nearly identical. This same environment was duplicated in Australia that prompted the creation of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation in 1992, which commissioned a curriculum of reconciliation for Australia that recognized and prioritized the histories and cultures of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (Exley & Chan, 2014).

The West Virginia Colored Institute

The West Virginia Colored Institute, which began as the equivalent of a high school and would later grow to become West Virginia State University, was created on March 17, 1891 by an act of the West Virginia Legislature in response to the second Morrill Act of 1890. The original focus of the colored institute's curriculum was based upon the influence of the Tuskegee

Institute's philosophy of pursuing functional instruction in arts and mechanical sciences while also expanding the curriculum to include teacher training. Booker T. Washington was the influential founder and leader of the Tuskegee Institute and was heavily involved in politics as an advisor to presidents which brought him powerful political connections previously unavailable to people of color. Booker T. Washington's network of influence was referred to as the Tuskegee Machine and that power was used to influence and support the HBCU movement. Booker T. Washington was born into slavery in Virginia, but went to live in Malden, West Virginia at 9 years old after emancipation where he received his early education (Rowe, 2014). Washington believed the focus of education for people of color newly emancipated should focus on industrial/vocational education and reconciliation of the south (Du Bois, 1903).

The shaping of the educational philosophy of HBCUs and the curriculum of the West Virginia Colored Institute was also taking place in a broader conversation across the nation as Washington's counterpart of the time, W.E.B. Du Bois, attempted to analyze and influence the process himself by critiquing the philosophy of Washington and expressing his own views on the activism and education of people of color. Du Bois (1903) sympathetically defined the conditions Booker T. Washington dealt with to create an opportunity for people of color to receive an education during the most divisive of times in America that offers a snapshot of the mood of the country during that period:

In the South especially has he had to walk warily to avoid the harshest judgments, and naturally so, for he is dealing with the one subject of deepest sensitiveness to that section. Twice—once when at the Chicago celebration of the Spanish-American War has he alluded to the color-prejudice that is “eating away the vitals of the South,” and once when he dined with President Roosevelt—has the resulting Southern criticism been violent enough to threaten seriously his popularity. In the North the feeling has several times forced itself into words, that Mr. Washington's counsels of submission overlooked certain elements of true manhood, and that his educational *programme* was unnecessarily narrow...but aside from this, there is among educated and thoughtful colored men in all

parts of the land a feeling of deep regret, sorrow, and apprehension at the wide currency and ascendancy which some of Mr. Washington's theories has gained (p. 20).

Du Bois was referring to what became known as the Atlanta Compromise, which was a famous speech given by Booker T. Washington as a rollout of his educational philosophy for people of color where he advocated for a vocational/industrial curriculum with the rationale that, "In all things purely social we can be as separate as the five fingers, and yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress" wrote Washington (1895, p. 4). Du Bois (1903) expressed the profound disappointment of his contemporaries toward this philosophy after so much progress had been made toward civil rights and social equality, "Mr. Washington's *programme*," he wrote, "practically accepts the alleged inferiority of the Negro races . . . and Mr. Washington withdraws many of the high demands of Negroes as men and American citizens" (Du Bois, p. 21); and "these same men admire his sincerity of purpose, and are willing to forgive much to honest endeavor which is doing something worth doing" (Du Bois, p. 20). Du Bois advocated for a complete educational curriculum for people of color equal to the traditional public university in America. Du Bois felt that limiting the curriculum to agricultural and mechanical pursuits would still effectively marginalize people of color. The early emphasis on agriculture and industry synonymous with curriculum of the West Virginia Colored Institute and the traditional HBCU is reflective of the philosophy of Washington, while the more progressive versions of the institution that followed and eventually became West Virginia State University, placed a greater emphasis on the philosophy of Du Bois which advocated for a complete education for people of color that utilized a comprehensive curriculum for the study of the arts and sciences on par with the traditional public institutions in the nation. The difference in philosophy between Du Bois and Washington is an example of the dialogue and developmental process that occurred in America during the formation of the HBCU that parallels the curriculum of reconciliation.

The quality of education and success of the colored institute in the early years of development as the equivalent of a high school, prompted growth in the student body and an increase in appropriations from the state of West Virginia under Principal J. Edwin Campbell, Principal John L. Hill, and Professor James Canty, who acted as the first administrators of the colored institute in its earliest stages. The success of the West Virginia Colored Institute continued under the administration of President J. McHenry Jones and marked an important period for the growth of the institution that served as the foundation for the university and pointed the school toward national recognition. President Jones was politically astute and gained an incredible amount of influence within the state government which helped set the foundation for the vision of what West Virginia State University would eventually become. New funding appropriations as a result of the success and renown of the institute and the political activism of President Jones, helped to fund construction for new buildings on the campus, as well as creating an opportunity for the expansion of the curriculum with the establishment of new Agricultural, Military, Commercial, Domestic Science, and Art departments. An already existing Mechanical Department was also expanded during McHenry's administration to include blacksmithing, painting, interior decoration, wheelwrighting, plastering, brick laying, and architectural and mechanical drafting. Alongside the Mechanical Department, the already existing Industrial Department expanded to offer courses specifically designed for women that included cooking, laundering, millinery, and dress making (Withrow, 1991).

By the semester of 1914, the Colored Institute had drastically expanded its curriculum to include three areas of study offered to students that were categorized as English, Academic, and Normal. The Normal curriculum was designed for training aspiring teachers, the Academic curriculum was a college preparatory curriculum reminiscent of public high school designed to

prepare aspiring college students, and the English curriculum was designed for students learning a trade. The English curriculum consisted of literature, grammar, and rhetoric. A mathematics curriculum was also developed at the colored institute that consisted of physics, chemistry, botany, physiology, and physical geography. All students of the Colored Institute were also assigned industrial work as a requirement for graduation regardless of the student's chosen field (Harlan, 1968).

The Colored Institute established a Domestic Science Department that offered specialized courses in scientific agricultural methods developed under the direction of Austin Curtis, Jr. Curtis was a graduate of the Agricultural and Technical College of North Carolina and Cornell University and worked for eight years under the tutelage of Dr. George Washington Carver. Clay was known for creating innovative methods that increased previous yields from the notoriously difficult clay soil in Piney Grove. Charles E. Mitchell was a graduate of Boston Commercial College who came to the Colored Institute under the administration of President Jones to direct the Business Department in 1904. At the time, the Business Department curriculum consisted of only typing and stenography but Mitchell expanded that curriculum by developing courses in commercial law, dictation, orthography, banking, transportation and economic history. Mitchell was a man of high political acumen like President Jones and was influential in Republican circles of the West Virginia state government. Mitchell became a certified public accountant during his tenure at the colored institute and was promoted to the position of the school's business manager (Withrow, 1991).

The administration of Byrd Prillerman, succeeding J. McHenry Jones, swept in with a larger emphasis on Agriculture, and Byrd Prillerman immediately partnered with Professor Austin W. Curtis, Jr. to further advance the agricultural studies programs by procuring new

equipment and machinery to work on more scientifically advanced methods of farm production to incorporate into the curriculum. The faith, hard work, and sacrifice of the generations of students and administrators of the West Virginia Colored Institute was rewarded when the West Virginia Colored Institute became the West Virginia Collegiate Institute in 1915. Byrd Prillerman wrote a letter to the West Virginia legislature that expressed a great desire among the community to establish college courses at the colored institute that would grant it the authority to graduate its students with college degrees. Prillerman further suggested, in the spirit of the racial and social reconciliation that was happening across the country in reference to the civil rights movement, that the word “Colored” in West Virginia Colored Institute be replaced with “Collegiate” thereby naming it the West Virginia Collegiate Institute (Withrow, 1991). Prillerman’s request was echoed by West Virginia Governor H. D. Hatfield in a passionate speech during a legislative session where he asked the legislature to establish a collegiate department at the school, or to at least provide appropriations for scholarships for qualified students of color (Harlan, 1968).

On February 17, 1915 Governor Hatfield signed the bill into law creating the West Virginia Collegiate Institute granting the institution the power to offer college courses as well as offering extension work in agriculture and home economics. In conjunction with the change in curriculum to offer college degrees, entrance exams were introduced, the academic calendar was improved to reflect the semester and term length schedules traditional to a collegiate program, and academic courses were reorganized to reflect the changes. The new Collegiate Department housed Mathematics, French, English Language, and Chemistry (Harlan, 1968).

Following the installation of President John W. Davis in 1919, the curriculum at the Collegiate Institute expanded again with the additions of psychology, economics, mathematics,

natural sciences, Greek, political science, and philosophy. Advanced courses were also added to the curriculum for Education, Business Administration, and Pre-medical studies. During this time, talented faculty members came to the school to complement the expansion of curriculum and the West Virginia Collegiate Institute quickly became known for offering the best programs for biology and health education for minorities in the state of West Virginia (Withrow, 1991).

