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The Many Ways of Wakanda: Viewpoint Diversity in *Black Panther* and Its Implications for Civics Education

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ABSTRACT

Like many of its superhero film predecessors, *Black Panther* (2018) achieved widespread popularity both domestically and internationally. Although the film examines the focal character T'Challa's (Black Panther) attempt to balance his dual responsibilities as king and protector of Wakanda, the viewpoint diversity displayed by its citizens suggests that the film's central character is Wakandan society. Drawing on events and themes from the film, the essay argues that social domain theory (SDT)—a theory that attempts to explain the development of sociomoral concepts across the lifespan—provides a useful lens to examine Wakandans' viewpoint diversity as portrayed in the film, specifically with regards to general similarities between the sociomoral considerations at the heart of the film, and those people bring to bear when understanding their social worlds. Moreover, the essay contends that such an analysis suggests that *Black Panther* (2018) may have some value for primary school educators as a potential aid towards their efforts to create learning activities related to civics education.

Keywords: Black Panther, superheroes, society, education, social studies, children, civics, sociomoral development

As the highest grossing superhero film featuring a solo superhero, *Black Panther* (2018) landed in the top-five and top-ten lists of the highest grossing domestic and international films of all time respectively shortly after its release (Busch, 2018). It was also the first film shown in Saudi Arabia's first movie theater opened after the lifting of its 35-year-old movie theater ban (Lanigan, 2018). The film has been further distinguished from most other superhero films through its garnering of reactions (in the form of reviews and commentaries) from writers, journalists, and research analysts on topics such as racial politics, identity, representation, political activism, economic and foreign policy, and natural resource management. Moreover, educators from primary schools to colleges have created curricula, syllabi, and activities aimed to promote critical thinking around the themes addressed in or related to the film (Muncy, 2018; Platt, 2018).

Further explicating ideas introduced elsewhere (2018, 2019a, 2019b), the present essay contends that although the official main character in *Black Panther* (2018) is T'Challa, it is the film's unofficial main character—Wakandan society—that partially explains the film's popularity and interdisciplinary appeal. The essay further argues that at the conceptual (abstract) level, both the sociomoral features of Wakandan society and the resulting viewpoint diversity displayed amongst its citizens have implications for social studies education in primary schools, specifically with respects to civics education. As such, the following essay is aimed at primary school teachers and teachers in training, for the purpose of identifying ways that certain features of Wakandan society can potentially assist in the generation of civics-related learning activities for students in Grades 2-5.

First, some relevant ideas and findings based on social domain theory (SDT; Turiel, 1983, 2002, 2014) — a psychological theory of sociomoral development—will be discussed. Although brief, the following overview aims to identify some general features that are central to the essay's arguments. Second, broad connections are drawn between the sociomoral features of human life and societies highlighted by SDT and similar features of Wakandan life and society as depicted in *Black Panther* (2018). The essay concludes with some implications for primary school educators who may be interested in using some features of Wakandan society to generate civics-related learning activities.

SOCIAL DOMAIN THEORY (SDT)

A Brief Overview

According to the ideas supporting SDT (Turiel, 1983, 2002), early in their development, children try to actively interpret and understand both their own interactions with others and interactions among others through the use of concepts belonging to three distinct domains. The *moral* domain includes concepts such as harm/welfare (physical and psychological), justice/fairness, and rights/civil liberties. The *socio-conventional* domain deals with concepts pertaining to norms, laws, rules, policies, and authority. The *personal* (sometimes called *psychological*) domain deals with considerations involving emotions, intentions, wants/desires, autonomy, and personal jurisdiction. Each domain develops independently from the others. These domains are qualitatively distinguished from each other through the use of criterion judgments, which are judgments pertaining to acts (e.g., their generalizability, rule-contingency, alterability, etc.) that suggest that children construe acts within one domain (e.g., moral) as fundamentally different from acts in the other domains (e.g., psychological) (Turiel, 1983, 2002).

Primary school recess offers a useful illustration of the relevance of these three domains in the everyday lives of children. Children's games often encompass rules for how to play them (socio-conventional), and the smooth progression of gameplay is contingent upon the participants behaving in a respectful manner towards each other so as not to cheat (moral) or harm (moral) others. In addition, children are free to move from game to game and to play with whom they wish as matters of preference (personal). Moreover, there are often rules instituted by authorities (e.g., teachers) demarcating the beginning and end of recess (socio-conventional).

