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Historical Simulations in the Classroom: Bringing Race and Class Talk to Students

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"Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorizing prepackaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write reflectively about it, relate it to past experiences and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn a part of themselves." [1]

Introduction

In the past ten years, it has been estimated that more than 81% of Hartford's population qualifies as "minority", identifying themselves as either Black or Latino. Furthermore, an estimated 7,500 families in Hartford are living in poverty (more than 30 %) and the average income in Hartford hovers around $27,000 per year.[2] In a city where these numbers are occurring, shockingly few schools have taken it upon themselves to educate their students about the race or class relations in the Hartford area over the past century. In fact, it is not only school children who are unaware of the type of discrimination that the Hartford area has experienced over the past hundred years, but adults as well.

This summer, while conducting research with Professor Jack Dougherty (Educational Studies, Trinity College), Professor Dougherty and I discovered that many of the librarians, town clerks and archivists did not understand the extent of the discrimination that residents of the Hartford area who were minorities or poor experienced. Throughout our travels, we made several trips to the West Hartford Town Clerks' office to investigate restrictive covenants, clauses in housing deeds that forbid non-white or low-income families from moving into a development in West Hartford in the 1930s and 1940s. To our surprise, upon our arrival and questioning of the town clerk, we discovered that she had no knowledge of these harsh clauses that existed in many of the documents we found. Trips like these were not uncommon this summer, finding well-

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[1] Arthur Chickering and Stephan Ehrmann, "Implementing the Seven Principles: Technology as Lever," http://www.aahe.org/technologylehtmann.htm.

[2] *Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice Report, City of Hartford, Connecticut*. Rep. Department of Development Services and Housing Education Resource Center, 2005. Web. 10 Dec. 2010. http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/about/conplan/fairhousingexs/hartfordanalysisofimpediments.pdf

educated people, supposedly knowledgeable about Hartford's history, who were unaware of the sheer volume of discrimination occurring on a day-to-day basis. After further research of 1930 census data for Hartford, West Hartford, and Bloomfield, and significant research through old newspapers, reports, and maps, Professor Dougherty and I began to brainstorm the possibility of creating a learning tool for students in the Hartford area to learn about the history of discrimination in Hartford.

I took the design of the beta-version of this historical simulation into my own hands for the second half of the summer, designing a simulation for high school and college students that would, ideally, allow teachers to discuss race and class talk in their classrooms and get students talking about Hartford's history of discrimination and ways that they could actively combat the continuation of these patterns. I came to my project this semester through my desire to not only test, but also improve, the simulation. I believe strongly that students should experience engaging activities in the classroom, and that they should see themselves reflected in the curriculum. Through the simulation, I hoped to accomplish both, and through my research this semester I hoped to get one step closer to a finalized simulation.

For this semester, I had plans to test my simulation on high school students in West Hartford, but after those plans fell through, I decided to reformat my research to study Trinity students and how they interacted with the simulation. Throughout the study, I had two research questions in mind. The first was: how does an historical simulation get students talking about race and socio economic class? This was my main question for the semester, attempting to understand more fully the simulation and how students interacted with it. My second question was: in the creation of an historical simulation that addresses difficult topics, what steps must be taken to make it a valuable learning tool for students? This question was one that I understood

would take more than the semester to answer, but that I wanted to keep in mind while conducting my research.

Throughout my study, I found many interesting results that I will discuss more in depth later in the paper. Results included student awareness of race relations through the simulation, student ability to relate the information in the simulation to their own lives, and interesting patterns in the students' goals throughout the simulation and suggestions for improvements. Overall, students responded well to the material presented in the simulation and believed that it was able to teach them new information about the history of discrimination in Hartford. In addition, students were able to use the information represented in the simulation to describe their own identities and their experiences with the discrimination in Hartford. Before beginning my research on students, however, it was crucial that I look at some of the literature surrounding topics of race and class in the curriculum, technology in the classroom and gaming for students.

Literature Review

The idea of using games and simulations in the classroom is not a new one. In fact, formal use of gaming and simulations in the classroom first took place in America in the early 1960s.[3] However, while current research on games and simulations in the classroom does exist, most of the research does not target issues of race or socioeconomic status throughout history. There has been much research done in the past 10 years concerning technology in the classroom, and there has also been significant research on the study and discussion of race and class in classrooms. It is the combination of these two fields that lacks research thus far, and that could

[3] Tansey, P. J., and Derick Unwin. *Simulation and Gaming in Education*. London: Methuen Educational, 1969. Print, page 1.

also lead to a significant breakthrough in the teaching of race and class relations throughout the past 100 years in Hartford.

