

**Images of Africa: A Case Study of Pre-Service Candidates' Perceptions of Teaching Africa**

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**Abstract:** As much as the history and study of Africa have been incorporated into social studies curricula, Africa is still a region that is prone to misperceptions and misconceptions. Social studies teachers could provide students with an alternative image, but what if they only perpetuate misperceptions of Africa? This case study examines pre-service candidates' perceptions of Africa and categorizes their responses to determine what one group of future social studies teachers imagines when asked to think about Africa. The results show that stereotypes and misperceptions overwhelmingly pervade candidates' thoughts despite years of study. This work has critical implications on the ways in which we prepare pre-service candidates to teach world history and global studies and how we can help pre-service candidates reflect on their own cultural assumptions and the construction of knowledge.

**Key words:** study and teaching of Africa, global education, multicultural education, social studies education, teacher preparation, World History teaching.

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**Introduction**

Although globalization itself is not new, the pervasiveness of globalization in popular discourse may very well be unprecedented (Barchuk & Harkins, 2010). It seems logical, then, that teachers should have an important role in preparing their students to be global citizens—to competently negotiate a modern society in which exchange and movement of monies, ideas, products, and peoples are not constrained by political and physical boundaries (Gaudelli, 2003; Merryfield, 2008). The idea that schools should prepare students to be globally competent is a popular notion, one advocated by professional social studies organizations, politicians, educators, and business people alike (Hanvey 2004[1976]; National Council for the Social Studies, 2008, 2013; Spring, 2008; NEA Education Policy and Practice Department, 2010).

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Unfortunately, scholars have noted that American schools have not done enough to prepare students for global competence. While “global education” has a nice ring to it, our teachers are ill-prepared to teach a global perspective (Merryfield, 1993; Ukpokodu, 2010). Teachers may in fact be reinforcing stereotypes and negative images, as they are often unprepared to address the issues of race, power, and privilege that undergird academic content knowledge (Matthews & Dilworth, 2008; Willinsky, 1998). Some scholars are critical of teachers for maintaining an imperialist perspective and teaching content that is Euro/American-centric (Gaudelli, 2003; Mangram & Watson, 2011).

I became curious about this subject when I reviewed course outlines that my undergraduate social studies education students produced in my secondary education social studies methods course. For those who chose world history or global studies, I noticed that there was very little “world” in their course outlines. They seemed to suffer from what Ross Dunn (2000) called the Western Heritage Model and Different Cultures Model. The former emphasizes a traditional, Eurocentric world history in which units of study from areas outside Europe are added to an older European history curriculum. The latter, the Different Cultures Model, tends to teach regions as discrete units, and there is little attempt to connect the areas in a global narrative.

My students’ course outlines made me ponder their content knowledge of the areas covered in global studies and world history courses. I decided to focus on Africa, a region fraught with stereotypes, to narrow the scope of my study. Unfortunately, as much as educators from the 1980s onward have incorporated Africa into social studies curricula, it is still an area that is prone to misconceptions and misperceptions (Hume, 1996; Ukpokodu, 2010). As one scholar laments, world history and global studies courses give short shrift to Africa, which usually comprises a single chapter or unit (Schmidt, 1990). In addition, African cultures are still taught using Eurocentric sources, which often reinforce rather than break down stereotypes and myths about Africa, and Americans frequently use such culturally loaded terms such as “tribe,” “primitive,” and “village” to describe Africa or Africans (Ehret, 2002).

