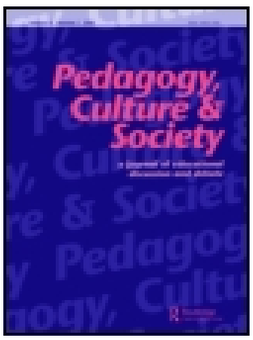

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Changing landscapes, changing narratives: socio-cultural approach for teaching global migrants

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ABSTRACT

Given the proliferation of new media technologies today's immigrant children and youth are experiencing the effects of *time–space compression* in the domain of interpersonal interactions. Increasingly, they are able to simultaneously engage in developmental activities across their native and host societies. If migration is no longer a one-way binary choice, but rather a culturally dialectical process involving fluid articulation of consciousness and identity across multiple cultural landscapes, how can we structure teaching and learning to support cognitive development of immigrant children and youth as they gradually assume the responsibilities of adulthood? This work builds on socio-cultural theory in order to describe *sense-making*, a psychological process situated in interaction with extant social, cultural and physical environments, which employs language actively woven into a narrative as a tool for organising consciousness and perception. Practical recommendations stemming from this theoretical framework are explored in order to enable the tools for curriculum design that support bicultural and transnational developmental orientations.

KEYWORDS

Psychological development; time-space compression; immigration; sense-making; narrative development; social media

Introduction

'Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!' Emma Lazarus writes in 1883 as immigrants rush from Europe to the American shores in search of a better life. These verses frequently conjure images in our minds, of excited European immigrants aboard steamships waving their hats at the statue upon which the verses of the New Colossus are now inscribed. History lessons, films, poetry, media, and popular culture have all contributed to the development of a master narrative – and its inherent belief system – that tells the story of the Great Wave of immigration. It is presumed that this narrative ostensibly governed the lives of immigrants settling in the United States between the 1850s and 1930s. Set against a pitch-black background, The Godfather trilogy, depicting lives of Italian immigrants in New York City at the turn of the twentieth century, begins with a famous monologue: 'I believe in America. America has made my fortune' (Ruddy and Coppola 1972). There are indeed a great many common threads among the nameless masses of immigrants that come to mind when the traditional narrative is evoked. Data show that most immigrants arriving during the Great Wave of immigration were predominantly poor and principally male (Foner 2000). They set on their journey believing in America as the land of opportunities and arrived from Europe never to return

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to their native lands (Daniels 2002). It is often understood that those who chose to settle permanently in the US quickly assimilated into the American way of life.

One hundred years later, not one of the above mentioned threads hold true. The immigrants of today are an economically heterogenic and culturally diverse group (Foner 2014), who – given the new media technology – are increasingly able to simultaneously engage in social interactions in their native and host societies. If migration is no longer reduced to just a binary choice, but takes on a form of a culturally dialectical process involving the fluid articulation of consciousness and identity across multiple cultural and social landscapes, what is the dominant narrative that frames the lives of today's immigrants? Viewed from a pedagogical standpoint – how can we structure teaching and learning to best enable immigrant children and youth a point of entrance into today's complex, heterogeneous, culturally diverse, and technologically advanced social landscape? What are the necessary skills they should develop as they assume the responsibilities of adulthood?

In this article I will engage these questions by focusing primarily on the topics of teaching, learning and development of immigrant children and youth who are attending elementary and middle school in the United States, with a hope that the insights derived from this context may be generalisable and useful to a broader audience. In order to provide a coherent framework for what will essentially be a deliberate theoretical intervention into processes of teaching and learning, I will employ socio-cultural theory, particularly post-Vygotskian approaches which conceptualise psychological development as a continuous process of sense-making across developmental contexts (Nelson 1985; Bruner and Haste 1987; Daiute and Nelson 1997; Daiute 2010; Lucić 2013). The role of cultural tools, sense-making, and narrative (particularly as a tool for exploration of experience) will be discussed throughout the article as these concepts – according to the view advanced here - play a constitutive role in the process of cognitive development via the language/thought mechanism (Bruner 1962; Vygotsky [1934] 1987). Discussion of these theoretical concepts should provide us with a uniquely Vygotskian understanding of how to structure teaching and learning in order to support and augment socio-cognitive processes that frequently become activated following migration.

This theoretical framework will be extended toward immigrant children and youth in order to theoretically delineate ways in which we can support their developmental process –frequently conceptualized as bicultural, transnational or 'hybrid' –and point toward language as mechanism for multiplicity of developmental outcomes, a tool for development of transnational ties (Skerrett 2012; Shin 2013), bifocality of developmental outlooks (Vertovec 2003) and development of bicultural cognitive styles (Lucić, 2013). Given these potential developmental outcomes, the question that frequently arises is how we can structure teaching and learning in ways that encourage our students toward intercultural understanding, rather than leading them toward confusion, marginalization or adversarial cultural identifications?

Structuring teaching to support diversity in the classroom is becoming increasingly important as the recent empirical research increasingly ties biculturalism and transnationalism with the abilities to think in more complex culturally specific ways (Benet-Martinez, Lee and Leu 2006; Herz 2015), engage in cultural frame switching (Hong, Morris, Chiu & Benet-Martínez 2000; Hong, Benet-Martínez, Chiu, and Morris 2003) flexibly relate with others (Lucić 2013) and lead to measurable outcomes such as higher academic achievement (Suárez-Orozco 2001; Salas, Musetti, and Plaisance 2014). To aid the efforts of supporting diversity in the classroom, in this work I will outline the theory of sense-making and narrative development in order to further advance theoretical tools of *interactivity, symbolic flexibility*, and *vast source of information* identified by Daiute (2013) towards educational practices. I hope that the confluence of theoretical ideas and practical recommendations will enable those interested in immigrant development specific tools for curriculum design.