In 1926, the West Virginia Collegiate Institute partnered with the West Virginia Schools for the Colored Deaf and Blind help to educate and serve the needs of two handicapped minority populations who had no other recourse for education or service in the state. The two schools worked together to thrive in the harsh conditions of segregated America. The WVSCDB shared land, facilities, resources, students, and personnel with the Collegiate Institute that created an atmosphere of congeniality that led to student/teacher exchanges between the two schools that allowed handicapped students to attend social functions and take classes at the Collegiate Institute, while students at the Collegiate Institute studying to work in special education had the opportunity to gain unique experience in their chosen field (Bickley, 2001).

Eventually, West Virginia Collegiate Institute and The West Virginia School for the Colored Deaf and Blind partnered with the American Foundation for the Blind to create a cooperative teaching program that was the first of its kind in the country and making the West Virginia Collegiate Institute (West Virginia State College by that time) the first HBCU to establish a laboratory-teaching program for the handicapped. The cooperative teaching plan brought awareness to the idea of schools for the colored handicapped in the south and the fact that the students would be taught by teachers of color, drew teachers of color from all over the nation (Withrow, 1991).

Soon after, the West Virginia Collegiate Institute joined the American Association of Colleges and on February 11, 1929, the West Virginia Legislature passed House Bill 71, which changed the name of the school from the West Virginia Collegiate Institute to West Virginia State College (Withrow, 1991). Senate Joint Resolution No. 15 soon followed and was enacted on March 1, 1929, authorizing West Virginia University and West Virginia State College to accept federal grants for the purpose of organizing and conducting agricultural extension work (Harlan, 1968).

In 1939, after many years of the administration's tireless campaigning at the War Department that included a letter written by Daniel L. Ferguson addressed to the President of the United States on behalf of the institution, an official R.O.T.C. program was designed and implemented on campus. The R.O.T.C. program at West Virginia State College boasted an artillery unit that was the first in the history of HBCUs. The location of Wertz Air Field next to the campus of WVSC made the institution a prime location for an aviation program which eventually became known as the Civil Aeronautics Program. The curriculum included aviation science, groundwork, and mechanics. Specialized faculty were brought in to help teach the classes which taught 22 students how to fly within a year of implementation (Withrow, 1991).

The Army Air Corps was still denying opportunities to people of color to join the Officer Flight Program prior to the implementation of the flight school at WVSC, but due to pressure from social institutions that included the NAACP and Eleanor Roosevelt, significant progress was made and on March 7, 1942, WVSC graduates George Roberts and Mac Ross were commissioned as Second Lieutenants joining two other cadets to become the first African Americans in the history of the Army Air Corps. Several graduates of the aviation program at West Virginia State College became part of the famed Tuskegee Airmen famous for their heroic

exploits in World War II where they destroyed 409 German aircraft, over 950 units of ground transportation, and sank a destroyer with nothing but machine gun fire. “They performed brilliantly, despite being trained and having to operate under the most difficult conditions of segregation and discrimination, in the United States and overseas” (Ledbetter, 2017, p. 1).

Withrow (1991) highlights how WVSC tailored their curriculum following the events of World War II:

As World War II drew to a close, the college again altered its curriculum to meet the changing needs of a new student body. Veterans who returned from the war required academic programs that would enable them to find gainful employment. The college offered a wide assortment of classes, such as accounting, chef duties, business administration, greenhouse management, secretarial science, machine shop practices, plumbing, printing, and swine husbandry. Moreover, West Virginia State provided job placement services and offered special arrangements so that veterans could earn college credits while completing military service requirements (p. 53).

In 1944, Dr. George Strayer conducted research that produced a report on the health of public education in West Virginia and stated that in regards to West Virginia State College, “It is the only institution in the State that has strong nationwide drawing power...It enjoys the national reputation of being one of the two or three leading institutions among the seventeen land-grant colleges for Negroes, public and private, that are not of university rank (Withrow, 1991, p. 53).

President John W. Davis was leader of the institution in the 1940s and with his parting words to his successor, Dr. William Wallace, articulated his vision of the destiny of West Virginia State College, “This college must work itself out of a business as a college for Negroes. It must become a college for all people” (Withrow, 1991, p. 55). Dr. Wallace received the charge of his predecessor and it became his personal mission to make the vision of Dr. Davis for the small school in Institute a reality. Following a monumental Supreme Court ruling that finally ended segregation in public schools, Dr. Wallace saw an opportunity and began to lay the ground work for the post racial institution he and his predecessor envisioned by creating five divisions of

administrative responsibility that included Instruction, Business Affairs, Records and Recruitment, Student Personnel Services, and Cooperative Extension. Dr. Wallace also drafted a statement documenting the expectations of department heads and tasked the faculty with drafting a new constitution. Faculty and staff meetings were scheduled on a regular basis where issues of great significance were worked out which enhance cooperation, efficiency, and allowed the faculty and staff to vent their frustrations and the minute details of the institutional transformation behind closed doors (Harlan, 1968, p. 99).

President Wallace became a force for integration in West Virginia and painstakingly prepared the staff and faculty of West Virginia State College, as well as the community of Institute through a series of comprehensive, and often contentious, community meetings about the direction of West Virginia State College post integration. There were concerns from institutional stakeholders and the community as to how the implementation of integration would take place, and what those changes would mean for the legacy of the institution. Dr. Wallace is reported to have been the de facto leader of an uncertain community with an uncertain future and would go to community meetings where he would be alternately praised and blamed. The WVSC community was searching for some assurance that the new integration plan would in fact be in the best interests of the school and not another way to undermine or erode the opportunities that so many had sacrificed for. Dr. Wallace patiently soothed doubts and boldly dealt with dissenting factions within the faculty, staff, and community by striking a delicate balance between the application of force and calm diplomacy. “Wallace did not just guide the school through what could have been a period of protests and riots. He exerted strong and effective leadership. He said what had to be said to members of either race as the occasion demanded” (Withrow, 1991, p. 78).

Meanwhile, integration at WVSC was hurtling towards reality as white students began applying for admission at WVSC for the 1954-1955 school year. The 1954-1955 admission process brought the small college in Institute to national acclaim. West Virginia State College handled integration so deftly and admirably that the school grabbed national headlines with the *New York Times* and CBS News. Institutional enrollment grew which required an increase in faculty, and a new culture was created on campus overnight as new students and faculty from all walks of life joined the WVSC family. The spirit of cooperation and congeniality that defined the campus of West Virginia State College continued after the school was integrated and was described as, “The campus offered a refuge – a magical place – to all qualified individuals who wanted to increase their knowledge and expand their social experience” (Withrow, p. 79). Dr. R. Charles Byers states the following regarding the legacy of integration at WVSU:

The legacy for West Virginia State University will play an integral part of the integration of higher education in the United States. Beginning with the *Brown vs Board of Education* Decision in 1954, West Virginia State College (now University) was an example of successful racial integration among previously segregated schools. President William J. L. Wallace coined the slogan “A Living Laboratory of Human Relations” to keep the West Virginia State College (WVSC) family aware of what was to be expected from students, faculty, and staff as they interacted with each other. It later became the school motto. The institution survived under this motto while other schools across the nation experienced turmoil. The legacy of West Virginia State University is hard to predict, given the racial tension that still exist in our country. However, we can state that “WVSU will be remembered as a leader among historically black institutions that integrated successfully.” The state of West Virginia has benefitted greatly from the integration of WVSC. During the late 50s, other state schools also slowly began to integrate, particularly in athletics from team interactions. Academically, the high accreditation standing of WVSC gave it notoriety among other state schools and the region. The institution will be remembered as a leader both in academics and in athletics. The most notable legacy for WVSU regarding integration will be the human relations factors. People from diverse backgrounds learned to respect each other. People from rural Appalachia and people from large out of state cities learned to accept each other’s individual differences. Faculty, students, and staff began to understand and appreciate what each could contribute to the institution and society. Therefore, the legacy among historically black institutions will be somewhat different than the interpretation among non-minorities. West Virginia State Universities will have made significant contributions to all affected by her. However, when dealing with human behavior, there will always be

negative interpretations offered about her role in their lives (Personal Communication, July 25, 2017).