To begin, it is necessary to look at technology, simulations and gaming developments for the classroom since gaming and simulations broke into the classroom scene nearly 50 years ago. First, we must look at the evolution of simulations in the classrooms. Simulation and Gaming in Education, a book written in 1969 in England by Tansey and Unwin, provides significant insight into the beginnings of simulations in the classroom, both in England and in America. The authors focus their argument on the shift in education practices of their time from a teacher-centered system to a child-centered system.[4] Around the time that Tansey and Unwin were doing their research, another book, Simulation Games in Learning edited by Boocock and Schild, was also released, discussing the role of simulation games in the classroom and as a learning tool. The editors stressed that educators find simulation games crucial to classroom learning because of their ability to allow a student to learn though a real-life scenario, while discovering knowledge for himself.[5]

More recently, articles regarding the hands-on nature of science classrooms have begun to arrive on the scene, advocating simulation-type learning to engage students through experiment. The field of research on simulations in science classrooms is extensive. Authors discuss the use of computer technology to aid in simulations in science classrooms (Stratford (1997), Rivers and Vockell (1987)). Others study the ways that games in science classrooms help student learning (Mayo (2007), Gee (2003)). Together this field has a wide range, only a small amount of which relates to my project.

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[4] Ibid

[5] Boocock, Sarane Spence., and E. O. Schild. *Simulation Games in Learning*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1968.

Jumping forward to the 1990s, research on simulations using computers became a hot topic. Everything in this field, including the concepts of discovery learning and science teaching was researched (De Jong & Van Joolingen (1998), Snir, Smith and Grosslight (1993)). In the 2000s, further research on similar topics, focusing in the science of computer simulation was conducted (De Jong (2006)), leaving us with a snapshot of the advancement of technology and where simulations fit into our new technology driven world. In 2004, Margaret Gredler looked broadly at how games and simulations relate to learning. In her article, Gredler argues that using games as a learning tool actually goes back much further than we could imagine. Furthermore, she says,

> "Educational games and simulations are experiential exercises that transport learners to another world. There they apply their knowledge skills and strategies in the execution of their assigned roles."[6]

The gaming world, and thus significant gaming research, only began to develop in the 2000s, setting the ground work from studies on how gaming affects classroom learning, whether or not the games are played in the classroom. Authors discussed the ways in which video and computer games helped children learn (Gee (2004), Shaffer, Squire, Halverson and Gee (2005), Gee (2005), Shaffer (2006), Maldonado (2010)). It was not until 2005 that a researcher began to look at the effects of bringing these games into the classroom. Kurt Squire discusses the difficulty to learn video games for those in the classroom who do not already know how, the teacher, for example. He also discusses the movement of games from a waste of time to "the darlings of the media, technology, and now educational industry."[7]

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[6] Gredler, M. *Games and Simulations and their Relationships to Learning.* University of South Carolina: Handbook of Research on Educational Communications and Technology, 2004. Page 571.

[7] Squire, Kurt. *Changing the Game: What Happens When Video Games Enter the Classroom.* Innovate: Journal of Online Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison. Page 26.

Contemporary research on alternative methods of classroom learning is focused mainly on bringing technology into the classroom as a means of providing students with what they will need to know after graduation. There were several articles that I found very helpful in discussing technology in the classroom and while none of them specifically discuss simulations, they do discuss the need for integration of technology into the classroom. Several of the articles I found addressed technology by teachers and administrators (Kara-Soteriou (2009), Pasco & Adcock (2007), Kay (2006)). However, there was some discussion of students using technology as a learning tool.

One such article, "Avoiding the Digital Abyss: Getting Started in the Classroom with YouTube, Digital Stories and Blogs" by Mullen and Wedwick (2008), explores the effects of online technology use in a rural, middle school language arts classroom. One of the most important concepts that the authors discuss is the No Child Left Behind requirement that every child should be technologically literate by the 8th grade.[8] One of the most vital points that this article makes is that the teacher in this rural setting was given flexibility by the administration of her school to use time in her classroom to address technology. In urban schools, where focus is often simply on keeping kids in school and passing standardized tests, there is no time, money, or flexibility to use technology in the classroom as they did in this study.

While research on technology use and development is fairly straightforward, the development of a curriculum in which topics of race and socioeconomic status are addressed is not so clear cut, as research on the topics shows. Significant research has been done regarding the process of labeling race categories in classrooms (Singleton and Hays (publishing date unknown), Nieto (1999), Pollock (2004)), a topic that can often feel overwhelming and

[8] Mullen, Rebecca, and Linda Wedwick. "Avoiding the Digital Abyss: Getting Started in the Classroom with YouTube, Digital Stories, and Blogs." *The Clearing House* 82.2 (2008): page 66.

sometimes is avoided so that teachers or administrators do not have to feel “racist”. In particular, Mika Pollock’s ethnography *Colormute* gives a chilling snapshot of the fear that often surrounds race talk in schools. Specifically, she addresses the dangers of a "colormute" society, one that is so scared to talk about race that the topic is avoided all together. While widely researched by the United States Government, especially regarding the production of statistics on poverty in and out of schools, research on the discussion of socioeconomic status in the classrooms is lacking. The research that does exist focuses on how socioeconomic status affects student success rates (Caldas and Bankston III (1997), Sirin(2005)), not how socioeconomic status is discussed in the classroom. Race discussions in the classroom are researched much more fully and spread across many subtopics.