Shifting demographics – shifting narratives

It is never easy to construct a critical assessment of a condition that is overwhelmingly present. It is therefore essential to begin this work with a quick overview of the historical context and briefly describe

the major social and demographic shifts occurring across the landscape of immigration over the past century and a half. Understand the emerging patters and the magnitude of the change among US immigrant population during this period will help us to situate this intervention.

At the start of the twentieth century, European immigrants dominated the landscape of American society. Today, the majority of immigrants arriving to the US hail from Asia and South America, a mere 14% originating in Europe. This shift in the ethnic basis of immigration is drastically altering the demographic base of the US population away from its traditional European roots. It is predicted that by 2042, minorities will make up more than 50% of the entire US population (Bernstein 2012). The change has been so seismic that it led some theorists to link the contemporary immigration diversity with the erosion of American national identity, and pose metaphorical questions such as '*are the flags of our fathers still there?*' (Huntington 2004), an ironic allusion to the fact that it is becoming increasingly harder to recognise the US and understand the direction in which the country is headed.

Historically, the dominant narratives of immigration, both inside and outside of academic purview, were structured by three clearly articulated assumptions: the *clean break* assumption, the *homogeneity* assumption, and the *progress* assumption (for a review see Suarez-Orozco 2000). According to this view, immigration was theorised to take place in clearly delineated waves (as opposed to ongoing back-and-forth flows) between remote, bounded, geopolitical and cultural spaces. Immigrants left the country A, the story goes, to settle in country B, more or less permanently. In cases when immigrants chose to return to their country of origin, country A, they yet again did so as a permanent move.

These assumptions, first articulated by Chicago School of Sociology (Park 1928; Gordon 1964), have recently been reexamined in light of distinct features which characterise the recent immigration waves. Indeed, demographically and socially, the US has been changing more rapidly over the past century than at any other points in its history. Those of us living in large American cities do not have to look far in order to see the effects of contemporary changes on our society. A brief comparison of the demographics of America's largest city, New York, at the turn of and twentieth and twenty-first centuries highlights one de facto aspect of this change – the city is now more diverse than ever before.

In the 1880s New York City was a much smaller place with a combined population of slightly under two million people (Rosenwaike 1972; Foner 2000). The two largest immigrant groups of this period were the Irish and the Germans, accounting for approximately 35% of the total population. The next 30 years saw the population of the city increase twofold to nearly five million, primarily due to a massive influx of immigrants from southern Italy and Eastern Europe. In 1880 only about 12,000 foreign-born Italians resided in New York City; by 1910 the number had reached 341,000. The growth of the city's Eastern European Jewish population was even greater, increasing from 14,000 in 1880 to 484,000 in 1910.

Today the immigrant landscape of New York City is no longer homogenous and no longer dominated by two immigrant groups. In 2013, the city's foreign-born population reached an all-time high of three million, or 36% of the city's total population (Lobo and Salvo 2013). According to the 2010 census, 32% of immigrants residing in New York City are Latin American, 28% are Asian, 19% are Caribbean, and 16% are European. The diversity of the city is also reflected in the classrooms. Overall, 48% of all students in public schools are either foreign born or children of foreign-born parents. Between 2008 and 2011, 41% of students enrolling in public school in Queens –the city's second largest borough – were foreign born, followed by 35% of students in Brooklyn, 34% in The Bronx, and 12% in Manhattan.

How should pedagogical practices respond to the increasing diversity of students in our classrooms? Can this social diversity be employed to aid the psychological development of contemporary immigrant children and youth? Part of the answer to these questions lays in understanding another force that makes today's migrants to the US a culturally and historically a unique group. Namely, in conjunction to being the most diverse group of migrants to ever set foot on American soil, today's migrants are able to – and often do – maintain a bicultural and transnational virtual presence. Increasing daily use of new media, greatly exacerbated by the introduction of the smartphone concept in 2007, allow the potential for developmental activities across multiple national and transitional spaces, hence affording immigrants environmental scaffolding to develop multicultural cognitive styles and greater relational flexibility – skills that are increasingly necessary for participation in today's global and mobile world.

Effects of time–space compression on interpersonal interactions

In 1979 Urie Bronfenbrenner, a pioneer of the Ecological Systems Theory, elegantly defined an individual's psychological development as a 'lasting change in the way in which a person perceives and deals with his environment (2).' Today however, our understanding of what constitutes environment is rather different from what it used to be in the years before technology and mobility defined much of our social life, and particularly before smartphones became culturally ubiquitous tools for interpersonal interaction. We live in a mobile world in which the movements of people, things, information and ideas are central to our lives. Take airplane travel, for example: in the year 2010 we reached one billion international arrivals worldwide. This translates into approximately four million air passengers travelling on any given day, and as you read this there are approximately 360,000 passengers in the air above the United States alone. Additionally, much of the time we remain stationary is also spent connected to others via cultural tools that allow for technological mediation of interpersonal interactions (primarily smartphones and personal computers). In light of increasing mobility and technological mediation, it has been suggested that our understanding and theories of place, activity and context have to be reexamined (Urry 2007).

More than ever before in our history as a species, our environment includes technologically mediated spaces – such as virtual environments and online social networks – at least as much as it includes traditional material spaces such as streets, parks, schools and other built environments. Americans today spend more time engaged in activities that involve the Internet and smartphones (not related to work) than on other traditionally common face-to face activities such as healthcare, self-care, or religious participation. For example, 73% of American adults connected to the Internet use a social networking site of some kind on a daily basis (Hampton et al. 2013). Usage data for smartphones are astounding: research shows that the average American spends approximately two hours a day using a smartphone, and that 65% of owners sleep with or next to their smartphones. Children and youth frequently spend more time actively interacting online than playing in their physical environment – such as parks, city streets and school yards. Increasingly, our social life involves the continual processes of shifting between being at home, enjoying leisurely activities or spending time with friends, while at the same time being distant from them yet connected via social networks and smartphones.