My case study was guided by three questions: 1) What images come to mind when my students think of Africa? 2) What do these images imply about the perceptions that my students have about Africa? And 3) How can these perceptions influence the ways that my students teach about Africa? It is my hope that this case study will help other teachers and teacher educators facilitate dialogue with their students about how culture and experience influence our perception of people, place, and region, and that through this process of introspection we will begin to

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appreciate the need for further research on how we conceptualize and teach world history and global studies.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This case study uses a conceptual framework of critical multicultural education, as theorized by Banks (2004) and others (Sleeter, 1996). In his *Dimensions of Multicultural Education*, Banks (2004) outlines five ways to implement multicultural education: content integration, equity pedagogy, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, and empowering school culture and social structure. While all five are relevant to this study, knowledge construction has been the most helpful because the study probes how knowledge of Africa is constructed and taught within a social studies curriculum. Other scholars have gone further in examining knowledge construction and have urged educators to incorporate the principles of critical pedagogy to multicultural education in order to challenge and question the dominant narrative, to go beyond mere knowledge acquisition, and to interrogate the source of our perceptions and the sources that we rely on to teach our content (Vavrus, 2015). Critical multicultural education calls for educators to help students consider the construction of knowledge, who controls that construction, and the subtext of the message (Branch, 2005; McIntosh, 2005). Merryfield (2001) exhorts students to examine the “origins and assumptions that underlie the mainstream, Eurocentric, Cold War framework that divides the world into ‘us’ and ‘them’. . . and to inquire into the relationship between knowledge construction and empire-building...” (p. 181). Scholars who are engaged in postcolonial thought have best articulated the need to “decolonize” education and to consider the effects of imperialism on education for the colonizers and colonized (Pashby, 2012; Willinsky, 1998). Only in deconstructing knowledge or “decolonizing the mind” can people begin to reconstruct a different narrative that removes the West from the middle of historical narratives and that is culturally responsive to the global community.

Unfortunately, scholars have noted that teachers, who are primarily white and middle class, often feel guilt or defensiveness when questioning the dominant cultural values and can be resistant to curricular reforms (Barchuk & Harkins, 2010). These alternative narratives challenge the traditional national curriculum and the notion that America has a unique and special history grounded in liberty and democratic ideals. Hence, in order to achieve multicultural global perspectives in world history and global studies, an important step is to help teacher candidates understand that knowledge is constructed and that their own culture and experience influence their perspectives on peoples and regions.

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Many scholars have argued the importance of this type of self-examination in teacher preparation and curricula reform. Nitza Hidalgo (1993) posits that teachers must first understand their own cultural frames of reference before instituting a multicultural curriculum. Likewise, Merryfield (1993, 2008) has written extensively on the need for reflective practice to help educators incorporate a global perspective in their teaching. Branch (2005) advances the pedagogical value of introspection as a way to combat racism. Teacher candidates need to confront their own stereotypes in order to deconstruct them. In essence, a critical multicultural education has to begin with teachers reflecting on their own backgrounds and belief systems, especially since their cultural framework can shape the way they teach students. This in turn can affect students' perceptions of peoples, places, and regions.

### **Methods of Data Collection and Analysis**

#### **Participants**

The participants consisted of students in my undergraduate secondary social studies methods course (total n=35). With the exception of one student, the participants were in their senior year. Most students followed a traditional four-year path from high school to college. The students in this course seek certification in middle-school and high-school social studies, and they must take the course before they can student teach. Of the 35 participants, 15 were male and 20 were female. Five self-identified as non-white (one American Indian, one Hispanic, and three multiethnic). The secondary education program at this university resides in the content area departments. Students are required to take 54 to 63 credits in content courses (not pedagogy) before they can student teach. The participants in this study came from four different departments: history education (n=28), psychology education (n=4), political science education (n=2), and economics education (n=1).

#### **Methodology**

This study utilized an instrumental case study method to investigate what one group of pre-service social studies candidates imagines when asked to think about Africa. The design of the study was influenced by research conducted by scholars Barry Beyer and E. Perry Hicks (1969), who gave 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students "stimulus terms" in an effort to discern which terms the students associated with Africa and which they associated with other continents. Their conclusions were based on frequency of terms selected. The most popular choices for Africa were wild animals and some sort of "tribal" term such as "witch doctor," as well as intangible qualities such as "primitive" and "savage." Instead of providing stimulus terms, I had the students draw

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an image of Africa. I coded the images, and a colleague and I separately counted the frequency of images. In Year 3 of the study, I used a modified “draw and write” technique, which aided interpretation of the drawings. Students drew their pictures and then identified common images with a partner. Noreen Wetton and Jennifer McWhirter (1998) advocate “draw and write” as a way to gather both qualitative and quantitative data and used this technique while researching students’ thoughts about healthy living. Hence, like Beyer and Hicks (1969), I was able to draw conclusions based on the frequency of images and patterns that emerged.