According to SDT, one implication of the presence of diverse social concepts is that social interactions are often complex and multifaceted (Smetana, 2006; Turiel, 2006; Turiel & Perkins, 2004; Turiel & Wainryb, 2000; Wainryb, 2004, 2006). Such complexity is reflected in the kinds of conceptual or domain-based interactions individuals navigate when relating to others. One example includes social interactions that are considered *mixed* or *multifaceted*, whereby concepts within multiple domains (Smetana, 1983; Turiel, 1983) or concepts within the same domain (Turiel, 1983) are evident in the same interaction. Referring to the recess example, an instance of the former could be a situation where a child is deciding whether to share the tetherball (moral) or continue playing with it because they want to play with it until recess ends (personal). An example of the latter could be a team captain trying to decide whether or not they should exclude their friend from being on their team because they would have too much of an advantage over the other team (moral), realizing that excluding the friend would hurt their feelings (moral).

Another kind of social interaction is a *second order* one whereby an individual commits an act in one domain that has implications for another domain (Smetana, 1983; Turiel, 1983). For instance, a child who decides to disobey a rule to stop playing at the end of recess (socio-conventional) continues running and accidentally crashes into another student, hurting the student in the process (moral). Hence, given the different domains, their respective concepts, and the varied ways these domains and concepts interact within social spaces, SDT further contends that coordination—the ability to weigh differing concepts or considerations when judging interactions—is important for navigating the social world (Helwig, Ruck, & Peterson-Badali, 2014; Horn, 2005; Nucci, 2014; Nucci & Turiel, 2009; Smetana, 1983; Smetana, Jambon, & Ball, 2014; Turiel & Gingo, 2017).

Children's Sociomoral Capacities

Although the present essay focuses on older children (where older refers to children between the ages of seven and eleven), younger children's ability to make domain distinctions in the context of both real and hypothetical social interactions is well-documented (Killen & Smetana, 1999; Nucci & Turiel, 1978; Smetana, 1981; Tisak, 1993; Yau & Smetana, 2003). The reasons for selecting age seven as a starting point will be discussed later. The following summary of relevant findings is meant to highlight the general *capacities* or *potentialities* of older children and the ways these capacities are brought to bear in their attempts to comprehend diverse sociomoral phenomena. It is the contention of this essay that similar capacities were brought to bear in the myriad conflicts Wakandan citizens found themselves in in *Black Panther* (2018).

With regards to domain-distinctions, findings based on children's evaluations of acts and their justifications for their evaluations indicate that older children are able to distinguish between acts occurring in different domains (Ardila-Rey & Killen, 2001; Hollos et al., 1986; Nucci, 1981; Nucci et al., 1996; Nucci & Turiel, 1993) as well as acts occurring within the same domain (Davidson et al., 1983). Although for many situations it is difficult to predict a particular type of evaluation justification (e.g., Jambon & Smetana, 2014; Kahn, 1992; Smetana et al., 1991), the justifications related to older children's construals of moral (Davidson et al., 1983; Jambon & Smetana, 2014; Kahn, 1992), socio-conventional (Davidson et al., 1983; Turiel, 1983), and personal (Ardila-Rey & Killen, 2001; Davidson et al., 1983; Helwig, 1998; Nucci & Turiel, 2009) acts suggest that their understanding of these acts at the conceptual level are generally more nuanced and elaborate than those of younger children.

A related capacity evident in older children's sociomoral understanding is their ability to balance their understanding of the features of acts with their understanding of the roles of authorities in potentially regulating those acts. One byproduct of this kind of coordination is a more flexible approach to certain situations such that children's support for intervention (or in cases of transgressions, punishment) by authorities varies depending on the nature of the act, such as believing punishment is more appropriate during moral transgressions than socio-conventional violations (Ardila-Rey & Killen, 2001; Hollos et al.,

1986). Older children have also been found to negatively evaluate both a moral transgression and a school rule permitting the transgression, whereas younger children are more likely to positively evaluate the moral transgression when it has been sanctioned by an authority figure (Weston & Turiel, 1980). As suggested by research, some other examples of concepts older children at least attempt to coordinate include concepts related to (1) democratic decision-making and psychological features of persons (Helwig & Kim, 1999), (2) laws and morality (harm, rights) (Helwig & Jasiobedzka, 2001), (3) laws, systems of government, and freedom of speech (Helwig, 1998), and (4) learning context and psychological features of persons (Helwig et al., 2008).