Research on the discussion and labeling, or lack thereof, concerning race in the classroom is crucial to my research, but is a field that is as diverse as the subjects that it studies. Some authors focus on how people, especially students, often do not fit neatly into one racial category (Chang & Conrad (2008), Rampton (2006)). Others discuss the complexities of being treated as a member of a certain race group, whether or not one would put themselves in the group (Gibson, Gandara and Koyama (2004), Dance (2002)). Perhaps the largest subset of research on race relations is the research focused on the allowance or denial of opportunity in schools based on race (Ferguson (2001), Rubin and Noguera (2004), Tyson (2002), Pollock (2004)).

However, in terms of my project, the most interesting and relevant research is done by the authors who study the relations between curriculum and race, focusing on the way in which race is incorporated into the curriculum (Mott-Smith (2008), Lightfoot (2008), Duncan-Andrade and Morell (2008), McCarty(2005), Ongtooguk & Dybdahl (2008), Tieken(2008)). This research does not address the incorporation of race talk through a simulation, or even through a history

class, but it does discuss the ways that youth are interacting with race talk and with their diverse, or sometimes not so diverse, classmates. Mara Tieken's (2008) research is particularly interesting to my study because it deals with the process of making race relevant to White students, even when "racial material" typically refers to material about people of color. Her writing, however, gives insight on ways to incorporate race into the curriculum and make it significant to the students. In particular, her writing focuses on the ways to use local history to inform students. In addition, it stresses the idea that this incorporation of race and class talk into the classroom is crucial because students often feel that their classmates do not understand or recognize the differences in racial experience. Further research on race talk in the classroom has focused not on how race is not incorporated into the curriculum, but how teachers incorporate it into their classrooms. This research is crucial to an understanding of race talk in the classroom because it explores teachers' roles in introducing race talk to their students (Blum (2002), Lopez (2006), Cushman (2005), Ladson-Billings (1994)).

My research will strive to connect history and the current availability of technology to explore the ways in which students can learn through simulations in classrooms now driven by the use of technology. In addition, my research hopes to explore a way to bring race talk and class talk to the classroom. Through my research, I hope to discover whether or not an online, historical simulation can teach students the history of race and class relations of Hartford, as well as bring them up for contemporary discussion. Further, I hope that my research on Trinity students will allow me to continue development of a simulation that will be more successful at bringing up these complex topics with high school students. By using the understandings of the authors who write about the progression of technology in the classroom and discussions of race and class in schools, I hope that my research will provide a bridging of the gap between these

two seemingly far apart topics. I hope to discover whether the technology now available, such as Google maps and gaming software, can be transformed into a good tool to spark conversation about race, class and discrimination.

Methods

The Simulation

As I discussed, I created the simulation as part of my summer research project with Professor Jack Dougherty. After many discussions about what type of resource we wanted to create for students regarding our findings this summer, we decided that a historical simulation incorporating both current technology and historical materials would be the best option. For further details about our decision making process throughout the creation of the simulation, or for more specifics on its content, I have written 6 short papers, but for the purposes of this study, I will be brief about the simulation.

To begin, each student is given a profile, defined in both racial and socioeconomic terms. This basically means that each student is given data for a family that includes such information as the family's race, monthly income, cash available and the occupation of the head of the household. The racial categories, in order to stay true to historical census data, labeled profiles as either "White" or "Negro", and because Hartford was almost entirely Black and White at the time, no other races are included in the simulation. Each student the plays two rounds as a member of the same family, one in 1930 and one in 1960. Throughout the two rounds of play, students must make decisions based on supplemental reading material (I handed out a small packet for my study) and attempt to buy a home in one of the four towns in which homes were available (Hartford, West Hartford, East Hartford, Bloomfield). Characters labeled "Negro" or

had low income often face discrimination or difficulties purchasing a home, by design. In addition to attempting to buy a home, in between rounds, students participate in a voting round as a member of the town in which they lived in the 1930 round. Students vote on issues such as non-discriminatory housing policies, an affordable housing project in the town, zoning policies and increased public education for their town. Students must decide together on these issues with the other members of the class who have also bought a home in the same town.

At the end of the simulation, the students are measured by two meters of success, personal wealth and what we call "quality of life" points. Students calculate their personal wealth by adding up the values of the homes in which they lived in both rounds. Then, by going through a checklist of criteria including what each town voted for in the voting round, where they lived and the decisions they made, students earn "quality of life" points as well. Students set their own goals for the game, deciding whether to strive for "quality of life", personal wealth or a combination between the two. Ideally, after this tallying students would have a chance to discuss their experiences throughout the game with their classmates, opening a forum for discussion about discrimination, race and class. For this project, students took the survey instead of having a discussion with their fellow participants, simply for timing reasons.

The Study

For my study, I conducted research on seventeen Trinity participants, sixteen students and one professor, who varied in age, race, gender and socioeconomic status. I had both male and female students, though I had more female participants than males. I carried out research with participants who were White, Black, Hispanic, Indian and more. Sixteen of my participants were between 18 and 22 years old, with the exception of the professor who participated. Students discuss coming from low and high income neighborhoods. In addition, when asked before the

official data collection began, students reported urban, suburban and rural homes. I carried out two data collection sessions, the first with eleven participants and the second with six participants, when I realized that I needed more data than the original eleven participants gave me.