Given the interactive qualities of new media, we are now able to engage in interpersonal interactions with others virtually, thus transcending traditional geographic and physical boundaries. Examining interpersonal interactions from this angle, we can begin to notice a modal shift in line with *time-space compression*, a term initially used by Harvey (1989) to indicate processes that revolutionise the objective qualities of space and time thereby reducing the significance of physical distance and time (Harvey 1999). Applied to interpersonal interactions, I propose that the effects of time-space compression have a particularly strong pull via the new media which allow us the potential to – without physically moving or travelling – interact almost instantaneously in a virtual space with others who are geographically very distant. In other words, mediation of our interpersonal interactions via the cultural tools (such as the smartphone) allows for compression of the time and space that would otherwise be required to facilitate such interactions. Whereas in the past human relations were largely predicated on concrete physical space in which the interaction would occur – today a greater number of us are able to engage in meaningful activities virtually. Considering this change, we can say that interpersonal interactions have indeed undergone a postmodern shift, as this condition has frequently been equated with a certain mode of experience of space and time (Berman, 1982; Jameson, 1984).

Objective qualities of time and space are basic categories of developmental investigations long recognised as relevant to our perception (Bruner and Postman 1949; Gibson and Spelke 1983; Gibson 1984) and our psychological processes (Piaget [1927] 1969; Bronfenbrenner 1979). Psychological theory recognises that our subjective experience in space can take us into realms of perception, imagination, fiction and fantasy, which produce mental representation of spaces and so many mirages of supposedly real things. While time and space are still important categories of virtual activities, their significance in affording and facilitating interpersonal interactions is greatly reduced. Instead, largely as a product

of time-space compression, today we increasingly find that interpersonal interactions – together with culture which they carry – are encoded in language. Together with their historical or cultural value, even mundane everyday interactions (such as text-message conversations) frequently assume material existence in a virtual space. Examining the development of immigrant children and youth from this vantage point, we can start to see that virtual social landscape created largely as a product of time-space compression, affords a greater degree of developmental trajectories and possibilities for transnational development than it did the pre-internet era.

Owing largely to time-space compression of interpersonal interaction, immigration is no longer seen as a clean, more or less permanent, break with the country of origin. Quite the contrary, immigrants today are defined by mobility. Contemporary migration is best understood as a multidirectional, dynamic movement, that is, a networked system facilitated to a great extent by information and communication technologies (Alonso and Oiarzabal 2010). Today's immigrants have access to affordances which enable them to be at once here and there, viscerally and virtually, and the ability to articulate themselves toward transnational identities (Vertovec 1999) and form transnational ties that bridge distant national spaces (Levitt 2000, 2001; Guest 2003; Vertovec 2003; Smith 2006). Mediation of interpersonal interactions via the new media further highlights and extends some key features of *nomadic identity,* a concept initially described by Joseph (1999) as an attempt to capture the possibilities for articulation of psychic and social boundaries which have emerged out of destabilised relationship between citizenship and identity, previously arbiter by a nation state. A central premise of her work – that citizenship and identity are not organic but must be acquired through active psychological participation – meets new possibilities for enactment in the virtual social landscape.

Lens of socio-cultural theory

The lives of immigrants living across the United States have been transformed by the increasing utilisation of new media technologies. Compression of time and space provides new avenues and accelerates the pace of transnational development defined by Basch, Schiller, and Blanc (1994) as 'the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement' (6–7). The physical architecture of high-speed internet and mobile data networks has liberated the content and form of interpersonal interactions from the immediate physical context that used to constrain them for the large part of human history. At the same time, largely uninterrupted access to internet via the smartphone is gradually allowing us to sew back together our psychological functions fragmented due to the shattering, technologically-induced, stress described by Toffler (1970) in his conception of the *future shock*.

While transnational development is increasingly becoming a possibility (and frequently a reality), a question for educators is how to harness the social processes afforded by time-space compression and effectively use them in classrooms? One of the few persuasive lessons of postmodernism is that the juxtaposition of diverse and seemingly incongruent social, cultural and historical elements can be fun and occasionally instructive. Hence, the sections that follow will examine the effects of the time-space compression of interpersonal interactions through the lens of socio-cultural theory in order to point toward educational practices that allow for the use of new media in the classroom.

By examining the effects of these changes not merely from the grand perspective of history, but also from the vantage point of the living, breathing individuals who experience it, we frequently discover that beneath the veneer of a seemingly 'natural' shift towards a technologically mediated social life, there lie terrains of novelty, ambiguity and personal struggle for meaning that perforce alter daily activities of immigrant children and youth. Careful theoretical analysis, however, allows us to examine the effects of mediation and emerge with somewhat integrated description of possible developmental outcomes. Understanding contemporary developmental theory, particularly as it relates to narrative development, can assist us in this task.

It is through the study of Vygotsky's early writings that contemporary psychologists have conceptualised *mind in society* - a metaphorical representation of the very concrete relationship of mutual

interdependence between social, historical and cultural processes and human mind. In his attempts to ground the study of developmental psychology in social practice, Vygotsky emphasises the social origins of human mental processes. In his theory, mind is not a self-contained or vague mechanism - the workings of which are hidden, obscured and hard to discern. Rather, mind is in social practices, it develops though activities with other people, and manifests itself as unique product of the history of an individual's mediated practices over the course of a lifespan. To highlight these points Vygotsky expresses the relationship between the mind and society simply and eloquently in famous law of higher psychological functions, by stating that 'Each function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first on the social level, and later on the individual level; first between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological)' (Vygotsky 1978, 57).