### **Data Sources & Analysis**

The data sources for this study consisted of an in-class assignment that the participants completed as students in my undergraduate secondary social studies methods course. All students completed the assignment, but only the work of students who consented to participate in this research study was included in the analysis and findings. I collected qualitative data from three separate classes in three different years, with a total of 35 responses (Year 1 n=10, Year 2 n=10, and Year 3 n=15).

Similarly to Wetton and McWhirter (1998), I began the assignment without prior discussion. I gave students a piece of paper, which had printed instructions to draw an image of Africa. They were not allowed to discuss what they wanted to draw with their neighbor, and I provided no other instructions or guidelines for their drawing. They could draw anything they wished, including stick figures or symbols. I wanted them to draw what first came to mind, so they were not allowed to use any outside sources or electronic devices. The drawing activity took approximately eight minutes, followed by a class discussion about the common images that they drew.

I collected the assignment at the end of our discussion, and images were coded and analyzed in terms of frequency of recurring themes. I started by making a list of images that I saw in all of the pictures and then counted the frequency. I took the second and third year of data and added to the list. To prevent the list of images from getting too unwieldy, I compressed a few categories. For example, I combined depictions of oil and diamonds into one category, commodities. To improve the qualitative analysis procedures, a colleague who is a scholar of African history used the categories and topics that I created to separately code the same images. We compared our coding and discussed any image on which we disagreed. We had very few disagreements about the images, and there were a few images that we categorized as unknown. We counted each

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image individually from each student's drawing. Most students drew over three images in their drawings. Images are reported on accompanying tables.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There were two main limitations to my study. As the instructor of the course, I administered the in-class assignment that comprised the main source of data. Although the assignment was done at the beginning of the class without an explanation of its purpose, students may have drawn pictures of what they thought I wanted. My data analysis method also had limitations since my colleague and I sometimes had to interpret the images. For those images that we could not interpret, we coded them as unknown.

### **Findings**

In this section, I will describe the images that my students drew and the categories that I used to organize and analyze the images. The first thing I noted was that, despite not being told to do so, almost all of the students began with a blank outline map of Africa (see Figure 1). They then filled in the map with various images that they associated with Africa. Physical geography was the most popular category, with almost every student (94.3%) making some reference to animal life, climatic regions, or natural features (see Table 1). Most students (82.9%) drew some sort of natural feature such as mountains, bodies of water, or trees. The Nile River was the natural feature drawn most often (48.6% of students). Students always placed it in the correct area, and some students drew very fine detail showing the delta region and Lake Victoria. Safari animals were also a heavy favorite. Of the 35 students, 21 (60%) drew some combination of lions, giraffes, or elephants (see Figure 1E). Around 45.7% made reference to climatic regions such as desert or rain forest, but they did not locate those regions with nearly as much accuracy as they had the Nile River.

Table 1.

*Images by Category (N=35)*

<u>Category</u>	<u>Subcategory</u>	<u># of Students</u>	<u>% of Students</u>
I. Physical Geography		33	94.3%
	1. Animals	21	60%
	2. Nile River	17	48.6%