I used a qualitative survey to collect my data so that I could not only make a few statistics out of the data for quantitative support, but also so that I could understand more than just what a participant answered. I wanted to get to the "why" of the question, because with complex topics like race and social class, I was more curious about how the participants elaborated and what they thought was important. For this reason, all questions on the surveys were open-ended and each reminded the student to elaborate about why they answered as they did.

After my first participant group, I read through the eleven surveys and discovered that some of the questions that I asked were not clear or required follow up information. For this reason, though I understood that it would be more complicated to compare results by doing so, I added additional questions to the survey for the second group. I asked about previous experience with games in the classroom, probed further about students' own identities and how they played into their decision making in the simulation, and asked participants for demographic data about themselves. This means that for the six participants in the second group, I know their genders and how they define themselves racially, data that I did not collect for the first group. While it is frustrating, looking back, that I do not have the demographic data for the first group of participants, I will present the demographic data where I have it to create a better context for understanding. In addition, since most of the participants were no asked their gender as part of the survey, I chose to use all female pronouns instead of attempting to be gender neutral.

Because of this, it may appear that all participants were female, but this is not the case. I only made this choice for the sake of simplicity.

Furthermore, because the surveys were open-ended, I received a highly varied collection of responses. I then coded these answers myself, meaning that it is possible that during coding, I added some bias to my study by looking for particular answers over others. I attempted to analyze the data both statistically and qualitatively in order to get the best-rounded picture possible. Through my analysis, I found many trends and themes, a few of which I will address in the next section.

Data and Analysis

Through the presentation of the "Where Can You Find a Home?" historical simulation, I was able to gather some information to help me begin to answer my two main questions. First, how does a historical simulation address issues of race and class in the classroom? Second, what steps must be taken in order to create a valuable learning tool for students? Though I will address my data in more depth below, I will give a quick snapshot first to outline the types of data I saw in my research. First and foremost, the biggest theme that I saw was that participants felt that their experience playing the game taught them a lot about Hartford and its suburbs that they had not previously known. In addition, most participants explained that the historical simulation represented patterns of urban and suburban living in the Hartford area that they had not expected. Many students thought that the simulation showed the truth about Hartford with great success, and said that they understood race and socioeconomic relations in the Hartford area much better after the completion of the simulation. Students also agreed that the simulations had many improvements to be made, including, but not limited to, getting the whole simulation online,

being given more time to review materials, and adjusting the game to be more visual and streamlined. Last but not least, participants brought many interesting viewpoints when discussing their own identity (racial, socioeconomic, or otherwise), the identity of their profile, and the way they played the game. While their strategies of playing the game and the participants' thoughts about the material differed greatly, each participant was able to speak about their experience with the material clearly. In addition, many of the participants were also able to discuss their own identities as a factor in the way that they played the simulation. Overall, the results of my research provide some insight regarding my questions and will help me to develop a better simulation for future use by a wider range of students.

Awareness

As part of my research question, I was interested in whether participants had a sense of their fellow participants' experiences throughout the simulation. I was curious about this because the literature on race relations in the classroom explains that often students are not able to understand the experiences of their classmates if race or class talk is not present in the classroom (Tieken (2008)). By looking at the students' comments regarding the fairness of the simulation to everyone in the room and by looking at their comments regarding how much they learned about the Hartford area through the simulation, I was able to piece together a few thoughts answering my question.

Nine of the seventeen participants believed that the simulation was not fair to everyone in the room. This means that more than half of the participants believed the simulation to be unfair, either to themselves or to their fellow participants. This percentage (53%) was considerably higher than I believed it would be when setting out to do my research. While the percentage shows that only about half of the students were adamant about the unfair nature of the game, and

this percentage seems rather low for a simulation that is designed to be unfair, additional information helped me to see a fuller picture. Six additional students believed that the simulation was simultaneously fair and unfair to the students in the room. The participants in this category cited many reasons for their confidence that the simulation could be concurrently fair and unfair. Students mostly cited that the simulation was fair because the profiles were randomly distributed to the participants in the room or that the simulation was fair because it was true to historical patterns. All six of these students agreed, however, that despite the just aspects of the simulation, that the simulation did not provide equal opportunity to all participants in the room. This result tells us that the complexity of issues such as race and class were apparent to at least these six participants in the study. While I assumed that more students would discuss or mention this complexity, and perhaps hoped that they would, it does not surprise me that students avoid discussing the difficulties with race and class talk in the short amount of time during which they had to finish the survey.

One additional piece of information that I gained from the surveys was that all 8 of the participants that had a Negro profile believed that the simulation was either completely unfair or had many unfair aspects for themselves and the other Negro participants. This result was exactly as I would have predicted, since the game is designed to be unfair to Negro profiles. I assumed that if any students felt that the simulation was unfair, it would be the participants with Negro profiles. Because the game was designed to be historically representative and therefore explore moments of discrimination and unfair behavior, it was expected that participants would understand that not all people in the room had the same experience. The reasoning that the participants gave for why they believed the game was fair or unfair was one of my most interesting findings.