SDT AND VIEWPOINT DIVERSITY IN WAKANDA

The preceding analysis suggests that insofar as popular fiction possesses potential educative value with respect to children's sociomoral understanding, certain general features should be present. The first is the presence of distinct domains of social concepts whose purpose is to organize the characters' social worlds in a way that is similar to or at least parallels the ways they help organize children's social worlds in everyday life. The second is a social context that allows for these domains and/or concepts to interact in diverse ways. Without the benefit of knowing precisely how the characters in *Black Panther* (2018) construed the concepts and situations they faced, it is not possible to state with any degree of certainty that the characters made the kinds of domain distinctions discussed above. Film characters often do not justify their judgments within the context of the plot in the manner usually ascertained through the interviews conducted by SDT researchers (e.g., Turiel, 1983). This limitation notwithstanding, it appears reasonable in light of the aforementioned discussion to at least consider the possibility of analyzing the film through an SDT oriented lens.

Regarding the first general feature suggested by SDT that pertains to the potential educative value of *Black Panther* (2018), the film contains numerous acts and situations that can be viewed as being associated with distinct social concepts. For instance, inherently moral acts or considerations in the film include (1) Zuri's decision to risk his life to save T'Challa's when it appeared that Killmonger was going to kill him (harm/welfare considerations), (2) Nakia and Killmonger—albeit through different means—believing that Wakanda should use its resources (distributive justice/fairness) to improve the lives of non-Wakandans (harm/welfare), and (3) T'Challa agreeing to allow Killmonger to challenge him for the throne once he found out he was Wakandan (procedural justice/fairness).

Examples of socio-conventional acts or considerations include (1) naming the land and collectively agreeing (or at least attempting) to live on the land the five tribes inhabited (i.e., acts to enhance group identity and functioning), (2) the establishment—presumably by consensus between four tribes—of a monarchy-based government where the people are governed and protected by one person, (3) the ceremonial battle to select new kings, and (4) the practice of newly-crowned kings to visit the ancestral plane to commune with deceased former kings and Black Panthers to receive leadership guidance. Lastly, personal considerations such as autonomy and personal jurisdiction could have informed Nakia's decisions to resist careers and life paths more oriented towards loyalty to the throne/tradition (e.g., as a member of the Dora Milaje) and to a husband (e.g., as T'Challa's wife), respectively.

In terms of the second general feature suggested by SDT, many of the core issues surrounding the sociomoral conflicts Wakandans experienced in *Black Panther* (2018) can potentially be understood as encompassing interactions between various concepts or domains. The film's overarching debate of isolationism versus interventionism, for example, could be understood through the lens of an inner domain combination, at least with regards to the positions held by T'Challa and Killmonger. In particular, whereas Killmonger's concern for the welfare of others becomes evident in his stance favoring intervention, one could argue that T'Challa's insistence that it is not the Wakandan way to get involved in other countries' affairs may also stem

(at least in part) from welfare considerations. Whereas Killmonger advocates for the sharing of vibranium to alleviate others' suffering, T'Challa might be initially against the idea out of a concern that intervening could lead to undue suffering or making matters worse for Wakandans as well as for those they intend to help. Insofar as the debate could be construed as one between either (1) allocating resources (distributive justice) to improve the welfare of others versus maintaining that of Wakandans' and avoiding potential armed conflicts with other nations or (2) alleviating harm versus avoiding harm, the film's central theme could be viewed as an inner domain combination with moral concepts at the heart of both perspectives on the issue. Given that intervention would require fundamental changes in Wakandan tradition/policy/law, the debate could also be construed within the context of a second order combination, whereby T'Challa's and Killmonger's positions on whether or not the tradition/policy/law should be changed have moral implications affecting harm/welfare.