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	2. Island off coast of southeast Africa (unidentified Madagascar)	17	48.6%
	4. Desert	13	37.1%
	5. Rain Forest	5	14.3%
	5. Climatic Zones (lines drawn but not labeled)	5	14.3%
	5. Sun	5	14.3%
II. Social and Cultural Characteristics		23	65.7%
	1. Pyramids, Sphinx	11	31.4%
	2. "Tribal" Features (thatched huts, spears, villagers, etc.)	9	25.7%
	3. Violence, Guns, Genocide	8	22.9%
	4. Cities/townships	6	17.1%
	5. Hunger, Poverty, Health	5	14.3%
III. Political Boundaries		16	45.7%
	1. South Africa	15	42.9%
	2. Egypt	9	25.7%
	3. Morocco	5	14.3%
	3. Three or more countries (Morocco, Congo, Sudan, etc.)	5	14.3%

The desert was the most popular choice of the climatic regions (37.1% of students) and was generally drawn in the correct area. The tropical rainforest was next in popularity (14.3%) with the savanna close behind. This seems to indicate that students' mental map of Africa's climatic

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zones is skewed, because the tropical rainforest region of Africa is quite small (approximately 8% of the total land mass) while the desert covers approximately 30% of Africa. The largest climatic region in Africa, comprising over half of the total land mass, is the savanna, but only 11.4% of the students made direct reference to savannas or *sahel*, whereas 40% of them made reference to rain forests or deserts. Five students (14.3%) drew a sun in their picture, which my colleague interpreted as a hot sun beating down on Africa, once again evoking the stereotype of Africa as primarily a hot region.

Social and cultural characteristics were second to physical geography in percentage of students who drew such images (65.7% of students versus 94.3%). Images generally fell into four different categories: current issues, history, “tribal” images, and man-made landscapes. Images related to current issues centered overwhelmingly on depictions of human suffering. Students made references to war, genocide, and child soldiers, and frequently drew pictures of guns and knives (see Figures 1A and C). While 22.9% of the students drew images related to violence, the number climbs to 28.6% when combined with images of other current issues such as famine, poverty, and health-related issues (see Table 1). Certainly the students could be commended for their awareness of current events, but it is troubling that their knowledge of African current events is dominated by violence and misery, a telling tale of the impact of the media and other news outlets.

History was another popular topic, which was not surprising given the students’ major, but surprising in how few students depicted any part of African history. Only 40% of the students drew pictures related to history, even though 80% of them were history education majors. This number rises to 91% when factoring in those who were history minors. Students drew several different historical images, although the pyramids of Egypt were the unmistakable favorite (31.4% of the students). Clearly, *ancient* Egypt, not modern Egypt, rested prominently in their subconscious as an important place in Africa. Only one student made a reference to current events in Egypt (Arab Spring); otherwise, no students identified Cairo, the largest city in Africa, the Suez Canal, or any other allusion to modern Egypt. I suspect that the Nile River figured prominently in the students’ minds because of history classes that emphasized the importance of the Nile in the development of ancient Egypt. Aside from pharaonic Egypt, the other historical depictions involved white European and American interaction with Africans such as the West African slave trade, imperialism, and apartheid (see Figure 1D). These images would certainly support the notion that American students learn world history as an accompaniment to Western history. Despite decades of world history in social studies curricula, students still have a limited,

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West-centric view of history that often begins and ends with Western contact with the non-Western world.

Images that I labeled “tribal” were the third most popular topic in social and cultural characteristics. Nine of the 35 students (25.7%) drew images of thatched huts, village scenes, and people with various “tribal” objects. Huts may have been easier to draw than people, but if students drew a person or stick figure, they always distinguished the figures as “tribal” by drawing them wearing a loincloth, carrying a spear, or, in one case, wearing face paint (see Figure 1B and D).

Man-made landscapes ranked fourth as a subcategory under social and cultural characteristics. Only 17.1% of the students drew some form of urban landscape, but in every case except one, students drew these images in South Africa, a country that has a large white population (see Figure 1C). Three students made references to cities on the western side of Africa, but otherwise the students consistently placed any cities with skyscrapers or cityscapes in South Africa. Interestingly, no students drew a cityscape or made any reference to Cairo, even though it is the largest city in Africa and one of the largest cities in the world by population and geographic size. In contrast, Johannesburg ranks as the fourth largest city in Africa and only 89<sup>th</sup> in the world by population, according to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2008).