Twelve of the participants stated that they felt that the game was unfair because participants were not given a level playing field. These 12 students represented students who both believed the simulation to be completely unfair and the group of students who believed that the simulation was both fair and unfair. One student playing a "Negro" profile stated that

> "The simulation was not fair to everyone in the entire class, especially the Blacks, because there was not a level playing field."[9]

Again, a majority (7 of the 12) of the students who discussed the lack of a level playing field the students had "Negro" profiles. This statistics tells us again that the simulation was more successful at conveying the actuality of imbalanced playing field to the students who had to face the discrimination and uphill battle. In a way, it is tempting to be upset that more students, especially more students playing White profiles, did not comment on the lopsided nature of the game, but the results of my study were indicative of real experiences. Those being discriminated against in the 1930s and 1960s would have more readily noticed the discrimination than those for who discrimination is not a hindering factor.

Two players, one who had a "Negro" profile and one who had a "White" profile, expressed that they did not believe that the simulation was fair but stated that it was focused instead on being realistic. One student playing a "Negro" profile stated:

> "As we saw it was not always fair in that some people did not get housing, but that demonstrates a real problem that exists in Hartford."[10]

This result, while not one that I had expected to receive, was helpful information to have, because it tells me that these two students had some understanding of the real history of Hartford, and that they were able to relate the patterns in the simulation to reality. This was also

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[9] Campbell, Katherine. "Historical Simulations: A Learning Tool? Question 1." Survey. Answer by Participant H. 21 October 2010.

[10] Campbell, Katherine. "Historical Simulations: A Learning Tool? Question 1." Survey. Answer by Participant J. 21 October 2010.

encouraging because it gave me confidence that expansion of the game to include more rounds, including a contemporary round, would allow more students to establish these types of patterns and relate the patterns to current ones as well.

Four participants, one playing a "White" profile and three playing "Negro" profiles, said that they believe that the game was fair to everyone because the profiles had been randomly distributed. One such student, who believed that the game was simultaneously fair and unfair, said the following about the nature of the game:

> "It was fair in the sense that the profiles were given out randomly, but there was no way that those with less income would have had more points in the end than those with higher income."[11]

This quote, given by the participant with a "White" profile, shows an awareness of both the fair and unfair aspects of the simulation. In addition, it shows that there are students who pick up on others' experiences in the classroom, like Tieken (2008) said there could be. I was particularly by the answers of these four participants because I assumed that if participants felt that the simulation was fair because of random distribution, it would be those students who had benefitted (in terms of ease of play through racial and socioeconomic measures) from the random distribution, the students with "White" profiles. However, the distribution shows that more "Negro" characters felt that it was fair. It is possible that this result occurred because the participants were looking for something fair to cite in the game, and random distribution was the only thing that they could find.

Goals and Improvements

Goals

[11] Campbell, Katherine. "Historical Simulations: A Learning Tool? Question 1." Survey. Answer by Participant C. 21 October 2010.

Another theme that was present in my collection of data was the pattern of goal-setting in which the participants were involved. I was curious about what goals student would set for themselves when told that there would be two measures of success at the end of the simulation. By asking a question regarding these motivations on my survey I gathered some rich answers about why students chose one measure of success over another. I wanted to explore whether participants were thinking in terms of racial relations in the 1930s and 1960s, or whether they were using a more contemporary mentality in a historical setting. I was hoping to discover whether participants would discuss race or class as part of their answer, or whether they would choose a "colormute" path, as Mika Pollock discusses in her book (Pollack (2004)). My results for this question were a bit reminiscent of Pollock's because most of my participants did not discuss race or class in their answer.

Eleven of the seventeen participants stated that they were attempting to strike a balance between the two measures of success in the simulation, individual success and equality for the group. It is possible that it was the case that all eleven of these participants were truly striving for a balance. However, it is also possible that this result was influenced by what participants viewed to be the "right" answer, or the most "politically correct" answer. As Pollock suggests in her book, people will say a lot of things before they will say something that will make them seem racist, greedy, or fake (Pollack (2004)). Because of this, it is possible that the participants did not discuss race in their answers so as not to seem racist, did not discuss their goal for individual success so as not to seem greedy, and did not discuss their goals for equality so as not to seem fake.

In many ways, this result shows that the simulation did not do an adequate job of promoting discussion of race talk, as none of the participants mentioned race in their answer.

However, as most participants established thoughtful reasoning behind their goals, many of the participants did delve into discussions of socioeconomic factors, and how they hindered decision making. One student, an African-American Female with a "White" profile said:

> "Character-wise, the simulation was unfair on an income basis. African American characters were not allotted a sufficient amount of income, which resulted in a restriction of the representing participant's ability to make effective decisions in regards to the game."[12]

While this participant's profile was the richest in the group, her focus was on the restrictions that those with "Negro" profiles were dealing with in terms of wealth and money restrictions. This trend or consideration about socioeconomic status shows that the simulation was successful at getting students to consider class patterns. We see this specifically in a quote by one participant with a "Negro" profile, saying,

> "My goal was to strike a balance between the two. This was difficult at times because I wanted to vote for education and affordable housing, but I just couldn't afford to pay the extra taxes, so I only voted yes for one."[13]

This type of thought, for a character but influenced by their own thoughts on these issues, shows understanding of material that the participants had to experience through simulation to grasp. This is one of my most interesting finds, since talking about money, poverty, and wealth can be difficult topics but often take a back seat to the complex topic of race relations. While race is often avoided in schools, it is common to use words like "high-poverty" or "low-income" as a proxy for race (Pollock (2004)). My participants' willingness to discuss socioeconomic status shows an assumed simplicity about class that is not clear with race.