In addition, one could view the ceremonial battle between T'Challa and Killmonger as highlighting a between-domain interaction when examining the reactions of Okoye and Zuri. Although both appeared visibly uncomfortable when it appeared that Killmonger was going to kill T'Challa, their reactions differed considerably. Whereas Okoye decided to let the battle continue, Zuri decided to disrupt tradition and intervene at the cost of his life. One way to explain their differing reactions is that although both may have acknowledged the conflict between tradition (socio-conventional) and harm (moral) in that moment, Okoye prioritized maintaining tradition and Zuri prioritized saving T'Challa's life. Alternatively, from the perspective of an inner domain interaction, the nature of the conflict could have been one of procedural justice (e.g., allowing the competing claims to the throne to be resolved fairly) versus welfare (saving T'Challa's life).

IMPLICATIONS FOR CIVICS EDUCATION

It has been suggested that the social worlds of children are diverse and varied (Rubin et al., 2006) and commonly include social interactions that are by nature complex and multifaceted (Smetana, 2006; Turiel, 2006; Turiel & Wairnyb, 2000; Wainryb, 2004, 2006; Wainryb & Brehl, 2006; Wainyrb & Pasupathi, 2015). It is further suggested that in some instances, children's understanding of these situations is also multifaceted, including both the application of multiple concepts to and an appreciation of the unique features of the situations they witness or experience (Helwig, 1997, 1998, 2006; Helwig & Jasiobedzka, 2001; Jambon & Smetana, 2014; Nucci & Turiel, 2009; Smetana & Ball, 2019; Smetana et al., 1991). As such, and as the recess examples and research on older children's sociomoral understanding suggest, children bring a wealth of experiences to their learning spaces that can serve as valuable resources when it comes to learning about individuals and societies in the context of citizenship. Part of this rich experience may also include elements of popular culture that examine some of the same sociomoral concepts they use to navigate their everyday social worlds.

After providing a rationale for the focus on Grades 2-5 with respect to civics education, a suggested approach for educators interested in using features of Wakandan society as an aid in creating civics-related learning activities is provided. The general approach highlights the relevant capacities children at each age level may be able to bring to the activities and the relevant features of Wakandan society that educators may find useful to reflect upon when creating those activities. Given the essay's focus on broad capacities or potentialities and the fact that a myriad of factors can contribute to a child demonstrating a given capacity earlier or later than expected, some of the relevant capacities and activities discussed will contain some grade overlap (i.e., part of a suggestion may appear in the discussion of more than one grade).

Grade Choice Rationale and Suggested Approaches for Educators

In an effort to explore these features in *Black Panther* (2018) and apply them to civics education, Grades 2-5 will be the focus for three reasons. First, it appears that beginning in the second grade (approximately age

seven), the recommended scope and sequence for the civics component of grade level expectations for social studies in Washington State (Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2008) includes learning goals consistent with domain-combinations (e.g., personal preference vs. public safety). Although learning criteria can vary by state and school-type, it is expected that elements of Washington State's learning criteria are broadly consistent with those of other schools. Second, as mentioned above, findings suggest that children seven years old and older have capacities enabling them to (1) consistently distinguish between domains using both evaluative and reasoned criteria (Ardila-Rey & Killen, 2001; Davidson et al., 1983; Hollos et al., 1986; Jambon & Smetana, 2014; Kahn, 1992; Nucci et al., 1996; Nucci & Turiel, 1993) and (2) attempt to coordinate different concepts when trying to understand more complex social phenomena (Helwig, 1998; Helwig & Jasiobedzka, 2001; Helwig & Kim, 1999; Helwig et al., 2008; Nucci & Turiel, 2009; Weston & Turiel, 1980). Third, of the 32 animated superhero shows (created between 1992 and 2017) reviewed by Common Sense Media (https://commonsensemedia.org/) since 1990, 28 (87.4%) were recommended for either children ages seven and older (14 shows; 43.7%) or eight and older (14 shows; 43.7%). The shows were identified through a search performed by the author. The discussion ends at Grade 5 due to the fact that at the time of writing the essay, school districts in Washington State were in the process of transitioning Grade 6 into middle school.