While references to physical geography and social and cultural characteristics ranked high in popularity among the students, political boundaries came in a distant third. Only 45.7% of the students made any reference to the geo-political world of Africa, and those references were very limited. Of the 16 students who drew political boundaries indicating countries, almost all of them delineated South Africa on their map (see Figures 1A and D). Five of these students *only* drew South Africa, making no indication of any other country. Nine students drew Egypt, but I am unsure if they were making allusions to ancient Egypt or contemporary Egypt. Only five of the students (14.3%) could correctly draw and identify more countries than South Africa and Egypt, with Morocco, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo appearing most often (see Table 1).

I was amazed at the consistency of the images that my students drew. The images in themselves may seem innocent or neutral, but collectively they say much about Americans’ perceptions of Africa. Students drew very few, if any, positive images. Of the total number of images that I counted, I could only identify four, or 2.6%, as positive. Three of those four images were placed in or around South Africa. One student drew Olympic rings and pointed to South Africa. Another

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student drew a map of South Africa and indicated a mountain lodge. The third student wrote “Decolonization! Democracy!” off the coast of South Africa. This same student also wrote “Yay! African Union!” at the top of her drawing. When I looked up the records of these three students, each had taken an African history or political science class. The student who drew the South African mountain lodge had been to South Africa on a study abroad trip. I could attribute these positive images to the influence of their classes, but what can I conclude from the other 13 students who had also taken African history and/or politics classes? Sixteen (45.7%) of my students had taken these courses, yet only three students (8.6%) drew a positive, non-stereotypical image.

Table 2.

*Top 20 Images (N=35)*

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Sub-Category</u>	<u># of Students</u>	<u>% of Students</u>
1.	Animals	21	60%
2.	Nile River	17	48.6%
2.	Island (Unidentified Madagascar)	17	48.6%
4.	South Africa	15	42.9%
5.	Desert	13	37.1%
6.	Pyramids/Sphinx	11	31.4%
7.	“Tribal” Images (thatched huts, spears, etc.)	9	25.7%
7.	Egypt	9	25.7%
9.	Violence/Guns/Genocide	8	22.9%
10.	Cityscapes/townships	6	17.1%
11.	Tropical Rain Forest	5	14.3%
11.	Climatic Zones (lines drawn but not labeled)	5	14.3%
11.	Sun	5	14.3%
11.	Hunger, health, poverty	5	14.3%
11.	Morocco	5	14.3%
16.	Trees	4	11.4%
16.	Savanna/Sahel	4	11.4%
16.	Ocean/waters	4	11.4%
16.	Atlantic Ocean	4	11.4%

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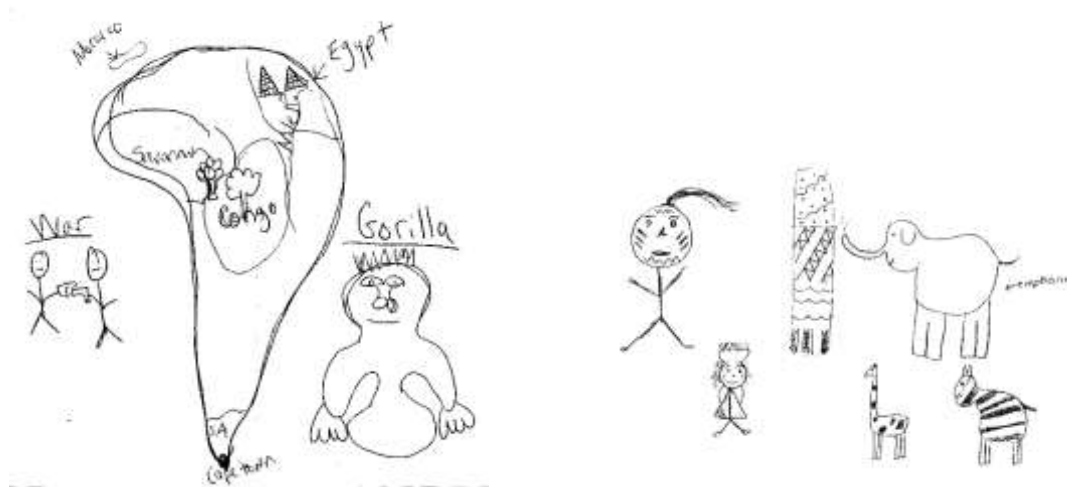
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16.	Commodities (Oil, Diamonds)	4	11.4%
16.	Slave trade	4	11.4%