Following the marvelously successful integration of West Virginia State College, the institution was unceremoniously stripped of its land grant status in 1956 in an October meeting of the Board of Education. The rationale for stripping WVSC of its land grant status was based on a strangely worded report titled “The Brewton Report” that suggested taking the land grant appropriations that usually went to West Virginia State College and giving them to West Virginia University, which was the largest school in the state and did not allow admittance to people of color before integration. In 1987, Dr. Hazo W. Carter Jr. took the helm as president of West Virginia State College with one of his stated objectives being the reclamation of land-grant status for the institution, “or failing that, have the record show that all possible efforts to regain the status had been made” (McMeans, 2017, p. 1). Dr. Orlando McMeans (2017) offers a description of the effort as follows:

West Virginia State University was designated by the United State Congress and the State of West Virginia as an 1890 Land-Grant Institution under the Second Morrill Act. These schools were created to provide “*instruction in agriculture, the mechanical arts, English language and the various branches of mathematical, physical, natural, and economic science: to the black citizens of the state where these students had no access to other higher education institutions.*” WVSU faithfully and successfully met its duties to the citizens of West Virginia as a land-grant university in an outstanding manner. However, on October 23, 1956, the West Virginia State Board of Education voted to surrender the land-grant status of WVSU (effective July 1, 1957) and transfer all personnel and expense funds to West Virginia University, the state’s 1862 Land-Grant Institution. For decades, alumni of the University interested in regaining the Institution’s land-grant status, looked for the right time, place, and person(s) to reverse the decision made in 1957. In 1988, President Hazo W. Carter, Jr. undertook this endeavor. During the fall of 1988, President Carter and several members of his staff traveled to Washington to meet with the staffs of West Virginia’s Congressional delegates and representatives of the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), to explore the feasibility of regaining land-grant status for the College. The Congressional delegation was supportive, but pointed out the first

step was to have the state legislature redesignate WVSU as an 1890 Land-Grant Institution. In 1991, House Bill 2124 was passed unanimously by both the House and Senate after being amended twice, to redesignate WVSU as an 1890 Land-Grant Institution. On February 12, 1991, Governor Gaston Caperton signed the bill on the campus of WVSU. On August 4, 1999, Senator Robert C. Byrd amended the House of Representatives Bill 1906, to once again establish WVSU as a land-grant institution, eligible for research and extension funding as established under the Second Morrill Act of 1890. After approval by Congress, on October 22, 1999, President Bill Clinton signed the FY2000 Agricultural Appropriations Bill (Personal Communication, August 28, 2017).

The Origins of the General Education Program

The evolution of the curriculum at West Virginia State University is the curriculum of reconciliation in practice before the concept existed as an educational phenomenon. It was a reaction to inequities in society that created gaps in understanding between people from different culture and classes, which is the educational philosophy behind the modern concept of the curriculum of reconciliation movement (Hodgkin, 2006). The *Origins* and *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes, which were the crown jewels of the General Education program are a shining illustration of the creation of a curriculum of reconciliation on the campus of WVSU.

Dr. David Wohl arrived on the campus of West Virginia State College in 1976 to join the faculty of the Arts and Humanities department. Dr. Wohl characterized the General Education program as “unique” upon his arrival and described the format that existed at the time as, “a Colloquia in Humanities and Social Sciences that consisted of topic-oriented courses” and “a distribution system of credit hours” that accepted any class the student chose within their major as a satisfaction of their General Education requirement. When the late Dr. Arline Thorn became the Vice President of Academic Affairs in 1983, she saw a reformation of the General Education program as a passion project (Wohl, Interview, November 18, 2017).

Dr. Thorn formed the General Education Advisory Committee, which she led, that consisted of Dr. Bonnie Dean and Dr. David Wohl that was tasked with researching and

evaluating the General Education program. Dr. Wohl, along with his colleagues on the committee, studied student transcripts, syllabi, and college catalogs for data and patterns. Dr. Wohl was at first against any revision to the General Education curriculum but changed his mind through the process of the transcript research because, “graduates were sort of wildly different in terms of what they had for a core because there wasn’t a core, it was just a menu” (Wohl, Interview, November 18, 2017). The consensus was that the current General Education curriculum was not providing a common learning experience for the students and required more focus and direction. The program evaluation got an initial boost in momentum when Dr. Thorn received a Title III Grant from the federal government that officially charged the research team to investigate the general education program, recommend curriculum changes, grant release time for the faculty, and provided funding for faculty salaries to engage in research (Wohl, Interview, November 18, 2017).

Dr. Thorn, Dr. Dean, and Dr. Wohl studied General Education curriculum from all over the country, did site visits, and began formulating ideas. The culmination of the early research came with a report to the faculty at a meeting in the summer of 1983 titled, “Toward a Common Learning Experience” written and presented by Dr. Thorn, Dr. Dean, and Dr. Wohl that brought the faculty up to speed on all their findings and began incorporating them into the process of revising the general education curriculum. The report states (1983) that, “the majority of colleges today follow some kind of distribution system, usually divided into precisely the same curricular areas as our own and listing mostly traditional introductory survey courses within each area. The basic flaw of a distribution system is the lack of integrated experiences. A list of courses taught in separate departments, which are not related to each other in objectives, philosophy, or

methodology, do not necessarily add up to a coherent General Education” (Thorn, Dean, & Wohl, pp. 9-10).

Dr. Wohl described the period between 1983 and 1985 to be politically tumultuous among the faculty when the process of changing the General Education curriculum began. The faculty would discuss the proposed changes to the curriculum in an open forum and courses would either be ratified into the curriculum, or the proposed course would be rejected and sent back to the committee for further review. The faculty meetings were highly charged and Dr. Wohl credits another vital boost in momentum to their revision efforts when the General Education team received an endowment from the Lilly Foundation. The Lilly Foundation provides grants for innovative initiatives in higher education and in the summer of 1987 the Lilly Foundation held a workshop in Colorado Springs, Colorado that brought together educators and thinkers from all over the country for two weeks to exchange ideas (Wohl, Interview, November 18, 2017).

The General Education team traveled to Colorado with some ideas about the new curriculum and how the *Origins* and *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* courses would act as the centerpieces of the General Education curriculum. The research team continued development of the fundamental themes of the curriculum at the Lilly Foundation workshop as Dr. Wohl explains that, “getting the Title III Grant and going to the Lilly Foundation workshop sort of made it more viable politically for the faculty because the real difficulty was getting it (the curriculum) passed. I remember those years ’85 to ’87 just being very charged politically because once you start changing general education people have different agendas, don’t want their courses to be dropped, and they want to make sure they get enrollment in their program. It

became as much of a political process as it was as an academic process” (Wohl, Interview, November 18, 2017).

The process of creating the curriculum posed many problems for the faculty to navigate because there was never a core general education curriculum. Dr. Wohl explained that, “the thing is once you go to a core, how are you going to teach it? Because these courses are not located in any particular department or anything, which meant you don’t have an infrastructure, so we knew we would have to recommend a general education committee and faculty who would be committed to teaching these courses and figuring out how they were going to be staffed” (Wohl, Interview, November 18, 2017). The addition of the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes as the centerpiece of the new curriculum, and suddenly becoming a requirement for all students also posed a challenge and required intense negotiation, planning, and compromise by the faculty.

Dr. John Magan is a physics teacher who came to West Virginia State College in 1984 and represented the Science Department during the faculty meetings leading up to the adoption of the new General Education curriculum. Dr. Magan was fully engaged in the process and feels that General Education is important because it informs the student how their own chosen major relates to other fields. As Dr. Magan describes, “I’ve had fifty different jobs in my life. I went into the coal mines when I had a PhD in Physics and worked for nine years. One of the things I’ve learned is that education fits you for a wide variety of things. An awful lot of our students see education as just job training and really a college education should be way more than that, it should be training your mind to think in various ways to be able to adapt to new ideas” (Magan, Interview, October 27, 2017).

The new curriculum required a math component and Dr. Magan lobbied for a Quantitative Reasoning course and his experience provides an interesting snapshot into the conversations that were taking place among the faculty during the process, “I especially fought for the idea that it should not be taught by the math department,” he says, “but it should be taught by someone else who would just teach kids the practical things about how to use numbers. Instead of trying to teach kids how to think like mathematicians, for the art major or pre law students, you just want to teach them how to use numbers for the practical things they are going to run into, not to reason like a mathematician.” (Magan, Interview, October 27, 2017).

Dr. Magan continues, “I think that’s one of the areas where we failed because we never got someone to teach that class. I tried really hard to get a guy in counseling but his boss wouldn’t let him so we never offered that class. Now the math department is offering a class like that but they are still teaching it like it was their job to teach everybody to think like mathematicians.” And to this point, he adds: “Chemistry and Physics are classes that last a whole year and are hard as heck for people who really want to learn them and we’re going to take all of that and condense it down into one semester? So I thought about developing a new course that left a lot of that stuff out and only focused on certain things such as how science works. A course for people who are not science majors” (Magan, Interview, October 27, 2017).