According to this view, cognitive functions are also not viewed as innate, purely handed down from one generation to the next, or as embalmed structures that develop in the vacuum of an individual's mind. Vygotsky ([1935] 1994) sets out to explain that 'human development is the product of a broader system than just the system of a person's individual functions, specifically, [it is a] system of social connections and relations, of collective forms of behaviour and social cooperation' (41). Language is seen as a cultural tool for cognitive development. The ability to speak and think using language affords humans the possibility to engage into an enormous range of cognitive activities, both interpersonally and intrapersonal. Interpersonally, language affords us the possibility to communicate, understand and influence others. On the intrapersonal level, language allows us to think. Luria (1981) illustrates the relationship of language with cognitive development with the following quote: 'The enormous advantage is that world doubles. In the absence of words, human beings would have to deal only with those things which they could perceive and manipulate directly. With the help of language, they can deal with things that they have not perceived even indirectly and with things which were part of experience of earlier generations. Thus, the word adds another dimension to the world of human … Animals have only one world, the world of objects and situations. Human have double world.' (35). Hence, language allows human cognition a much expanded range of activities and liberates it from the immediate context.

Based in this theoretical orientation, the idea of *semiotic mediation* rooted in Vygotsky (1934) reformulation of Piaget's ([1932] 1965) concept of *egocentric speech* as *private speech* lays foundation for contemporary theory of narrative development and sense-making. It provides us with an understanding that by using language we enter into a system of shared meaning, a symbol system which reflects sociohistorical development. On this view, language actively employed and woven into a narrative serves as a tool for organising consciousness and perception while at the same time providing us with an interpretative framework for understanding the developmental world and events in it.

Research on cognitive development continues to offer insights about processes of mind as it changes over the lifecycle and in relation to socio-cultural circumstances that surround the developing individual (Fiske and Taylor 2013). However, current realities inside and outside the purview of academic research programmes are converging toward a focus on cognition in daily life explored as narrative – not only as metaphor but also as a cognitive process. At the confluence of these realities lays *sense-making*, a process situated in interaction with extant social, cultural and physical environments that describes and ultimately explains a mechanism by which people of all ages focus on salient, meaningful and challenging socio-cultural processes to achieve relevant personal goals. This process primarily occurs via the use of language although other symbolic media have been explored through the study of narrative genres, given that they frequently simulate and scaffold our construction of personal and collective activities (Bruner 1986; Amsterdam and Bruner 2000).

Semiotic mediation and the process of sense-making

Similar to his well-known theory describing the relationship of cultural tools and psychological signs, Vygotsky (1934) focuses on the relationship between speech and thought, that is, on semiotic mediation and the power of language to direct psychological development. More than just a mechanical concept of social becoming individual, semiotic mediation focuses on the role of language in the formulation

and enactment of knowledge Vygotsky (1934; Wertsch 1986) and meaning-making (Nelson 1985; Bruner 1990; for a review see Nelson 2014). Semiotic signs, just like physical tools, are outwardly directed toward other people (through speech) and influence those who are the object of speech (Lantolf and Thorne 2006). However, from the individual standpoint, it has also been formulated that once children have acquired language (or second language), their further use of language *leads* development especially as they encounter unfamiliar situations and unfamiliar bodies of knowledge (Daiute and Nelson 1997; Daiute 2010; Lucić 2013).

Language and psychological development are interpersonal processes tied with the development of intersubjective meaning. In socio-cultural theory in particular, meaning-making in everyday activities has been a central concept tied with psychological development (Bruner 1990; Nelson 1996). On this view, meaning is ontogenetically situated along a continuum, ranging from personal/idiosyncratic to shared meaning (Nelson 2014), and develops via the use of language through expression and negotiation in social interactions. When discussing his concept of *zone of proximal development* a theoretical space where a great deal of development happens – defined as the distance between the actual developmental level and the level of potential development achieved under adult guidance or in collaboration with a more capable peer – Vygotsky (1978) notes that 'human learning presupposes a specific social nature and process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them' (86).

Today, immigrant children and youth are growing into an intellectual life that is increasingly global, diverse and above all technologically mediated. It is within this context that meaning making frequently happens. When discussing development via new media, it would perhaps be easier to resort to polarising arguments over whether or not the effects of time-space compression are ruining or rescuing our society, rather than engaging in a critical assessment of the current condition. Either of these two extreme points would be an oversimplification. From the Vygotskian standpoint it is sufficient to acknowledge that new technology influences us and in the process changes how we perceive, conceive of, and interact with our world (McLuhan 1964). The Internet, social networks and smartphones – with all of the affordances they engender and the multiple narrative contexts they bring us in contact with – are extensions of ourselves that structure and inform our understanding, behaviour and activities in both remarkable and unremarkable ways (Bogost 2011). Socio-cultural theory provides an excellent theoretical standpoint from which to examine developmental challenges and possibilities presented to children and youth as they use language across various activities that bring them into contact with a complex, heterogeneous, culturally diverse, and technologically advanced social landscape.

In particular, contemporary developmental theory highlights that a dynamic quality of developing thought is making sense of what is going on in the environment and how one fits within it (Nelson 1985, 1996). The term *sense-making* is used here to capture that human ability to – upon entering a novel situation, environment, context, or a community of minds – recognise the social boundaries, rules, norms and ways of doing things, and connect these elements into a personally meaningful psychological bricolage. This process starts by recognising the ritual events captured across most cultures through storytelling and interpersonal narrative construction, which parents and teachers use to socialise children to their specific contexts (Nelson 1996).

Contemporary research in socio-cultural theory, cross-cultural studies, and narrative development has overwhelmingly shown that *cultural scripts* provide the basis for understanding perspectives, motivations, goals, intentions and emotions of others (Nelson 1996; Daiute and Lucić 2010) and serve as the basis for organising attention, perception, cognition, emotion, motivation and interpersonal relationship (Nasir and Saxe 2003; Rogoff 2003; Markus and Kitayama 2010). A script is a general event representation derived from and applied to the social context. Scripts help us to organise culturally relevant activities and provide contexts for learning other details necessary for participation in social and cultural life. They are built up as a person participates in (or in other ways gains knowledge of, for example, through television or via internet and cellphone) social routines.