Other than those four examples, the pictures generally painted an impression of Africans as both violent perpetrators and victims. Images of genocide and violence accompanied those of starvation and poverty. Even the historical pictures suggested black people as victims, referencing slavery, imperialism, and apartheid. The danger of such images collectively is that they imply that black Africans are merely victims and passive actors in their own history. Other images round out the implication that Africa is a dangerous region of the world. The focus on rainforests and deserts, despite these being the smaller of Africa’s climatic regions, perpetuates the stereotype of Africa as a harsh, unforgiving continent, a stereotype that has persisted in the Western imagination. “Tribal” images and drawings of commodities allude to Africa as a backwards and underdeveloped continent that is merely a provider of natural resources. Even the inclusion of images that could be seen as neutral, such as physical features like the Nile River, conveys an impression that Africa’s most notable features are landscapes and safari animals. Four of the top five images most frequently drawn by students were in the physical geography category (see Table 2). With the exception of images in and around South Africa, this trend negates the rich political and cultural diversity of Africa.

*Figure 1. Examples of Drawings by Pre-Service Candidates*



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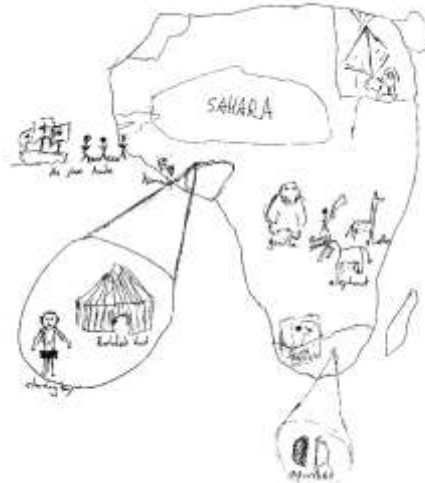
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A.



B.



C.



D.

E.

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The first two years that I did this assignment, I led a class discussion about the common images that students drew. The third year, I made a different instructional decision to allow the students to come to their own conclusions about the data. I had the students first compare their images with a neighbor, and then we made a list of the images on the board. Students could see patterns beginning to emerge and they were surprised by how similar their images were. From there, we had a discussion about what the list collectively said about Africa. The students began to understand that the images depicted Africa as a primitive and dangerous place. They could see that their pictures implied that Africans were less developed and even backwards when compared to other peoples. I asked the students to consider how these cultural impressions could influence power dynamics in the region, U.S. immigration policies, travel and tourism, and international conflict resolution.

Two days later, I had the students write a follow-up reflection on how their culture and experience influence their perception of Africa and how that could affect their teaching. I also asked them to reflect on what they could do as teachers to change those perceptions. The students recognized the influence of the media and popular culture as well as the shortcomings of their own academic knowledge. Many of the students wrote that they felt the need to “do more research,” “learn the truth,” and “provide a more accurate picture” of Africa. One student wrote that his students may be confused “when reality and [their] mental constructs do not align.” Many wrote that they needed to be more aware of their own biases and to be selective about the content they taught and the materials they used in the classroom. One student wrote:

If all I know about Africa is that it’s a primitive land, my instruction will definitely be influenced by those beliefs. However, this would not give students a correct nor a complete view of the country. Therefore, I would have to make a conscious effort to teach a more holistic version of Africa.