The General Education team received a FIPSI Grant from the U.S. Department of Education through the stewardship of Dr. Arline Thorn which is designed to support innovative postsecondary educational reform projects (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). The FIPSI grant funded two separate portions that supported faculty development and dissemination. The faculty development portion allowed more release time and allowed for more faculty training, as well as bringing in expert consultants. The dissemination portion was saved to set up an

international teleconference in 1989 titled “Interdisciplinary Teaching in the Core Curriculum” moderated by Dr. Thorn, Dr. Dean, and Dr. Wohl where the trio shared their experiences creating the General Education curriculum with an international audience. In 1990 the General Education team began receiving invitations from around the country to speak about their experiences creating the *Origins* and *Race, Gender and Human Identity* courses as well as the crafting of the General Education curriculum. Dr. Thorn, Dr. Dean, and Dr. Wohl presented a paper on the classes and their experiences at the Integrative Studies Conference as well as presenting in Baltimore (Wohl, Interview, November 18, 2017).

Dr. Magan describes the consummation of the new curriculum: “We took it to several long faculty meetings where we just argued and argued and even had one on a Saturday and it just went on for hours and hours. Scott Scobell got up and gave a marvelous oration about why health should be in the General Education curriculum because lots of people thought that Healthy Living didn’t need to be included. People really spoke out about what they believe, and I thought it was healthy because when you get faculty discussing something they all like to talk, and some of them have some real wisdom. So finally, they had a vote, and by a full faculty vote, voted in this curriculum and it lasted for thirty years.” Magan continues: “There is something that comes out from a bunch of faculty members getting together and debating about something. It’s painful, it takes a lot of time, and maybe seems like a big long meeting, but for instance that General Education curriculum, it was worth it. It was a really valuable piece of curricular advance” (Magan, Interview, October 27, 2017).

The new General Education curriculum that included the *Origins* and *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes was approved by a full faculty vote in the summer of 1987 and went into effect immediately in the fall of 1987. The *Origins* pilot class was offered first in the fall of 1987

as an elective and did not become a mandatory requirement for all majors until fall of 1988. The *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes began later as an elective in the spring of 1987 and also became mandatory for all students in the fall of 1988 as well. Dr. Wohl remembers enthusiasm being at an all-time high when the curriculum was put into place as Dr. John Magan from the Science department dressed up as Albert Einstein and Dr. Wohl dressed up as Sigmund Freud for *Origins* classes (Wohl, Interview, November 18, 2017).

Dr. Arnold Hartstein taught writing and literature classes in the English department at the time. Dr. Hartstein was involved in the curriculum change and was also one of the original teachers of the *Origins* pilot class alongside Dr. Bonnie Dean from Biology, Dr. Carol Eich from Music, and Dr. Arline Thorn. Dr. Hartstein remembers that:

there was great enthusiasm among the faculty that was teaching it, I can tell you that. It was new to everybody, challenging and there was a lot of interaction within groups that were teaching *Origins*. We often met outside of class and we had to prepare essay questions, quizzes, and exams (Hartstein, Interview, January 24, 2018).

Dr. Hartstein continues:

There was a lot of enthusiasm largely because we were doing different things. Each of us was taken outside of our discipline. I had come from English and I had taught exclusively writing classes or literature classes for about ten or twelve years, so this was completely different to me and to everybody who was teaching it. We learned a great deal from one another just from the faculty and I think, or I hope that was translated into student perception that they were able to see that kind of activity and play off of that in their own experience of the class (Hartstein, Interview, January 24, 2018).

Summary

The General Education program arose from a felt need to unite and expand the experiences of students who graduated from a campus so rich in cultural and historical significance. The rationale was that uniting the learning experiences of students in an interdisciplinary curriculum helps students perceive how the arts and sciences interact and relate to their chosen fields. The curriculum also allowed for a significant cultural exchange where

students who were future scientists from diverse backgrounds met and conversed with future artists, so that through a common learning experience in the classroom students would also be creating a common human experience that would transcend divisions in society. The creation of the General Education curriculum in 1983 is a model of how West Virginia State University has consistently practiced the curriculum of reconciliation from its inception as a matter of standard operation for the institution. The next chapter will examine the present and future of the revolutionary General Education curriculum at WVSU.

CHAPTER 5: THE FUTURE OF ORIGINS, RACE, GENDER, AND HUMAN IDENTITY AND THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

The general education curriculum formulated in 1983 that included the *Origins*, and *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes, and has successfully lasted for more than thirty years, was plunged into a difficult quandary by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission in 2008. The WVHEPC, “develops and oversees a public policy agenda for West Virginia’s four-year colleges and universities. Comprised of a 10-member board, the commission works with institutions on accomplishing their missions and carrying out state procedures” (WV Higher Education Policy Commission, 2018). The WVHEPC handed down a mandate that all four-year institutions in West Virginia must lower credit hours to 120 for Bachelor’s degrees in order to ensure educational quality and efficiency (Force, 2012). The General Education curriculum would inevitably be forced to bear the brunt of the credit hour cut because of the supplemental role General Education plays to the broader areas of study.

Dr. Jeffrey Pietruszynski was the chair of the General Education department at WVSU when the credit hour mandate came down from the WVHEPC. Dr. Pietruszynski tapped the General Education Advisory Committee which consisted of himself as chair, Dr. Daton Dean from Education, and Dr. Barbara Ladner from Communications to prepare the groundwork for the credit hour change. Dr. Pietruszynski took the advisory committee to the General Education Institute workshop held in Minneapolis, Minnesota and sponsored by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) in the summer of 2008.

The workshop in Minneapolis was very similar to the Lilly Foundation workshop attended by the original creators of the General Education curriculum in 1983 in the sense that the AAC&U workshop allowed the new General Education team headed by Dr. Pietruszynski to

brainstorm and begin to formulate ideas for the process for revising the General Education curriculum. The Committee drafted a report after the workshop that they presented to the faculty during a full faculty meeting where they informed the faculty of the details of the WVHEPC mandate, shared their initial ideas, and opened the floor to the faculty to participate in the process.

Dr. Richard Ford is an Assistant Professor of Biology at WVSU and was involved in the process on behalf of the College of Science and Mathematics. Dr. Ford shared his initial thoughts regarding the HEPC mandate:

Initial thoughts? I've been teaching at colleges since 1986. Students arrive at college less and less academically prepared, and (particularly in Science fields) they need to know more and more upon graduation. We should be requiring more education, not less. Yes, that will mean that students don't graduate in four years; who ever said that four years was the magic number? But ok, HEPC is a political body, and the powers that be wanting to see some more degrees in hand, faster and cheaper. The quality/ value/ credibility of a degree? That's the easiest part of the equation to fake. It's so easy to forget that it's not the sheepskin that matters, but rather the educated person. So, 120 credit hours it is. (Dr. Richard Ford, Letter, November 13, 2014).

From 2009 to 2011 the faculty, led by Dr. Pietruszynski, intermittently discussed frameworks and objectives for creating a new General Education curriculum to address the credit hour change. In May of 2012, the General Education Curriculum Revision Task Force was created to:

coordinate the development of a new general education program for the university that is focused on meeting the needs of WVSU students and the standards of accrediting, certification and licensure bodies; and is amenable to ongoing assessment and improvement. The task force should engage the entire university community in the development of the program and work to create a curriculum in line with the University Mission Statement. (Pietruszynski, General Education Task Force Charge, 2012).

The task force would consist of Dr. Pietruszynski as chair, two elected faculty members from each college, and two student representatives. The Task Force would report to the General

Education committee and the Faculty Senate with the goal of implementing the new curriculum by the Fall of 2015 or sooner.

In September of 2012 the General Education Task Force recommended to the General Education Committee the adoption of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) LEAP program initiatives which was accepted by the General Education Committee, the Faculty Senate, and the General Faculty (Pietruszynski, 2015). The LEAP program promotes a liberal education that relies on academic principles such as learning outcomes, educational practices, and authentic assessments (Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2015). The original General Education curriculum effort led by Dr. Arline Thorn in 1983 was a sixty-hour program and the mandate from the WVHEPC was exerting significant pressure to reduce those hours. The General Education Committee in consultation with the faculty determined to reduce the General Education requirement to forty-two credit hours. Dr. Ford gave his thoughts of the change:

Getting the Gen Ed Committee to agree to recommend a Gen Ed curriculum of no more than forty-two credits has allowed the Biology Department (and perhaps other programs) to continue to offer our major's curriculum (Core classes and electives) without having to reduce educational content for our majors. The necessary content of all Science fields continues to row like crazy, and we can't afford to give our students less preparation in their fields, so the 42-credit thing gives us that breathing room" (Ford, Letter, November 13, 2014).