Improvements

[12] Campbell, Katherine. "Historical Simulations: A Learning Tool? Question 1." Survey. Answer by Participant M. 4 November 2010.
[13] Campbell, Katherine. "Historical Simulations: A Learning Tool? Question 3." Survey. Answer by Participant J. 21 October 2010.

In order to answer my second research question about how to improve the simulation so that students would learn as much as possible from its contents, I asked students to comment on any improvements or comments that they had about either the content or the set up of the simulation. Through these questions, I was looking to understand what students would need for this type of simulation to be productive in getting the race and class topics out in the open through history classes. I was hoping to understand better whether my participants felt that the simulation should ask more questions about race and class of the students, whether they felt that teachers should be presenting these topics and what would make these topics easier to discuss.

In answering my questions, my participants had some truly inspired ideas. The suggestions were nearly all different. They ranged from suggestions about how the simulation could run more smoothly to how it could attract students more. Other answers ranged from new meters of success to the suggestion that a third round should be added to the simulation representing present day, to relate the simulation to the current problems that Hartford faces. Sixteen of the seventeen students believed that the simulation would fit in well in a high school or college curriculum, and three specified that it would be best if used in combination with primary or secondary source readings. None of the three who mentioned that readings would be helpful stated why they believed that this was the case. It is possible that they believed the supplemental information that I gave out at the beginning of the simulation was helpful but they wanted more primary source material. It is also possible that they thought the topics were too complex to simply dive into without background.

Five of the six participants in the second group said that they had used games and simulations as learning tools before in school (the first group was not asked the same question), and all five reported positive experiences with the games. Furthermore, as 18-22 year-olds, the

five participants vividly remember the topics and specifics about the games, indicating that learning through these types of games or simulations can inspire lasting knowledge. Most said that their experience with learning games was mostly in elementary and middle school, just as my experience was. The five cited games like "The Sims," "Oregon Trail," and "Math Blaster" as games that had influenced their childhood. It is clear not only that students are learning through simulations and gaming in the classroom, but that this simulation has the potential to help students understand race and class relations much better.

Identity

Perhaps one of the most important findings in my study were the discussions of participants contemplating and then discussing how their own identity influenced the decisions that they made in the simulation, especially in relation to the identity of the profile they were representing. The eleven members of the first group provided a wide variety of answers in terms of whether their own identity affected the goals they had, the decisions they made, or the strategies they used. Two participants discussed the amount of money allotted to them as the only determining factor for how they played the simulation. Two more participants discussed the racial identity, and any restrictions that came along with it, as the main factor in their decision making process. While none of these students related their profile to themselves, all of them gave me insight as to how they were making their decisions throughout the course of the simulation. These participants also were a red flag for me because it was after reading these surveys that I discovered that the simulation would not be able to inspire all participants to discuss their identity. In part, I felt that these results represented a bit of a failure on my part in the design both of the simulation and of the study, because the students clearly had clearly not understood wither

the point of the simulation (to break the ice for talking about race and class relations) or they did not understand the question.

However, of the eleven students in the first session, six students actually answered the question I was intending to ask by comparing their own identity to that of their profile and discussing whether they made decisions based on what they would do in real life, or what their character would have done at the time. Two students talked about their experience playing a character that was not similar to their own identity at all. One of these students talked about trying to put herself into the shoes of the character and make decisions as the character would have done. This participant, who played a "Negro" profile, stated

> "I thought about the decisions more trying to put myself in my profile's shoes."[14]

The other student discussed trying to take on a different view through her profile, but said that when it came to the voting round, her profile did not affect her decisions. She said,

> "My profile was a different race that my identity, so this allowed me to take on a different perspective when trying to navigate the housing market. However, this did not affect my opinions in the voting section of the game."[15]

This result identified the pattern that students were forced to make housing decisions based on the race and socioeconomic status that they were given, but that some students, like this one answered the questions as she would have personally, not how her character would have. This student shows us that her motivation in the simulation was to explore what it would have been like to be a person of a different race in history, but that she voted based on her views of the world today. This quote shows us that the simulation is not only able to get the material through

[14] Campbell, Katherine. "Historical Simulations: A Learning Tool? Question 5." Survey. Answer by Participant I. 21 October 2010.
[15] Campbell, Katherine. "Historical Simulations: A Learning Tool? Question 5." Survey. Answer by Participant J. 21 October 2010.

to the players, but it also allows us to track how the simulation is opening students to the topics of race and class.