Given concerns related to the prominence of violence in superhero media and its potential influences on children (e.g., Coyne et al., 2017; Mares & Woodard, 2005; Wilson et al., 2002) and potential variability with regards to who may or may not have seen the film, the hope is that the following suggestions provide the means for educators to consider how a popular culture product like *Black Panther* (2018) might inform their creation of civics-related learning activities without requiring their students to view the film. First, educators can, in a way that protects students' anonymity, ask their students to submit descriptions of the kinds of everyday conflicts or disagreements they experience with peers and adults. After roughly categorizing these descriptions according to the moral, socio-conventional, and/or personal domain features as conceptualized by SDT, educators can watch the film and take notes on the conflicts or disagreements experienced by Wakandans that may have similar domain features as the descriptions provided by their students. Lastly, after having identified examples of congruence between their students' conflicts and disagreements and those portrayed in the film, educators can begin brainstorming potential hypothetical scenarios and activities related to establishing and maintaining a community or society that is consistent with some civics-related learning outcomes. The next sections will briefly discuss some civics-related capacities for current and soon-to-be educators to potentially keep in mind during this activity-generating process, along with some accompanying activities.

Second Grade

In the second grade (approximately seven years of age), students are expected to begin exploring how concepts related to community, public/common goods, and individuals may be related. To these ends, some examples listed in the Grade Level Expectations (Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2008) include understanding the effects of following (or not following) park rules and traffic laws on the common good and neighborhoods respectively. From an SDT perspective (Smetana, 1983; Turiel, 1983), these examples suggest second-order combinations, whereby socio-conventional acts (e.g., following or not following rules or laws) have potential moral (e.g., individual and public safety) and/or personal (e.g., recreational enjoyment) implications.

As discussed above, potential second order combinations are also implicated in certain features of Wakandan society. Examples include the use of vibranium (e.g., changes in law/policy regarding its use have implications for the safety of both Wakandans and non-Wakandans) and ability-enhancing herbs (following or not following the cultural tradition of being stripped of the herb prior to battle entailing fairness and welfare implications for the opponent). In terms of second-order combinations involving socio-conventional acts and moral implications, educators could encourage second graders to consider the regulatory and consistent

nature by which certain laws in their neighborhoods and communities are followed (e.g., traffic and loitering), and the potential ways these observed social patterns affect others.

For moral considerations, the focus could be on the potential harm caused by people who disobey traffic laws as well as the harm that is prevented by those who follow these laws. For personal considerations, the focus could be on the effects related to how disobeying park rules can negatively affect the kinds of recreational activities children can engage in in their neighborhoods (e.g., reckless driving could make it more dangerous to play outside) and parks (e.g., loitering and damaging park property can take certain recreational activities off the table). These kinds of emphases (e.g., socio-conventional matters via observed regularities in social behavior, moral matters via harm/welfare considerations, and personal matters via recreational activities) are consistent with Nucci's (2009) characterization of second-graders' general understanding of socio-conventional, moral, and personal acts (see also Turiel, 1983).

Third Grade

A key goal in third grade (approximately eight years of age) includes the fostering of an understanding of a community that appreciates unity and diversity. Potential curricular examples include understanding the ways communities benefit from diversity with regards to differing viewpoints, cultural perspectives, and customs (Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2008). This educational goal is consistent with children's sociomoral development in at least two respects. One is with regards to the diverse nature of social interaction and the relevant concepts used to make sense of those interactions (Smetana, 2006; Turiel, 2006; Turiel & Wainryb, 2000; Wainryb, 2004, 2006). The other pertains to the notion that around third grade (approximately age eight), children are—albeit in a relatively limited manner—attending to some contextual features of social situations (Nucci, 2009).

Along these lines, one potential avenue for educators to help facilitate third graders' understanding of the relationship between community, unity, and diversity is to provide opportunities for them to explore different ways individuals can be generally unified (e.g., in their agreement both implicitly or explicitly to live together in community), yet disagree with each other on certain issues. This increased focus on the co-existence of agreements and disagreements within a community could be viewed as a way for students to begin to examine the bases of civil disagreements on various issues relevant to communities in the form of diverse domain interactions. In Wakanda, some examples of the co-existence of agreements and disagreements include the ways that a shared belief of the importance of Wakandan society (e.g., its values, resources, and tradition) was reflected in its citizens' disagreements over the use of vibranium, the role of Wakanda in the affairs of other countries, and the rules governing the ceremonial battle.