In November 2012, Dr. Pietruszynski sent out the official Call for Proposals to the General Faculty seeking suggestions for a new framework for the General Education curriculum with a February 2013 deadline set for proposal submission. In the Fall of 2014, three proposals by Dr. Schedl, Dr. Thomas Guetzloff, and Dr. Pietruszynski were submitted to the General Education Committee and the General Education Task Force, which then went to work revising the LEAP objectives and organizing them within a new curriculum framework. The three

proposals were paired down to two and submitted to the General Education committee for review and further revision leading up to a presentation to the Faculty Senate.

After the frameworks were reviewed and revised by the Faculty Senate in March of 2015, The General Education Task Force met with each individual department to discuss the merits of the curriculum options and negotiate the concerns unique to each department with a stake in the new curriculum. A new Freshman Experience” course was created as part of the new General Education curriculum that was designed to introduce and acclimate college freshmen to the rigors of college life. The course was originally designed to be worth only one credit but was bumped up to three credits as it replaced *Origins*, and *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* as a mandatory requirement of the General Education program through the course of these discussions. *Origins* and *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* were both six credit classes and one of the ideas for taking the General Education to forty hours from sixty was to eliminate *Origins* and *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* as a mandatory requirement for all majors and place a “diversity component” within the Freshman Experience course. The diversity component added the substance that justified three credits for the Freshman Experience class and the *Origins* and *Race, Gender and Identity* classes would then only be offered as free electives (Guetzloff, Letter, April 12, 2016).

As Dr. Guetzloff of the Chemistry Department explains, “A student needs one hundred and twenty credits to graduate and when we went to forty in the Gen Ed (curriculum) what we were saying is they can take those six credits from the two classes (*Origins* and *Race, Gender, and Human Identity*) but that would just count towards the 120 and not towards the 40 hours of Gen Ed, but they are still Gen Ed courses.” The new Freshman Experience course became the centerpiece of the General Education curriculum usurping the *Origins* and *Race, Gender, and*

Human Identity classes. A draft of the new framework was given to the General Education Committee by the Faculty Senate for final revision. The final revised curriculum framework was submitted and approved by the WVHEPC in October of 2015 and finally approved by the Faculty Senate in November. Finally, the new General Education curriculum and course electives were implemented in the Spring semester of 2016 (Guetzloff, Letter, April 12, 2016).

Student Reflections of the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* Classes

I spoke with four former students of WVSU about their experiences with the General Education curriculum as it existed before the most recent credit hour change mandated by the HEPC. I also interviewed a student who has taken the Freshman Experience class that was created to replace the *Origins and Race, Gender and Human Identity* classes for comparison. These students were asked questions that centered on four themes that consisted of the nature of the subject matter they discussed, how they felt about what they learned in the courses, positive or negative experiences from the courses, and their opinion of the validity of the courses going forward. The students' names are Eugene Stowers, Tracy Owen, Austin Owen, Doug Bright, and Takeiya Smith. Tracy Owen, Austin Owen, and Eugene Stowers are Caucasian males working in the field of Computer Science. Doug Bright is a male Caucasian who works in the field of Natural Sciences and Mathematics and Takeiya Smith is an African American female studying Community organizing. Eugene and Tracy were in the General Education program in the late 80s when the revised curriculum that included *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* was launched, Doug was in the General Education program in the 90s, Takeiya Smith was in the General Education program the semester before the program was changed completely and the mandate for all students to take *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* was rescinded.

When I asked Tracy about the subject matter of the classes he responded that:

We had an illustrated book and class lectures on the origin of the universe, earth, and human existence. We studied everything from evolution to the existence of God and the creation of the universe and mankind. We also studied the Big Bang hypothesis (Owen, T. Letter, April 12, 2018).

Tracy described his memorable experiences as, “learning the estimated age of the universe, our galaxy, the solar system, and earth using modern science methods” (Owen, T., Letter, April 12, 2018). Some of the negative experiences Tracy reported concerned, “the heated discussions about how human beings came into existence and how race was involved” (Owen, T., Letter, April 12, 2018). Tracy reported that he enjoyed his experiences in the General Education program and came away from the classes having learned to keep an open mind regarding the history of man and the universe (Owen, T., Letter, April 12, 2018). Interestingly, Tracy’s thoughts on the future of the *Origins* and *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes is that they should be taught as an elective but should not be made mandatory going forward (Owen, T., Letter, April 12, 2018).

Next, I spoke with Eugene regarding his experiences with the *Origins* and *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes. When asked about the subject matter and memorable experiences Eugene recalls:

The origins of the universe and of mankind. I remember working on a final project as a group, meeting in a remote location, and discussing the type of project we wanted to create. I think most of all, I learned how connected we all are in the grand scheme of things. How man and nature depend on each other for survival (Stowers, Letter, April 11, 2018).

Eugene continued:

We had guest speakers of different races and different genders as well as different sexual orientation. I learned the value of different viewpoints. I had never dealt with many of the issues provided in that class before and was charged with realizing how I felt about these types of issues (Stowers, Letter, April 11, 2018).

When I asked Eugene how he felt about the future of the classes he said:

I felt that they were too long at sixteen weeks for the subject matter covered. I feel it was a good way to expand my knowledge regarding the human condition. I don't know that it needed to be a mandatory class, but I do think people should not be allowed to hide from the subject matter." Eugene also added that both classes "could easily" be reduced to one credit hour courses (Stowers, Letter, April 11, 2018).

I interviewed Doug next about his experiences with the General Education program.

Doug recalled the subject matter as, "talking about different creation theories" and themes around *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* and offered explicit criticism of both the *Origins* and *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes directly (Bright, Letter, April 11, 2018). Regarding *Origins* Doug stated, "The class provoked thought for me, but overall, I don't recall learning much. It was better than I expected, and I was able to get through it without being in complete misery, but I still felt like my credits could have been used toward something more educational" (Bright, Letter, April 11, 2018). When I asked Doug about the future of the *Origins* class he said, "As I stated in every evaluation I filled out as an undergrad and post-grad, it should be eliminated" (Bright, Letter, April 11, 2018).

Regarding *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* specifically, Doug stated: "The class would erupt in argument every single day and the class was very uncomfortable to be in. I expected fist fights to break out every day. It was not a fun class. Every subject discussed was designed to create discussion, but the discussion turned into disagreement and then argument" (Bright, Letter, April 11, 2018). When I asked Doug how he felt after the class and what the future of the course should be he stated:

I was happy to be out of it and highly encouraged every administrator I was able to talk to about eliminating it. The class as it was offered was not productive. In order for that class to work it would need to be redesigned and the class size would need to be much smaller to contain the conversation. It is hard to mediate an auditorium of students with different backgrounds and that is why the conversations were more like arguments. (Bright, Letter, April 11, 2018).

Takeiya Smith was a student of WVSU studying Criminal Justice in 2015 during the General Education curriculum revision and I had the chance to speak to her regarding her experiences with the *Origins* and *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes. Takeiya is a Criminal Justice major who cares deeply about social justice and considers herself a social activist (Smith, Interview, October 15, 2017). Takeiya credits her experiences in the General Education classes for stoking her aspirations for social activism and started her first student organization on the campus of WVSU as a result of that inspiration. Takeiya had vivid memories of both the *Origins* class and the *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* class but admitted that they “sort of mixed together” in her mind; she added that some of that confusion may have occurred because she “had both classes in the same room” (Smith, Interview, October 15, 2017).

Takeiya stated that the themes of *Origins* and *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* complement each other in the sense that, “I think the talk of humanity and belonging and those types of thought open the doors to the human and spiritual perspective” (Smith, Interview, October 15, 2017). Takeiya described how she felt about the way her teachers conducted the classes:

I felt like the teachers did a really good job. I remember there were multiple professors in one room and they were playing it like it was a discussion and the class was meant to be a discussion. They played videos and things related to the content and I think they did really well with that (Smith, Interview, October 15, 2017).

Takeiya added:

I was very interactive and present in the conversations in *Origins* and I think the professors in *Origins* kind of noticed that. When it was time to take *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* one of the professors in the room was the same and we had already built that rapport, and so *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* really, really started hitting the nail on the head as far as my passions and my experiences. (Smith, Interview, October 15, 2017).

Takeiya shared an experience in the *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* class that speaks to the mission of the General Education curriculum and the changes that occurred in 2016:

What I took from that class was, here I am in this class about race and gender and humanity and there is still so much I don't know. Aside from that, what was shocking to me was that multiple people in my class said that they had never seen or been around black people until they came to State. That was really shocking to me and so I thought everyone should have this class. So, I was shocked to realize now that everybody did not have to have that class. (Smith, Interview, October 15, 2017).