From a cognitive perspective, Nelson (1996) describes the process of sense-making as rooted in language and narrative construction, involving a complex matrix of inter-related skills. Among these skills are: the ability to verbally project events in time, including the temporal and causal relations among

events; the ability to formulate connected discourse using cohesive linguistic devices and to understand such discourse; the ability to differentiate the canonical from the non-canonical and to mark events in terms of necessity, probability, and uncertainty; the ability to take the perspective of different actors and different spatial and temporal relations; the ability to resolve deviations from the expected course of events in culturally understandable terms; and the capacity to recognise and reformulate enduring culturally significant themes.

It is through speaking with others and paying attention to the world around us that we learn to recognise the cultural scripts that help us to understand the effects of time-space compression on the lives of immigrants. Contemporary migrants are regularly in touch – via Internet or smartphone applications – with their families and friends in their country of origin. They speak about cheering for teams and regularly following sporting competitions via the Internet. They use the Internet to order culturally specific foods and spices and to look up recipes of their favourite dishes. They share pictures via social networks that engage friends virtually both in their host and home country. But more than just gastro-tourist activities, technology allows immigrants to engage in a wide range of educational, civic and religious activities. For example, aided by internet, adult immigrants can meaningfully engage in political activity in their home country by follow political debates and contemporary situation via newspapers, listening to radio and watching video programmes. Active engagement takes the form of participation in heated ideological conversations via online blogs and chatrooms, and discussion of political opinions with friends and relatives via video-chat. Frequently, adult immigrants support political candidates by contributing financially (individually or in groups) to their election campaigns via mobile apps, and voting for them in elections via absentee ballots.

As educators, we must be attentive to and encouraging of the possibilities that technological affordances provide for activities of contemporary children and youth. But activities toward what end? Is it at all possible to describe a common developmental trajectory given the infinite number of possibilities - developmental singularities, a form of irreducible uniqueness that mediated and networked social environment offers? A great majority of children and youth stands to receive nothing but the positive effects of time-space compression, developing and thriving amidst an ever increasing number of social interactions. However adverse and antagonistic developmental pathways that also stem from affordances of time-space compression have been reported. The search for ethnic, cultural and personal identity motivates some to use the internet as a means of escape from the realities of dispossession that often permeate their daily life in diaspora (Böckler and Seeger 2013). In extreme cases Internet has lead youth to find dangerous pathway towards extremist and fundamentalism communities, which in turn facilitated their process of radicalisation (Storm 2014). In light of the potentially harmful consequences of technological mediation, organised instruction in schools can prove to be a powerful mechanism that scaffolds the activities toward supportive and psychologically beneficial social contexts.

While a number of studies on immigration focus on the outcomes of the interactions between immigrants and their society, surprisingly little systematic research has focused on psychological experience of immigrant children and youth (Garcia-Coll and Magnuson 1997). Research has often struggled to conceptualise immigrant experience, and has frequently fallen prey to the well-known trap in contemporary psychology called *the deficit model*. Far too often has contemporary research positioned immigrant versus the host society, and has stereotyped certain groups as 'problem' or 'model' minorities (for a discussion see Suarez-Orozco and Carhill 2008). Recently however, the increasing effects of time-space compression have motivated researchers and theorists studying diverse psychological phenomena to empirically examine and further articulate the effects of dual socialisation, defined as the transmission of two cultural orientations simultaneously (Haritatos and Benet-Martínez 2002) and technological mediation (Lucić, 2013) on psychological development and well-being (Alonso and Oiarzabal 2010). Theories of immigration which lagged behind in the past are, at last, starting to follow the larger socio-cultural trends described in this work and articulate a theoretical basis upon which we can structure teaching and learning methods that will enable today's young immigrants to realise their full potential.

Theories of immigrant development and educational practices

Understanding of theoretical paradigms that guide research programmes in psychology of immigration allows us to conceptualise, develop and situate educational practices that support development of immigrant children and youth. In 1984, John Berry proposed an influential fourfold taxonomy for the empirical study of immigration and acculturation. His work is based on the theory of acculturation articulated in 1936 by Redfield, Linton and Herskovits, who describe acculturation as a process that captures 'those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups'(149). Berry (1995) conceptualised acculturation as internal and largely decontextualised struggle in response to two basic, implicit questions: *Is it considered to be of value to maintain my cultural heritage?* and *Is it considered to be of value to develop inter-group relations in the receiving society?* The process of responding to these two questions indicates the extent to which immigrants are ready to relinquish or embrace their own cultures while at the same time embracing or rejecting the culture of their new society.

Empirical research shows that when applied to educational setting these embalmed and abstract cultural orientations do not aid our understanding of immigrant children and youth and do little to enable us to support their development. For example, research has identified children and youth who aim to fit in with mainstream culture, mimicking behaviours and attitudes of their US born peers – in particular as speaking English becomes a proxy for belonging and acceptance (Suárez-Orozco 2001) – as following the path of assimilation. Although children who employ such 'ethnic flight' strategies may perform at competent academic levels, they frequently isolate themselves and fail to build transnational ties, consequently losing the benefit of having a 'buffer' from the effects of discrimination (Suarez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco 2001). On the other hand, a strategy following the path of separation, frequently exemplified through the construction of 'adversarial identity,' referring to negotiating a sense of self around rejecting mainstream values, often perceiving one's options as either being 'like *them*' or 'betraying your own,' can become a constant source of conflict between future opportunities and present-day self, hence placing the individual at increased risk for premature termination of education, and a higher probability of unemployment (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 2002).