As an example of a learning activity, students can be given the responsibility of creating safety laws for a hypothetical community whose members hold diverse views on the nature of punishment. This could provide opportunities for students to engage with various perspectives as they pertain to the relationship between harm (e.g., resulting from ignoring safety laws) and justice (e.g., what punishment is appropriate given the nature of the harm caused by the violation of that particular law). Educators can modify such an activity to ensure diverse viewpoints are represented by community members, and diverse influences (e.g., cultural tradition, religion, family values, etc.) on these viewpoints are brought to bear on community decisions.

Within the same community where third graders are tasked with creating safety laws, they could also be tasked with establishing common rules for certain recreational games to be played in schools within the community. Within this activity, educators could encourage students to try to anticipate and resolve potential conflicts between (1) game rules and harm/welfare considerations (e.g., trying to regulate the nature and amount of physical activity so participants are less likely to get hurt) and/or (2) game rules and justice/welfare considerations (e.g., selecting teams and captains in a fair manner; accounting for diversity in physical abilities). In addition to students sharing diverse perspectives on what constitutes fair game rules, the activity might elicit

their more general understandings of social conventions around this age, which includes a relative devaluing of social conventions compared to earlier ages (Turiel, 1983; Nucci, 2009). Moreover, such activities can build on third graders' emerging capacities related to the personal/psychological domain (e.g., construing of the self as including a personality), and the moral domain (e.g., an increased emphasis on equality) (Nucci, 2009).

Fourth Grade

In the fourth grade (approximately nine years of age), there should be an emphasis on the understanding of personal (human) rights/civil liberties, with examples including the right to life, liberty, property, due process, freedom of thought, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion. Moreover, students' emerging understanding of these concepts should occur in relation to an appreciation of how these concepts can inform evaluations of laws and policies. They are also expected to critique the effectiveness of a legal ban on smoking in public places in Washington State from the perspective of promoting the right to life (RCW 70.160.030; Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2008). It is therefore expected that by the fourth grade, students should begin to (more) critically examine some of the "contracts" between individuals and their regulatory institutions. Given the potential socio-conventional (laws, policies) and moral (procedural justice, rights/civil liberties) considerations embedded in these learning objectives, coupled with the suggestion (Helwig, 1997, 1998) that the understanding of rights as a moral issue has its origins in the understanding of rights as a personal matter (e.g., autonomy and choice), fourth graders are generally expected to be able to not only distinguish between domains, but also to consider ways these domains inform their evaluation of laws and policies governing social interactions.

Further, in addition to a tendency at this age to construe conventions as not very important due to a greater awareness of inconsistencies and exceptions regarding whether conventions are followed or enforced (Nucci, 2009; Turiel, 1983), findings also suggest that by the age of nine, children should demonstrate the ability to evaluate laws or authority dictates using diverse moral criteria. Examples include evaluating laws or authority commands/sanctions based on their perceived likelihood of yielding outcomes that (1) are just/fair (Prencipe & Helwig, 2002; Wainryb, 1995), (2) promote general welfare (Helwig & Jasiobedzka, 2001), and (3) do not infringe on individuals' civil liberties (Prencipe & Helwig, 2002). In addition, they should be able to differentiate between governmental systems using fairness criteria by viewing democratic systems of government (e.g., representative democracy, direct democracy, and consensus-based democracy) as more fair than non-democratic ones (e.g., oligarchy and meritocracy). These distinctions should also become increasingly informed by procedural justice related concerns, such as the process by which decisions are made within each system (Helwig, 1998).

The ability of fourth graders to evaluate socio-conventional features of societies using moral criteria may be explored through activities geared towards examinations of the kinds of laws, policies, and customs that parallel some of the features of Wakandan society. One kind of activity may be geared towards students discussing the pros and cons and evaluating the fairness of a monarchy based system of government in comparison to a democratic one. Such an activity could also include a description of a society run by the former type of government that includes an interpersonal competition to select the king that is similar to the ceremonial battle used in Wakanda. The activity could further have students engage with other features associated with monarchies and an important aspect of Wakandan society: lineage and heritage. In addition to evaluating laws and government systems for the purpose of comparing such systems, students could also explore and evaluate the relationship between lineage, heritage, and government leadership within each system of government. Insofar as these systems of government vary regarding this relationship, students can explore the potential pros and cons of this variance in ways that implicate the kinds of domain interactions relevant to an evaluation of a ban on an act as socially-relevant as smoking.