Four more students discussed the experience of playing a character in the simulation with an identity similar to their own. Of these four, two played "White" characters and two played "Negro" characters. One of the students with a "White" profile, stated that her identity was similar to her own, so she did not deviate much from her normal experience, but she also stated that in terms of decision-making she did not believe that assignment of a different profile would have caused any changes for her.[16]While I cannot be sure that this participant would have made the same decisions if she had had another profile, this idea that the profile is unimportant to the decision-making process is highly interesting, especially since the profile dictates so much throughout the game. One of the students with a "Negro" profile discussed how her identity influenced the choices she made for her character greatly. She said,

> "I come from a low income family in reality, so I felt strongly about issues such as zoning, non-discriminatory housing and affordable housing, because it is something that is very real in my life."[17]

For my second group of participants, I was curious to see if I could get a little bit more out of them in terms of discussion about their own identities in relation to their characters'. One participant in the second group discussed her decision to vote for zoning laws because she has them in her hometown.[18] Another participant stated that she intentionally disregarded her own identity in favor of making decisions as her character would have.[19] I was intrigued by this statement, because it was so straightforward in saying that the decisions were not decisions she

[16] Campbell, Katherine. "Historical Simulations: A Learning Tool? Question 5." Survey. Answer by Participant F. 21 October 2010.
[17] Campbell, Katherine. "Historical Simulations: A Learning Tool? Question 5." Survey. Answer by Participant H. 21 October 2010.
[18] Campbell, Katherine. "Historical Simulations: A Learning Tool? Question 5." Survey. Answer by Participant L. 4 November 2010.
[19] Campbell, Katherine. "Historical Simulations: A Learning Tool? Question 5." Survey. Answer by Participant N. 4 November 2010.

would have made in reality but in the simulation had decided to stay true to the character. Two other participants discussed their experiences playing characters of different backgrounds than their own. One said,

> "Because my character was wealthy and white, I felt that I had more options when I had to make decisions pertaining to where my character should live and the house that my character should buy. Yes, I based my decision to provide affordable, non-discriminatory housing, as well as "no zoning" on my own identity."[20]

The other identified a slightly different kind of decision making process through the simulation. She said,

> "My character wasn't particularly well-off so housing decisions were based on that. The voting questions tended to be answered based on my personal identity as a Catholic and what I believed to be morally right."[21]

I was intrigued by both of these comments, especially the second one. I had not imagined in the course of the creation of the game that religion would come up at all in the discussions, as it is not a factor in the simulation. However, after reading this particular survey, I was struck by the depth with which this participant had answered the question. She went beyond the topics presented in the game to bring a new aspect of herself to the table. The participants went above and beyond what I expected in answering questions about their own identities in comparison with their characters.

Conclusion

Overall, my data shows that participants had a great deal of understanding and interest in the material being taught. Students were able to relate to the material and were additionally able to discuss eloquently the patterns that they saw through the simulation. Students found connections with their own lives, though most of them were not from Hartford. In addition, the

[20] Campbell, Katherine. "Historical Simulations: A Learning Tool? Question 5." Survey. Answer by Participant M. 4 November 2010.
[21] Campbell, Katherine. "Historical Simulations: A Learning Tool? Question 5." Survey. Answer by Participant Q. 4 November 2010.

students show great awareness throughout the simulation not only of the patterns of discrimination, but of the experiences of their fellow participants as well. Through their goals and suggestions for improvements, the students clearly engaged with the simulation and took something valuable away from their experience.

Simulations like this one that incorporate historical information into a technology driven game, hold significant promise for the educational sphere as our world turns to technology more and more. The simulation is designed to recognize the past, get students discussing patterns in the present and being active about changing these patterns in the future. It is simulations like this that engage students and ask them not only to be active participants in their own education, but educate them on how to be active participants in the neighborhood, city and state. Educational games hold promise to reach American students who have been falling through the cracks, and bring them back to loving school and learning. From here, though, we have a long way to go.

With the suggestions received from my participants, important adjustments must be made to make the simulation more user friendly and classroom friendly. The simulation must all be online to make it smoother; it must have more graphics and technological tools with which students can explore; it must be clearer and incorporate more primary source material to create a better context for the material to be presented. After these significant improvements, more research would need to be done to see whether high school students respond in the same way that college students did. This research would show us whether high school students are capable of describing their experiences and understanding the race relations in their hometowns. Preliminary research shows that students are learning from these simulations. More specifically they are learning through hands on experience with the material. When forced to make decisions while representing a character, students are fully immersed in the history that they are learning.

With this foundation, the simulation is making its way toward being an incredibly powerful learning tool, especially in the Hartford area.

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Appendix A – Surveys

1st Group

1. Did you feel that this simulation was fair to everyone in class? Describe why or why not.
2. Do you think that this game, in combination with readings on the material, would be a good learning tool for high school or college students?
3. Was your goal in the simulation to gain success individually, create equality for the group, or strike a balance between the two? (If none of these, what was your goal?)
4. What improvements would you make to this game that would make it a better learning tool for students?
5. How did your identity and the identity of your profile play into the way you played the game?