I emphasized to my students that the point was not to embarrass them for falling prey to these stereotypes but for them to consider that, as highly educated people, some of whom took African history courses, they still succumbed to the same misperceptions of Africa that many in our society do. One brave student admitted that she had drawn most of the stereotypical images of Africa. After we all chuckled at her brutal honesty, she commented that she did not know anything else about Africa. It was a beautiful segue to my point that if this were true for many, if not most, of them, then what can we expect from high-school and middle-school students? Who could help them overcome these stereotypes of Africa and Africans or provide an alternative vision to the ones presented in the media and popular culture?

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## **Discussion**

Unfortunately, students' perceptions of Africa do not seem to have changed much since Beyer and Hicks' 1969 study, despite the increased focus on Africa in world history and global studies courses and the emphasis upon multicultural curricula. My students' images were not much different than what Beyer and Hicks found. Over 50% of the students from the 1969 study chose surprisingly similar terms to the images drawn by my students, such as physical features, animals, and "tribal" stereotypes.

My study indicates that pre-service candidates are just as susceptible to misconceptions and prejudices as the middle- and high-school students from Beyer and Hicks' study. The salient difference is that my students have been through their content courses and are a short distance from teaching their own classes. This of course begs the question of their academic background in the history of Africa. All of the students were required to take the first and second half of world history, which is loosely split at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Almost all participants would have taken these courses before entering their senior year. The students at this university are also required to have taken world history in high school. Of the 35 participants in the study, 16 (46%) had taken an African history or political science class at the university. Although I cannot generalize how much African history the students were taught in their world history courses because of the plethora of instructors who teach the course, I can confidently conclude that as a group, they had fair exposure to African history, which makes the results of my study all the more troubling.

As highly prepared as these pre-service candidates are in their content area, they have not been exposed enough, as students or consumers of information, to an alternative image of Africa. They may have had some form of African studies in their high-school curriculum, but their exposure was likely brief, and it may have reinforced rather than broken down stereotypes of Africa. Even in colleges and universities, African studies programs are under assault, receiving less and less funding and support from their administration (Maloba, 2002). Instead, the strongest sources of information for students about Africa come from popular culture and the news media. Cortés (2005) calls the media the "main competitor" of social studies. These images are so strong that they can overcome what academic exposure pre-service candidates have had to Africa. The troubling thing, as I discussed with my colleague who teaches an introduction to African history course, which some of my students took, is that they confronted these stereotypes in their courses and *still* drew those images. In essence, we are fighting not ignorance but an alternate,

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more attractive narrative, one that holds more power and influence over students' perceptions than does academic knowledge.

Just like their future students, pre-service candidates are also heavily influenced by popular culture and the media, two information sources that often encourage stereotypes of Africa. Movies taking place in Africa tend to reinforce the savage, backwards image of Africa. Even the news media, in its coverage of African current events, tends to focus on genocides, coups, and atrocities, giving Americans the impression of a dangerous, wild region. How can we fight against such dangerous yet powerful competition?

To illustrate my point, I showed my students clips from two different movies and asked them to consider the scenery in both movies. The first clip I showed was from the Bruce Willis movie *Tears of the Sun* (2003). In this movie, Willis plays the commander of an elite special forces unit that is sent to Nigeria to rescue an American doctor. While escorting the doctor and some of the native workers from the hospital, the team comes across a village that is under brutal attack from a rebel unit and decides to rescue the villagers. The students instantly noted that the scene takes place in heavy, wet foliage, with dim lighting. Thatched huts with dirt floors and crude wooden fences comprise the village, which lies in the middle of a jungle clearing. The setting emphasizes the dangerous situation and savagery of the rebel units. The second clip that I showed was from *Hotel Rwanda* (2004). In this scene, the main character, Paul Rusesabagina, is returning home from his job as the manager of the Hôtel des Mille Collines in Kigali, Rwanda. He travels along paved roads, passing low storied buildings on his way to his home in a middle-class neighborhood. The neighborhood is clean and well kept. A few tall trees line the street and he enters a gate to get to his home, which has a manicured lawn, shrubbery, and a play area for his children. One of my students said with a slight tone of surprise, "That [Rusesabagina's] house looks like mine." The students are always astonished when I point out that *Tears of the Sun* was actually filmed in Hawaii, whereas *Hotel Rwanda* was primarily shot in South Africa with secondary units in Kigali, Rwanda.