A rational proposal based on Berry's theory is that maintaining bicultural balance between one's native and newly-adopted cultures by holding a positive attitude toward both can be beneficial and conducive to the development of a healthy sense of self (LaFramboise, Coleman, and Gerton 1993). Applied to the educational setting with an added emphasis on language as a mechanism of multiplicity and use of language to mediate self-society relations, such theoretical reorientations have yielded promising results. Studies report that bilingual immigrant youth are less likely to drop out of school when compared with monolingual immigrant peers (Feliciano 2001) and that maintenance of a native language affords an individual social support from both the family and the larger community (frequently transnational), particularly when the family and community are non-English speaking (Rodrìguez et al. 1995). However, as Milstein and Lucić (2004) point out, even in instances in which immigrant children and youth are exposed to the effects of dual socialisation, young immigrants are often caught between parents who communicate the enculturative message of their homeland and teachers who communicate the acculturative message of the receiving society. Viewed from this perspective, the potential clash of these two forces can hinder psychological development, especially for immigrant children of primary school age (6–12), who often lack the sophisticated cognitive skills required to overcome dilemmas frequently inherent in cultural differences (Milstein and Lucić 2004).

Under the influence of dual-socialisation, according to Suárez-Orozco (2001) youth frequently develop an ethnic identity style that is situated between the extremes of ethnic flight and adversarial identity following the acculturative attitude that Berry (1984) calls integration. These bicultural or 'hybrid' styles can creatively make use of living in both worlds by embracing a sense of ethnic pride while also functioning competently in mainstream American society (Wiley and Deaux 2010). Along the similar lines Benet-Martinez, Lee, and Leu (2006) as well as Hong et al. (2000) propose that bicultural individuals

think about culture and interpersonal interactions in more complex ways than individuals who have internalised only one culture. Benet-Martinez, Lee, and Leu (2006) found that more complex cultural representations among bicultural individuals are the result of accumulated experiences at detecting and processing complex and often ambiguous cultural cues. From an educational perspective, bicultural cognitive style is associated with high academic achievement, and is therefore considered to be the most adaptive approach for immigrant children (Suarez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 2001). Today, effects of time-space compression have the potential to afford immigrant children and youth even easier access to varied communities across their host societies as well as the native language communities in their home countries, hence enabling them to creatively make use of living in both worlds.

Along these lines, narrative research is also beginning to show that immigrant youth growing up in bicultural or multicultural environments progressively develop the ability to adjust their relational style in interactions with others based on their understanding of the interlocutors' cultural origin (Lucić 2013) as well as the ability to employ varied conflict resolution strategies across multiple cultural landscapes (Lucić in press). Given the pressing socio-cultural shifts that increasingly compel immigrant children and youth to seek multiple, diverse and often technologically mediated interpersonal interactions one of the challenges facing educational practitioners is what tools to use in order to structure school activities that support development of bicultural cognitive styles, transnational orientation and scaffold relational flexibility. The development of bicultural cognitive style frequently entails strengthening community affiliations of young immigrants in their host countries as well as the countries of origin. Theorised from the Vygotskian perspective, the Internet and all of the affordances that come with the virtual network can be seen as tools which when integrated into daily activities of students have an ability to lead to the development of higher psychological function. Educational practices that rely on use of new media can provide immigrants with the necessary scaffolding in the process of developing bicultural cognitive style by encouraging them to engage with varied cultural contexts in meaningful, educationally mindful and safe ways.

Employing socio-cultural theory for curriculum development

For most immigrant children and youth, the first step in the process of developing bicultural and transnational cognitive style begins in the classroom. School is often where acculturative activities meet the needs of the developing child. This process frequently starts with learning a new language and generally includes specific capacities outlined in the process of narrative development such as acquiring specific social and cultural scripts through educational practices. Elements of socio-cultural theory described above, particularly related to narrative development, can serve as a basis for a series of theoretical intervention which can assist us in conceptualising and developing educational programmes that are developmentally beneficial for today's immigrant children and youth.

Narrating, as an activity and social process, can serve as an excellent cohesive activity through which children and youth can position themselves differently in relation to the events they narrate, the audiences who might hear and read their narratives, and the broader contexts of meaning and activity defining their life experiences (Daiute 2004; Bamberg 2006). Narrating also serves a social relational process through which individuals can engage with affordances of the context and specific cultural tools, hence simultaneously using these affordances to mediate self-society relations, make sense of diverse social contexts, and learn how to use them as a tool for personal development. Classroom activities that capitalise on the process of sense-making as a pedagogical basis can enable immigrant children and youth to acquire skills necessary for successful establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relations across various cultural landscapes afforded by new media technology.

Organising educational efforts to aid students in the process of sense-making should be one of the goals of educators. When seeking to directly engage with diverse and virtual social landscapes we should be aware of three theoretical tools identified by Daiute (2013) as inherent affordances of the virtual world well suited for pedagogical interventions. Specifically, these tools are *interactivity, symbolic flexibility,* and *vast source of information*. Providing educators with a better understating of

these three tools can enable activities that support young immigrants in the process of transnational development and gradually move them toward greater relational flexibility. Considered in the context of education, each tool has the capacity to expand imagination, knowledge, thought and action, and can be theorised to aid our efforts in classroom.

Acquisition of well-structured, high quality tools through cultural affordances, such as concepts, theories, and ideas leads to new and more elaborate forms of mental functioning (Arievitch and Stetsenko 2000). Traditional Vygotskian theory holds that when a child masters the concept of numbers and counting, this knowledge allows him to participate in social interactions involving counting, such as card-games, sports, and board games. Additionally, the child who has acquired the concept of numbers is well on his way to mastering the concept of time, which on the intrapersonal level becomes self-regulatory, in the sense that it allows the child to structure activities according to units of time.