2nd Group

What is your race? (optional) _____

What is your gender? (optional) _____

What was the race of your profile character? _____

1. Did you feel that this simulation was fair to everyone in the session? Describe why or why not.
2. Do you think that this game, in combination with readings on the material, would be a good learning tool for High School or College students? Why or Why not?
3. Was your goal in the simulation to gain success individually, create equality for the group or strike a balance between the two? (If none of these, what was your goal?)
4. What improvements would you make to this game that would make it a better learning tool for students?
5. How did your personal identity and the identity of you profile play into the way you played the game? Did you make any decisions because of your own identity? If so, what were they?
6. Have you ever played a game as a learning tool in a classroom before? If so, please describe.

Appendix B – Sample Profile

Profile: Moore Family

- Race: Negro
- Occupation of Head of Household: Engineer
- Monthly Allowance (for rental or Mortgage): $130
- Cash On Hand: $350

Appendix C – Additional information given to participants

Hartford Area, 1930:

	Hartford	East Hartford	West Hartford	Bloomfield	Hartford County
Population	164072	17125	24941	3247	421097
% "Negro"	3.968%	0.672%	0.505%	3.573%	2.02%

At this time, Hartford Public High School was one of the most prestigious High Schools in the area, drawing students from all over Connecticut and the Northeast. Hartford was also home to many big businesses and a wonderful downtown area.

Pratt and Whitney, which was founded in the 1860s in Hartford, CT, is a major player. By 1925, the company was headquartered in East Hartford, CT, and provided jobs for many local residents.

West Hartford was developing quickly in the 1920s and 1930s. West Hartford, however, was only a growing suburb for white residents. Through the 1930 census pages, we found out that 90 of the 129 non white residents in West Hartford (69.76%) were not living in a home headed by another non white resident. By and large, these residents worked for and lived with the white residents of West Hartford.

Bloomfield, another suburb of Hartford, was home to considerably fewer residents that West Hartford and had a much higher percentage of non white residents. In addition, we see from the pages of the 1930 Census that the non-white residents of Bloomfield lived under their own roofs and were not employed as live-in servants, cooks, butlers or drivers for white families.

Restrictive Covenants were a popular form of discrimination in Hartford's suburbs (most known cases in West Hartford) from 1915 to 1950. Restrictive covenants were clauses in the deeds to homes that discriminated based on race and class. Value restrictions controlled the size of lots, the types of homes that could be built on a lot, or the minimum price of the home. By implementing value restrictions, poor and minority residents were often not able to afford a home, or the cost of building such a large home, in the suburbs. Race restrictions controlled who could move into certain properties. If a home was "racially restricted", the deed stated that no non-white residents were allowed to occupy the property, unless they were there as a domestic servant. Mainly applied to developments, these restrictions kept neighborhoods and developments "pure" and promised protection from difference.

In a similar way, exclusionary zoning provided a way to essentially discriminate legally. If towns were zoned, the property carried town-mandated restrictions on lot size, home size and more. Residents who inhabited the "High Caste" areas enjoyed the restrictions, because the neighborhoods remained uniform and employed regulations that would guarantee residents a

specific lifestyle. Exclusionary zoning kept home prices high, since neighborhoods could not be clouded by unwelcome inhabitants, industrial areas or the poor.

Public opinion of each town was very important in determining the success of the town. While the information that one could receive from local residents was not always accurate, it was likely to influence how people thought about other towns, or their own. It is important to recognize that opinions that could be heard were not always accurate, though some had merit.

Appendix D – Voting Questions and Opinions on the Issues

1. Should our town be zoned for minimum lot size? y/n
2. Should our town put a non-discriminatory housing policy in place? y/n
3. Should our residents invest in building an affordable housing project? y/n
4. Should our town make a larger investment in the public schools? y/n

Question 1:

- "Zoning will allow us more uniform neighborhoods in every sense."
- "Zoning is just a way to keep poor and minority people out of this town now that restrictive covenants are no longer recognized by the state."
- "Zoning will keep our neighborhoods more pure, and the values of our homes will stay high, or even increase."
- "Zoning will keep minorities out, and our neighborhoods will not decrease in value."

Question 2:

- "Putting a non-discriminatory housing policy in place will allow for diversity, something that everyone can benefit from."
- "A non-discriminatory housing policy would improve our quality of life, because it would make the town fair for everyone."
- "A non-discriminatory housing policy would simply allow minorities to take over."
- "A non-discriminatory housing policy would bring both pros and cons to our town. It would probably cause the values of our homes to decrease a little bit, but diversity can do us some good, especially in our schools for our children."

Question 3:

- "We should not invest in an affordable housing project, it will cost us money and it will put our town in a bad light."
- "We should invest in an affordable housing project, because we should welcome new people and it is the right thing to do."
- "We can't invest in this affordable housing project, because our taxes will be through the roof, since the residents can't pay their own taxes."

- "The affordable housing project is an important investment because someday we may need housing that is more affordable than ours now, and then we will have something right in town, so we don't have to move away."

Question 4:

- "We should be spending more money on our public schools so that our children will be able to succeed more easily."
- "We should not be spending more money on public schools, because all of the money is coming out of our pockets and our public schools are doing well already."
- "We should spend as much money as it takes, even if it is out of pocket, to help our children get ahead."
- "We should not spend the extra money on the public schools, because they have enough money already, they just need a better way to organize their funds."