During Years 2 and 3 of my study, I showed my students photographs that a family member had taken in Kigali. The students almost chuckled in disbelief as they looked at pictures of mansions, modern shopping areas, and golf courses. I tempered these images with pictures of poor housing areas and dingy urban centers. I explained that I was not trying to convince them that Rwanda was one or the other, wealthy or destitute. *Both* are realities of life in Kigali. Likewise, I was not arguing that the scenery in *Tears of the Sun* is completely false or that there are not safari animals,

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huts, jungles, and extreme violence in parts of Africa. The question that I urged the students to consider is why negative images overwhelmingly come to mind when they think of Africa.

The challenge to my students as pre-service teachers is to consider their own cultural frame of reference that they bring to the classroom and to be careful of the stereotypes that they could perpetuate. Even when they try to be well intentioned by bringing student attention to human suffering, educators can perpetuate negative stereotypes and make Africans appear as passive figures in their own lives. Educators need to remember that they can serve as a force to help their students overcome negative images and impressions. They can be a counterforce to a popular culture and media that often presents a very stereotypical view of Africa. Introspection pushes teachers to explore, investigate, and learn more about the subjects they are teaching, to dig deeper, to increase their knowledge, and to bring a fresh perspective into the classroom.

### **Implications**

As a follow-up to the data collection, I interviewed three of my former methods students, one from Year 1 of the study and two from Year 3. All three are currently teaching social studies in public schools and have taught at least one year of global studies or world history. All three commented that class discussions and activities about moving world history away from a Western perspective made an impact on how they teach. Two vividly remembered the drawing activity and incorporated the same activity in their own classes as a way to generate conversation with their students about perceptions of Africa. All three commented that the course and activity led them to take particular care with the lessons and materials that they use in their Africa units, to supplement class materials with outside sources, and to directly address stereotypes. The teachers felt that it was important for them to discuss with their students why their knowledge of Africa was so limited and one-sided and to try to help their students understand the construction of knowledge. Some of their students recognized the influence of popular culture such Disney's *The Lion King* (2003), and others merely could not remember learning any other narrative or perspective in school. All three teachers were cognizant that they need to be more knowledgeable themselves in order to address misperceptions and stereotypes, and so recognized the need to constantly improve their own content knowledge not only about Africa but other areas and regions.

Although it was gratifying to hear that former students were internalizing the ideas and experiences from their methods course and incorporating them into classroom practices, my study shows the need for further research on how educators incorporate the ideas of

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multicultural education into world history and global studies. We need to examine the shift from teacher preparation courses and content courses to the curriculum that is taught in the schools. How well are educators bringing other voices into their lessons and moving the U.S. and Europe from the center of world history and global studies? These challenges can be difficult for pre-service candidates and young teachers alike. Not all teacher candidates or in-service teachers see the value of multicultural education or their role in advancing it.

Teacher educators have a responsibility to convince pre-service candidates of the need for teaching for social justice and of their important role in this educational imperative. I believe that a pivotal step in this task is to ask pre-service candidates to analyze and deconstruct their own preconceptions and knowledge, not for the purposes of self-flagellation, but to critically analyze the construction of knowledge and ideas. By doing so, they begin an intellectual journey of discovery and take positive steps towards acquiring new knowledge. These are skills that will make them better educators and help them implement a critical multicultural curriculum. Teachers can become agents of change in their own classrooms and guide their students in exploring intellectually stimulating and exciting subjects. These teachers do not avoid the tough questions, but instead eagerly investigate how knowledge is attained, constructed, and used. And that is good teaching.

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