When Takeiya learned through social media and her professors that the General Education curriculum was being reworked and the new curriculum no longer included *Origins* and *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* as a requirement for all students, she decided to organize a student protest to address the issue. Takeiya gathered a group of fifteen like-minded students who felt the same affinity as she did for the *Origins* and *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes and met regularly with them to develop a list of demands to present to the administrators of WVSU. The student protest group successfully developed and circulated a petition among students on campus to keep the General Education curriculum true to the 1983 model with the *Origins* and *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes as a requirement for all students. The student protest group attached their list of demands to the student petition which went on to generate over three hundred signatures (Smith, Interview, October 15, 2017).

The student protest group began meeting with various administrators and was granted an audience with the Provost of the University, which is the second most powerful person on the campus besides the President of WVSU. Takeiya describes the administrations reaction to their protest: "We started getting shut down and shut out. No one was taking us seriously and they just had us running in circles" (Smith, Interview, October 15, 2017). After about a month, the protest group finally secured a meeting with the President of WVSU and Takeiya thought: "okay,

someone is finally taking us seriously” but the group was still not satisfied with the answers they received about the courses. The demands of the group morphed somewhat at this point because the group acknowledged that the faculty had a difficult task revising the curriculum to comply with the HEPC mandate and approached the WVSU Board of Governors about the addition of a “diversity component” in the new *Freshman Experience* class that was taking the place of *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* (Smith, Interview, October 15, 2017).

The board was concerned and repeated those concerns to Dr. Tom Guetzloff who was the faculty representative on the Board of Governors at the time of the request from the protest group. Dr. Guetzloff addressed the concerns of the board and the protest group at a January 2016 meeting where he discussed the creation of the curriculum and stressed the importance of the diversity component and explained that it would represent one of the three credits the student received for taking the course which satisfied the board and the students (Smith, Interview, October 15, 2017). The substance of the exchange of knowledge that occurred in the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes is evident in the examples of students like Takeiya Smith, the members of the protest organization, and the three hundred students who signed the petition to design the new General Education curriculum in a way that keeps the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes as a requirement for all students.

At this point, I wanted to understand the new *Freshman Experience* class that has replaced *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* as the mandated General Education class for all students at WVSU. I thought it was important to understand the themes of the class and how it was being administered with the diversity component that was added to the curriculum because of the student protest to compare it with the effectiveness of the previous curriculum for analysis. To accomplish this, I observed a week of the *Freshman Experience* class

as well as speaking to Austin Owen, who is a student of WVSU and has taken the *Freshman Experience* class, for his perspective.

When I asked Austin about the subject matter and some of his experiences from the class, he said he learned:

How to better prepare yourself on your journey through college. I was very shy when I started college and the teacher pushed me to talk in front of the class to prepare myself for public speaking. I also remember the class had some of the best guest speakers teaching us about how we should act and character and other things. (Owen, Letter, April 17, 2018).

When I asked Austin about the diversity component and how he felt about the class after taking it he said:

The diversity content was abundant. We all were taught that no matter what race or color or any circumstance we might single out, everyone deals with the same problems and everyone has difficulties in life. The class was an excellent class for any student to take. If that class in particular is the same as when I took the class, it would be a good class for any student (Owen, Letter, April 17, 2018).

Analysis

The interviews provide a few samples from various points within the timeline of the General Education curriculum where the student mandate to take the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes existed through the beginning of the new *Freshman Experience* class. The themes of the classes and the responses of the students to the subject matter combined with my observation of the *Freshman Experience* class offers a backdrop for a final analysis of the General Education curriculum as it exists today at WVSU. The students interviewed for this study were asked questions that centered on four themes that included the nature of the subject matter they discussed, how they felt about what they learned in the courses, positive or negative experiences from the courses, and their opinion of the validity of the courses going forward.

The first theme concerns the nature of the subject matter of the *Origins and the Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes: Eugene, Tracy, Doug, and Takeiya all consistently report that the classes dealt with the origin of the universe, philosophy, and science while the *Race,*

Gender and Human Identity classes dealt with social issues although the two classes often overlapped in subject matter because the issues of society and culture are so closely related to theology and philosophy. The second theme covered how the students felt about what they learned in the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes: The responses from Eugene, Tracy, and Takeiya were overwhelmingly positive. The respondents reported learning to keep a more open mind, learning how connected humanity is, and even opening a door to an understanding of spiritual and human perspective. The exception was Doug Bright who stated, “The class provoked thought for me, but overall, I don’t recall learning much. It was better than I expected and I was able to get through it without being in complete misery, but I still felt like my credits could have been used toward something more educational” (Bright, Letter, April 11, 2018).

The third theme focuses on memorable experiences from the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes: The responses of three of the four students was positive and one response was negative. The positive responses reported dynamic guest speakers and thought-provoking discussions that led to new understandings and ideas. Eugene, Tracy, and Takeiya all responded positively but still mentioned they were all involved in acrimonious class discussions that were not always resolved nobly or respectfully. Doug responded the most negatively regarding the theme of memorable experiences and emphasizes that he was “always uncomfortable” and put off by the intense debate that often erupted in the class, particularly during discussion in the *Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes. Doug reported that he felt the chaos in the discussions was due to the large class size and the difficulty of facilitating a class discussion with such a large group of students (Bright, Letter, April 11, 2018).

The fourth theme asked the respondents' opinions about the validity and future of the *Origins and Race, Gender and Human Identity* classes going forward: Three of the four responses were negative, and one was positive. Eugene and Tracy felt that the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes were too long as sixteen-week courses and "could probably" be reduced to one hour, while Doug is advocating for the total elimination of the courses from the curriculum (Bright, Letter, April 11, 2018). Takeiya was the only respondent who felt the classes should be kept as a full three credit hour class and remain mandated for all students of WVSU (Smith, Interview, October 15, 2017).

In response to the four themes as it relates to the *Freshman Experience* class: Austin reports that the class teaches students how to navigate their college journey in his response to the theme of subject matter, reported being inspired by guest speakers and being encouraged by his professor to do public speaking as a memorable experience, stated that diversity themes were emphasized throughout the class, and felt that the class would be great for any student as a type of classroom college orientation class for college freshmen (Austin Owen, Letter, April 17, 2018). My personal observations of the Freshmen Experience class as it relates to the four themes generally agrees with Austin's perspective: The class focused mainly on orienting students with services and facilities on campus as well as familiarizing them with basic academic functions in college life such as registering for classes, tutoring, and information on student clubs. A diversity component was evident in the sense that issues of culture and philosophy were interwoven into class discussions by the teacher and also came to the forefront when guest speakers lectured on social themes students encounter in college.

Students who have taken the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes have carried the significance of those experiences with them and some have even become teachers and

activists themselves. These experiences have inspired a protest movement, a social action group on the campus of WVSU, launched the careers of students as organizers, and helped create a theoretical space in education internationally, whereby an educational curriculum can create awareness and dialogue that creates an environment where social and cultural reconciliation is possible. The General Education curriculum was a great success up to the present as evidenced by the testimony of the faculty and students with only a few exceptions, and there was no appetite within the institution to make changes to the program. The changes to the General Education program would not have come about without the mandate from the WVHEPC that compelled the institution to make a change in credit hours that made the curriculum unworkable in its original design. The reworking of the General Education curriculum excluded the substance and strength of the program which was the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes and replaced them with a course centered on the first-year college experience of combined with a cultural component.

In my personal view, the *Freshman Experience* course does an excellent job of integrating the diversity component within its stated purpose of orienting first time students to college policy and procedures, but it would be impossible to recreate the philosophies and understandings gained by an entire semester of pondering, researching, and discussing the juxtaposition of theology, philosophy, and culture gained through taking the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes in one diversity unit within the *Freshman Experience* class. The *Freshman Experience* course is designed to orient students with finding facilities and accessing services on campus and was not originally designed to contain a culture and diversity component. A diversity component that includes theology, philosophy, and culture wedged into a curriculum designed as an orientation to introduce first year students to facilities and services on

campus may be awkward for some teachers and students to facilitate, but even with honest efforts, it would be hard to argue that it would replicate the same results as the stand alone *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes.

It is true that all of the respondents to the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes except Takeiya, felt that the classes were too long for a full sixteen week semester, and Takeiya herself stated that she felt like the subject matter from the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes often overlapped (Smith, Interview, October 15, 2017). To address the concern of the classes possibly being too long and overlapping subject matter, I might recommend combining the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* as one stand-alone course. Combining the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes would preserve the revelatory deep dives into theology, philosophy, culture, and society that has defined the two classes since their creation and puts it all into one dynamic package. Another solution might be to frontload all of the First Year Experience (FYE) curriculum content in the first half of the semester and focus totally on the diversity component, which includes theology, philosophy, and culture, in the second half of the semester. The FYE curriculum gives students a healthy dose of college operations and procedures as well as introducing them to campus culture and diversity. A *Freshman Experience* class modeled like the one I have envisioned has the capacity to educate and open the eyes of students who have never experienced cultural diversity and whet the appetite of students like Takeiya Smith and inspire them to take a course that goes into deeper water like a redesigned and combined *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* class.