Similarly, in the age of increasing diversity and time-space compression, allowing immigrant children and youth to become technologically literate can move them more efficiently toward the development of bicultural cognitive styles and ability to relate flexibly within their host and home societies. This process begins with understating and mastering the *interactivity* – a virtual affordance that engages multiple processes identified by narrative theory such as: making sense of temporal and causal relations among persons and events; ability to predict future interaction; and the ability to engage in and coordinate taking perspectives of different actors as well as their spatial and temporal relations. Introducing students to this affordance by constructing assignments which call for its use, can aid multicultural development as interactivity provides students with an opportunity to derive information, solicit opinions, make inferences and coordinate multiple relational styles through joint activities with near and distant others. Interactivity can be introduced particularly well through assignments in social sciences and humanities, as knowledge within these fields often relies on engaging others to gather and coordinate multiple viewpoints around common issues.

Constructing assignments that embed developmentally relevant questions such as *what is going on here?* or ones that engage students in predicting *what will happen next?* while simultaneously urging students to ask *where and how, do I fit in?* can engage them with varied cultural communities while at the same time enable the formation of symbolic representations (Bruner 1986). Given the constant presence of others visually, aurally, and textually on the screens in our homes, schools, libraries and phones, the educational challenge is to construct assignments that enable students to learn how to read, interpret, respond to, and develop with others, especially others who might be culturally distant or difficult to understand. Additional benefit of this approach, according to the theory of situated learning (Lave and Wenger 1991; Dubé and Jacob 2005) is that engaging with online communities of practice has the potential to provide knowledge and understanding that can be transferred to similar activities outside of the school context.

Asking questions and receiving feedback via online tools is fast, and has the potential to greatly expand the zone of proximal development of students during class hours and afterschool activities (creating seamlessly merged narratives, reports, blog posts or social media connections). Interactively engaging with students from other schools – locally as well as schools from other regions of the world – can aid students in overcoming developmental issues inherent in the process of growing up in a diverse and interconnected society. It can also allow them access to communities of minds and networks of knowledge in their home countries, hence enabling them to foster a more meaningful psychological bridge from home to host country. Once immigrant children and youth begin to understand that knowledge networks derived from their home countries can have a meaningful impact in their host countries, they will engage with them more readily. Active engagement with the knowledge networks of the home country in the host country, within the context of educational practices, has the potential to make students cultural knowledge meaningful and serve as initial means for bicultural development.

Furthermore, children and youth today often find themselves in situations and contexts where they must negotiate and make sense of others who act, look, and sound differently. Communicating with others, by asking questions, soliciting information and addressing multiple audiences can provide an integrative framework for interpersonal activity involving diverse and distant others. From an individual

standpoint, interactivity can help students to make manifest the relational styles that other children and youth use (or don't use) in their interpersonal interactions, as well as to develop these diverse interpersonal relational styles by introducing and scaffolding innovative ways of addressing multiple audiences. Coordination and use of multiple relational styles are necessary basics of civic life in a world where the material and symbolic realities of national boundaries are rapidly transforming.

Symbolic flexibility – or in other words multimodality – is another feature of the digital world that can be employed to aid teaching and scaffold development. It involves creating assignments which call for a combination of images (moving and still), words, and sounds. These activities can all be flexibly employed in the classroom to provide a context in which immigrant children and youth can develop the capacities connected with their use. Through juxtaposition and contraposition - a multimodal text can create a different system of signification, one that transcends the collective contribution of its constituent parts and affords students the opportunity to build on activities with diverse others and create new knowledge (Hull and Nelson 2005).

In particular, fostering an educational context in which immigrant children and youth can collaborate with same-age peers from their host and native countries in order to construct digital stories based on the approach described by Digital Underground Storytelling for You(th) (Hull and Nelson 2005) and Dynamic Storytelling by Youth (Daiute 2010) can enable activities which lead to development of bicultural cognitive style. In particular, in their work Hull and Nelson (2005) employ task of digital stories – brief movies distinctive in featuring the digitised voice of the author orally narrating a individually composed story, frequently his or her own story, using an assemblage of visual and auditory artefacts (old and new photographs, images found on the Internet, snippets of video, and anything that can be converted to digital form). Practitioners of this approach note that 'digital stories have wide appeal among children, youth, and adults, in part simply because they are multimodal and digital, and thereby allow individuals those compositional means and rights that used to be associated just with the world of mass media. They are popular too because they typically privilege a personal voice and allow participants to draw on popular culture and local knowledge' (Hull and Nelson 2005, 231). Educators can construct assignments by engaging immigrant students in activities of online data gathering in order to craft a multimodal personal narrative. In addition to providing students with spaces to link personal motivations and desires with social sources of knowledge, task associated with these types of assignments call for enactment of relational flexibility if students are encouraged to share their narratives with others, in their native and host countries, via the Internet.

Use of multimodality in the classroom allows us to support young people in narrating from diverse perspectives which, in turn, strengthens their abilities to account for specific experiences, goals, and requirements and enables them to derive an implicit understanding of what can be said and what cannot even in circumstances of conflicts. With such an approach, we have evidence that children and youth muster intellectual and other resources supporting their sense-making in challenging circumstances (Daiute 2010; Lucić in press). Carefully crafted assignments using multimodality teach students how to draw upon and interpret complex social forces and construct a personal narrative to organise their experience using multiple sources, thus directly enabling and aiding their process of transnational development.