Dr. Richard Ford's early analysis of the situation strikes me as uncannily prescient when he wrote:

HEPC is a political body, and the powers that be wanting to see more degrees in hand, faster and cheaper. The quality/value/credibility of a degree? That's the easiest part of the

equation to fake. It's so easy to forget that it's not the sheepskin that matters, but rather the educated person.

Dr. Ford further observes:

But education, that's about changing lives, widening vision, deepening the human experience. There's no formula, and you can't measure it (at least not until years later). Those seeds planted in some classroom or in some conversation between teacher and student will grow in a unique way in each person. (Ford, Letter, November 13, 2014).

The *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* courses were designed to change lives by widening vision and deepening human understanding as Dr. Ford suggests, and I agree with his assessment at this juncture in the research, that this is an obvious case where the substance of education itself is being sacrificed for the sake of achieving political goals.

There are extremely rare cases where it is entirely appropriate to upend education objectives to achieve political ones such as *Brown vs Board of Education of Topeka* that ended segregation in public schools in the United States, but a change such as *Brown vs Board of Education of Topeka* was the achievement of a political objective that raised the standard of education while the mandate driven by the WVHEPC to reduce credit hours lowers that standard by requiring less credit hours, not because it will make education better and more efficient, but so that students can simply graduate from college faster and cheaper (Force, 2012). A rationale like the one offered for the credit hour change by the WVHEPC can have a demoralizing effect for higher education across the state of West Virginia because it sacrifices the quality of education for cost savings. If West Virginia's institutions get a reputation for graduating students without a complete skillset to operate in their fields of study businesses will not hire West Virginia graduates and students will gravitate to other states to receive their education. The current reconfiguration of the General Education program does not guarantee a lapse in the quality of the degree the student graduates with but I would argue that a policy such as the one

set forth by the WVHEPC can set a bad precedent if these kinds of programs continue to change in ways that make them less substantial.

West Virginia State University and institutions like it with visionary educators will continue to carry the torch for curriculum and education that creates positive change that enhances human understanding and advances society. The legacy of the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes at WVSU is a beautiful example of an educational model that was needed at its inception, but was still ahead of its time as the spirit of the model continues in the educational philosophy of the Curriculum of Reconciliation.

Conclusion

The idea of cultural reconciliation through education incorporates disenfranchised elements of history, such as the example of aboriginal history in Australia, and incorporates them into the popular view of history to provide a more comprehensive narrative of history that is not glamorized or sanitized (Exley & Chan, 2014). The idea of a curriculum of reconciliation can create understanding and build bridges in the classroom through mutual dialogue that deepens our understanding of history itself. The history of the curriculum of West Virginia State University chronicles this nation's desire and struggle for racial, cultural, and social reconciliation through education, and the tremendous role the institution of WVSU has played to help accomplish that goal and further those ideals.

West Virginia State University, as an original 1891 land-grant institution, is a physical embodiment of this nation's attempt to heal its social and cultural divides by uplifting people previously oppressed in society through education. West Virginia State University and the people who created its noble legacy have become the personification of the healing and reconciliation America was longing for as well as providing a philosophical and educational

framework to duplicate their effort. The tradition of excellence and reconciliation has continued to be woven into the curriculum of the institution even to this day, as it has in the past, with original programs like *Origins, Race, Gender, and Human Identity*, and the *Freshman Experience* classes that advance the philosophy of social and cultural reconciliation. WVSU shared their unique curriculum and educational philosophy with the international community during the “Interdisciplinary Teaching in the Core Curriculum” teleconference in 1989 and reconciliation curriculum models and agendas have been springing up along the international community ever since as the “Reconciliation Agenda” in education has spread internationally (Wohl, Interview, November 18, 2017).

The Curriculum of Reconciliation was an undefined academic phenomenon that was in practice at West Virginia State University as a standard mode of operation, because the special purpose for the existence of the 1891 land-grant institutions was to foster and facilitate social and cultural reconciliation. The legacy of WVSU is a legacy of revolutionary curriculum from its beginning and the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes are a part of this legacy. The curriculum of reconciliation established in Rwanda following the genocide in 1994 and the reconciliation curriculum of Australia that incorporated Aboriginal history and culture in 2011 are beautiful examples of how this concept of social and cultural reconciliation through education is spreading internationally (Exley & Chan, 2014). This curriculum of reconciliation has continued with the General Education Program at West Virginia State University and the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes are shining examples of the success of this curriculum that has lasted for over 30 years and continues on to this day. The innovative curriculum of WVSU and the transformational exchanges that take place in the classroom as a

result, are the fulfillment of the vision of West Virginia State University as a living laboratory of human relations.

Recommendations for Future Study

The *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes were extremely important and relevant when they were created, but now that such sweeping changes have taken place due to the WVHEPC mandate they are taking on new roles. With this and the aforementioned findings in mind, several recommendations might seem prudent. First, future researchers might want to take another look at the statistics of students who actually take those two classes now that the *Freshman Experience* class has been implemented. *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* are deep dives into theology, philosophy, culture, and society that students have historically shied away from hence the General Education mandate that students take the classes. Now that those classes are no longer a requirement, students may choose not to take those two classes at all, and those who do will probably have a small class with smaller degrees of diversity among student participants which may blunt the impact of the courses. Students may stop signing up for the classes altogether making them non-entities within the curriculum. Classes that are not sufficiently populated with an adequate number of students are dropped from the academic schedule for that semester if students do not sign up for the classes.

The results of this first recommendation might lead to a second recommendation, which would be to combine the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes. I believe that the combination of the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes may make the single course even more dynamic, memorable, and inspirational for a student like Takeiya Smith, who would naturally be inclined to take such a class and may possibly make a profession out of sociology or community organizing. The subjects of theology, philosophy, culture, and society

all under one roof can help students to see the interconnectivity of the concepts in social institutions and social interactions. The diversity component within the Freshman Experience course would be a great primer to generate interest and would naturally compliment a combined *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* class.

Related to this, of course, is hiring and retaining dedicated faculty to teach the *Freshman Experience* classes and the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes. The success of the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* class rests on teacher facilitation. All four respondents to the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* questions reported bitter arguments that often ended in acrimony. Doug stated that the thought the acrimony was due to teachers having difficulty moderating such large groups of students in controversial debates (Bright, Letter, April 11, 2018). I believe full time dedicated General Education faculty members should teach the majority of these classes, instead of the heavy reliance on adjunct instructors as it does today. Dedicated faculty would also have more consistent experiences teaching the classes which would translate over to the student experience.

Stemming from this third recommendation is a fourth: to create a program and offer a degree that compliments the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes. WVSU would be an ideal place, with its unique history, to examine the interest and possibility of offering a degree in community and public service. WVSU culture has always centered around public and community service and the degree would be a natural offshoot of WVSU's educational philosophy. West Virginia State University would be of interest to any student considering a career in community and public service because of the institution's history of advocacy and philanthropy. All of these recommendations are, of course, in the ideal; but it

seems that, again, given the findings of this study that a closer look at the *Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity* classes is warranted.

Epilogue: Personal Reflection

I am a graduate of West Virginia State University and I am a product of the living laboratory of human relations. Through my education at WVSU, I experienced the classroom as the single greatest place for the exchanging of ideas, dialogue, and dialectic. The most fascinating, memorable, enlightening, paradigm shifting conversations I have ever experienced have taken place within the classroom. This type of discovery is what has inspired me to pursue education. I am inspired by the power of education to transform people and the world. This research has confirmed my thoughts on the exceptionality of the classroom as a place for dialogue and dialectic. Rarely in any practical social situation do the numbers and diversity of thought and opinion gather together for the sole purpose of dialectic and discovery as it happens in the setting of a classroom. The knowledge that comes from genuine dialogue and dialectic underscores the fact that the process of having genuine dialogue and dialectic is not necessarily easy and can often be difficult and arduous, but the difficulty of the task does not make it any less necessary. These exchanges persuade individuals to confront their own thoughts and examine them for substance so that even if they still do not agree at the end of the exchange they still walk away with a deeper understanding. This education and understanding is the essence of West Virginia State University and the curriculum of cultural reconciliation. The process of this dissertation has been a privilege and a revelation that has confirmed my ambition to pursue the profession of education.