Similarly, using a purely narrative approach for design of Dynamic Storytelling by Youth, Daiute (2010) explores multiple and often clashing ideologies of political conflict and transition though workshops with youth aged across four positions of post-war Yugoslavia (Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, a Bosnian refugee community in the US). All activities of the approach aimed to facilitate online intercultural contact among four groups of youth who share the same language but were physically divided due to the political circumstances of their post-war societies. During this theory based intervention, each group of youth was asked to engage in a multimodal project that involved construction of an online questionnaire. Students were told that after they created the questionnaire, it would be distributed to the three other groups in order to solicit their responses. During this process students were asked to come up with a theme for the online questionnaire, design the questions using both qualitative and quantitative survey methods. They also worked together to create a visual logo (survey ad) and write an

introduction inviting other ethnic groups to participate. Focusing on young people's use of multimodality and narration as a way of dealing with the complex situations of their post-war societies, Daiute (2010) shows that they are able to engage in sense-making on a larger social level which overcomes national boundaries. Participants of these workshops were able to draw on online resources to deal with and overcome physical barriers and ethnic divisions that define much of their daily lives. This is only one example of the numerous ways in which multimodality can be used to construct assignments that engage immigrant children and youth in developmentally beneficial activities using the affordances of time-space compression.

The third affordance of the digital world is inherent in the *vast sources of knowledge and experience* present on the Internet. Given the constant and increasing amount of information in the digital world, students need to develop skills and tools to access it in developmentally supportive ways. As noted previously, content accessible through the Internet can be useful and educationally relevant, but it can also be confusing, misleading, and sometimes dangerous. Case studies note that youth in diasporic communities frequently search for online communities and content that provides sources for ethnic and cultural identity development. By allowing transnational engagement, in extreme cases, the Internet and the vast sources of information it offers has led youth toward extremism and fundamentalism (Storm 2014). Such examples, which are few and far in between, highlight the need for organised school instruction that provides immigrant children and youth with means of interpreting and making-sense of diverse sources of knowledge and experiences that are available to them online, rather than leaving them to navigate this, often confusing, process on their own.

Developing sophisticated online search skills to interpret the relevance of information can be of paramount importance. Creating databases and wikis and participating in collaborative projects that stretch students' spontaneous realms of interest can guide knowledge and serve purposes beyond only keeping in touch with friends at home or abroad. There are a number of steps that can ease student's access to reliable information and trusted people. Creating a list of trusted online sources and providing students with tools of online etiquette can be first steps that enhance students' ability to arrive at useful sources. Scaffolding and further developing their information literacy, in particular by engaging into activities of jointly interpreting online information, discussing how these information are presented and exploring presentation alternatives, as well as teaching basic social-science methods that illuminated the approaches which with the data were gathered can be very helpful and revealing. Given that reliable sources are more likely to lead to reliable information, teaching such activities in the context of school practices further scaffolds students' abilities to reliably make sense of various other social contexts. The goal of method is to allow students to engage with vast sources of information in a safe school setting under the guidance of an expert, with an understanding that students will abstract from school activities and employ these abilities for further self-directed development outside of the school context.

Through her work with youth from four regions of former Yugoslavia described above, Daiute (2010) shows how the vast sources of knowledge and experience available online can be used in developmental supportive ways, and can even function as means of bridging the experiences of youth divided by a decade of war. Reflecting on this intervention, Daiute (2013) notes that 'given the opportunity to inquire about the lives of youth in other areas, about whom they had some knowledge, some assumptions, and, no doubt, some prejudices, sparked participants' curiosity and empathy. Inquiries of peers living in different political positions brought contradictory ideas together, for example whether adolescents across sites of political conflict experience ongoing discrimination because of ethnicities that, in part, fueled the war (73).' Clearly, using the tools afforded to us by the effects of time-space compression allows us to scaffold a number of psychological functions, including student's ability to engage in the process of sense-making.

Conclusion

A number of questions were raised by this work; some of them have been answered while others remain as problems to be addressed in future work, empirically and theoretically. By way of a summary we can reflect on some of the broader stipulations that emerge from our discussion of above. Perhaps the most important aspect to highlight is that due to the effects of time-space compression, the context of individual development today is no longer as homogenous as it once was and cannot be conceptualised solely though didactic interactions that characterise the developmental period of early childhood, or more homogenous classrooms that used to characterise our society in the past. The stories and the storytellers that developing individuals have access to increase daily hence proliferating the number of forms, scripts and situations that must be understood and mastered. We should recognise that, on social level and individual levels, the process of sense-making is increasingly linked and intertwined with context-sensitive extension of perspective-taking which enable developing individuals to engage in with multiple, and often diverse developmental contexts, in parallel. Diverse cultural milieus today shift frequently – and not only along the traditionally recognised vertical lines, such as moving from home to neighbourhood and school – but also horizontally, via the internet, across multiple other socio-cultural landscapes. Therefore, understanding the contemporary social forces, and the larger socio-cultural narrative that frames them, allow us to shed new light on the processes of development among immigrant children and youth and articulate pedagogical tools which can scaffold and enable them.

Building on Vygotsky's insights regarding the role of language and semiotic mediation in psychological development, we can see how the use of new media can enable teachers and educational practitioners to support young people in their efforts of making sense of diverse perspectives accounting for specific experiences, goals, and requirements. The use of the three affordances of the digital world extends students' activities toward the perspectives of inclusion and social justice, given that, as Daiute (2013) notes, 'the more young people encounter others with diverse experiences, ways of knowing, and interacting in the world, the more they have to develop skills for negotiating differences – not as neutral process but as fraught with issues of inequality, prejudice, and conflict' (75). From the perspective of socio-cultural developmental theory we assume that as soon as children can interact verbally, or via other symbolic means with those around them, they can influence their environments and culture and be influenced by them. Culture, like language, is a relatively enduring set of practices realised within a symbolic system. Like language, culture varies and changes, while exhibiting universal functions. Hence, like language, cultural practices must be acquired; their meaning must be mastered again and again by new generations of students. Conceptualised theoretically, fostering and encouraging diversity in the classroom – by fostering intercultural and transnational understanding – has the potential to offset potential hegemonic influences of any cultural group because it allows a skilled teacher to decenter the dominant opinions by introducing viewpoints and alternative positions that allow for the development of sense-making.

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