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PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS

Bright, Doug, Letter, April 11, 2018

Byers, Dr. R. Charles, Letter, July 25, 2017

Ford, Dr. Richard, Letter, November 13, 2014

Guetzloff, Dr. Thomas, Letter, Interview, April 12, 2016

Hartstein, Interview, January 24, 2018

Magan, Dr. John, Interview, October 27, 2017

McMeans, Dr. Orlando, Letter, August 28, 2017

Owen, Austin, Letter, April 17, 2018

Owen, Tracy, Letter, April 12, 2018

Smith, Takeiya, Interview, October 15, 2017

Stowers, Eugene, Letter, April 11, 2018

Wohl, Dr. David, Interview, November 18, 2017

APPENDIX A: LETTER FROM INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH BOARD



Office of Research Integrity
Institutional Review Board
One John Marshall Drive
Huntington, WV 25755

FWA 00002704

IRB1 #00002205

IRB2 #00003206

November 17, 2017

Luke Lassiter, PhD
Graduate Humanities Program, MUGC

RE: IRBNet ID# 1150801-1

At: Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral)

Dear Dr. Lassiter:

Protocol Title: [1150801-1] The Curriculum of Reconciliation at WVSU and the General Education Curriculum (Harris diss research)

Expiration Date: November 17, 2018

Site Location: MUGC

Submission Type: New Project APPROVED

Review Type: Exempt Review

In accordance with 45CFR46.101(b)(2), the above study and informed consent were granted Exempted approval today by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Designee for the period of 12 months. The approval will expire November 17, 2018. A continuing review request for this study must be submitted no later than 30 days prior to the expiration date.

This study is for student Michael Harris.

If you have any questions, please contact the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Coordinator Bruce Day, ThD, CIP at 304-696-4303 or day50@marshall.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

The Curriculum of Cultural Reconciliation at West Virginia State University and the General Education Program

Introduction

You are invited to be in an oral history research project, which is designed to gain historic knowledge that may help other people in the future. You may or may not receive any benefit from being part of the study. Your participation is voluntary. Please take your time to make your decision, and ask your research investigator or research staff to explain any words or information that you do not understand.

Why Is This Oral History Being Done?

The purpose of this oral history is to connect the historical curriculum of West Virginia State University and the courses of the General Education curriculum: the Origins, and Race, Gender, and Human Identity classes.

How Many People Will Take Part In The Oral History Research?

About 4 people will take part in this oral history. A total of 10 people are the most that would be able to enter the study.

What Is Involved In This Oral History Research?

Research collaborators will participate in oral face-to-face interviews about their experiences. During the study they will be asked questions regarding these experiences and may terminate their participation in the oral history at any time.

How Long Will You Be In The Oral History Research Project?

You will be in this oral history collection process for about 5 months or when the dissertation research is completed.

You can decide to stop participating at any time. If you decide to stop participating we encourage you to talk to the study investigator or study staff as soon as possible.

The study investigator may stop you from taking part in this study at any time if he/she believes it is in your best interest; if you do not follow the study rules; or if the study is stopped.

What Are The Risks Of Taking Part in this Oral History?

There are no known risks to those who take part in this oral history research.

There may also be other side effects that we cannot predict. You should tell the researchers if any of these risks bother or worry you.

Are There Benefits To Taking Part In The Oral History Research?

If you agree to take part in this oral history, there may or may not be direct benefit to you. We hope the information learned from this study will benefit other people in the future. The benefits of participating in this study may be: gaining a greater insight into the history of WVSU and preserving the memories and experiences of WVSU faculty and students.

What About Confidentiality?

We will do our best to make sure that your personal information is kept confidential should you wish your contributions to remain confidential. However, we cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Federal law says we must keep your study records private. Nevertheless, under unforeseen and rare circumstances, we may be required by law to allow certain agencies to view your records. Those agencies would include the Marshall University IRB, Office of Research Integrity (ORI) and the federal Office of Human Research Protection (OHRP). This is to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety.

As in oral history research, if we publish the information we learn from this study, you will have the right to be recognized for your contributions, or choose to make those contributions anonymously.

Any and all recordings will be made available to participants should they request a copy. At the conclusion of the study, all recordings will be erased.

What Are The Costs Of Taking Part In This Oral History Research?

There are no costs to you for taking part in this oral history research. All its costs, including any research tests, supplies and procedures related directly to the oral history research, will be paid for by those conducting the research.

Will You Be Paid For Participating?

You will receive no payment or other compensation for taking part in this oral history research.

What Are Your Rights As A Research Participant?

Taking part in this oral history research is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or you may leave the oral history at any time. Refusing to participate or leaving the oral history will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. If you decide to stop participating in the oral history we encourage you to talk to the investigators or study staff first.

Whom Do You Call If You Have Questions Or Problems?

For questions about the study or in the event of a research-related injury, contact the Co-investigator, Michael Harris (doctoral student) or Principle Investigator (doctoral dissertation

chair), Dr. Eric Lassiter at (304) 746-1923. You should also call the PI if you have a concern or complaint about the research.

For questions about your rights as a research participant, contact the Marshall University IRB#2 Chairman Dr. Stephen Cooper or ORI at (304) 696-4303. You may also call this number if:

- You have concerns or complaints about the research.
- The research staff cannot be reached.
- You want to talk to someone other than the research staff.

You will be given a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

SIGNATURES

You agree to take part in this study and confirm that you are 18 years of age or older. You have had a chance to ask questions about being in this oral history research and have had those questions answered. By signing this consent form you are not giving up any legal rights to which you are entitled.

<hr/>	
Subject Name (Printed)	
<hr/>	
Subject Signature	Date
<hr/>	<hr/>
Person Obtaining Consent (Printed)	
<hr/>	<hr/>
Person Obtaining Consent Signature	Date

Optional: Agreement for Recording Interview/Conversation

Name: _____	_____
Date: _____	Participant's initials

APPENDIX C: GENERAL EDUCATION INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- What was your role in the creation of the General Education Program?
- What was the creative process like?
- What were some of the highlights of the process?
- What departments/personnel was involved in the creation process?
- Could you please discuss your time in the General Education Program as a student?
- Could you please discuss your time in the General Education Program as a teacher?
- How would you describe the learning environment there?
- How would you describe the school culture?
- Would you please describe the relationship between the school and the community?
- How do you view the significance of the race and Race, Gender, and Human Identity Classes both then and now?
- How would you describe the legacy of the Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity Classes?
- How would you describe the quality of education Origins and Race, Gender, and Human Identity classes provide?

APPENDIX D: VITA

Michael Carpenter Harris II
205 Bruce Street, Dunbar WV, 304-545-3434 | milozeno@yahoo.com

EDUCATION

Marshall University, Huntington, WV
Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction 2018
Dissertation: “The Curriculum of Reconciliation at West Virginia State University”

Marshall University, Huntington, WV
M.S. in Educational Leadership 2018

Mountain State University, Beckley, WV
M.S. in Strategic Leadership 2011
Thesis: “Program Effectiveness and College Readiness at After School Programs”

West Virginia State University, Dunbar, WV
B.S. in Communications 2009

AWARDS

Chancellor’s Scholar, Marshall University January 2014 – Present
Southern Regional Education Board Fellowship, Marshall University January 2014 – Present

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

West Virginia State University, Dunbar, WV 2012-Present
Instructor – English 101 and 102
[Developed syllabus and overall course structure, and administered all grades.]

West Virginia State University, Dunbar, WV 2014 - Present
Instructor - “Speech Communications – Com 100”
[Developed syllabus and overall course structure, and administered all grades.]

West Virginia State University, Dunbar, WV 2012 - Present
Instructor – General Education - Origins 100
[Developed syllabus and overall course structure, including weekly lab practicum, and administered all grades.]

Marshall University, Huntington, WV Spring 2015
Co- Instructor – Diversity and Multicultural Education
[Collaborated on curriculum and exam development, met with students upon request, and graded all written work, including final exam papers.]

RELATED EXPERIENCE

P.A.A.C. After School Program, Dunbar, WV 2002-08
Teacher/Mentor
Designed and taught an academic curriculum for grades K-12 that included special needs students.

West Virginia State University, Dunbar, WV January 2008 – January 2010
Admissions Recruitment and Retention Officer
Worked closely with local high schools to award scholarships to eligible students, as well as working directly with students to market the programs, activities, and community service groups at the university.

West Virginia State University, Dunbar, WV 2012 - 2014
Title III Program Officer
Managed and maintained activities, program budgets, accounts, files, weekly checklists, and inventory for Title III and VII federal program.

PUBLICATIONS AND PAPERS

“Civility, Religious Pluralism, and Education: A Review”
British Journal of Scientific Studies, vol. 62(4), 471-473 2015

MEMBERSHIPS

Southern Regional Education Board Fellowship Scholar