Fifth Grade

Moving towards a more abstract and elaborate understanding of social life that goes beyond communities, the learning goals for fifth graders (approximately ten years of age) emphasize an understanding of factors related to informed civic participation within a democratic society. An example of a related outcome includes students' ability to examine the relationship between censorship and freedom of speech (Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2008). According to Nucci (2009), one of the major advances that emerge around the age of 10 occurs in the socio-conventional domain. Concepts related to social order and hierarchy generally become more important to 10-year-olds' understanding of the nature and purpose of conventions (e.g., Midgette et al., 2016; Nucci, 2009; Turiel, 1983).

One way to incorporate features of Wakandan society could be to have fifth graders explore intersections between moral (e.g., fairness, freedom of speech), socio-conventional (e.g., established rules, norms) and personal (e.g., individuals' abilities to and desire for civic participation) concepts through activities centered around an analysis of a hypothetical society's core decision-making process used in the creation of laws and/or the election of government officials. Such activities can enable students to explore the role of procedural justice in group activities. Given the unique features of the ceremonial battle (e.g., any Wakandan can participate, prohibition against using the enhancement herb, the use of fighting ability as a criteria for leadership, etc.) and its importance in the film, educators may want to consider incorporating some of the battle's features into their activities.

The connection between procedural justice and everyday activities can then be used to discuss issues pertaining to what it means for individuals to engage in civic participation. One feature of civic participation related to procedural justice that has been examined in children, and thus may prove useful for the present discussion, is decision making. For instance, 10-year-olds prioritize democratic systems of government over non-democratic ones, and justify their preferences by appealing to considerations related to procedural justice; namely, giving people a voice in governmental processes and allowing them to express their concerns about the nature of decisions (e.g., good/just or bad/unjust) that could potentially result from various democratic systems (Helwig, 1998). They have also been found to endorse the teaching of democratic values in schools at a higher rate than 8-year-olds (Prencipe & Helwig, 2002) and discriminate between decision-making procedures in group activities with respect to both the nature of the activity and the social context in which the activity takes place (Helwig & Kim, 1999).

A second feature of civic participation related to procedural justice pertains to the relationship between individuals and authorities or laws. Findings on 10-year-olds' understanding of these relationships may be further suggestive of their capacities in the realm of procedural justice. One concept 10-year-old students appear to have an abstract understanding of that is relevant to the present discussion is freedom of speech. Helwig (1998) found that although younger and older children generally endorsed free speech, an age trend emerged. Compared to first graders (6-year-olds), fifth graders (10-year-olds) were more likely to endorse freedom of speech, negatively evaluate laws restricting free speech, and endorse an individual's decision to engage in free speech, even when doing so meant breaking the law (Helwig, 1998). Fifth graders also appear to distinguish between (1) socially beneficial laws, (2) socially beneficial laws in conflict with individual autonomy, and (3) unjust laws better than first graders do (Helwig & Jasiobedzka, 2001).

CONCLUSION

With its emphasis on domain distinctions, diverse social and domain-related interactions, and coordination, SDT provides a useful lens to examine *Black Panther* (2018) as a potential tool for primary school educators in two respects. For one, SDT provides a framework by which broad, conceptual parallels can

be drawn between situations common to children's social worlds, the kinds children are expected to engage in and understand through their civics education, and those at the heart of the conflicts and disagreements experienced by Wakandan citizens. Second, SDT assumes children are active participants in their social worlds, capable of reasoning in a principled manner, and at times demonstrating an awareness of the unique features of varying situations (Smetana, 1983, 2006; Turiel, 1983, 2002, 2014; Wainryb, 2004, 2006). Thus, events in the film can potentially provide the basis for activities consistent with some civics-oriented learning objectives within the social studies curriculum. Moreover, it has been argued that this could be done in a way that does not require students to watch the film or to engage with its (more) violent elements.

Given the prevalence of superhero media and the general consistency between (1) increasing sociomoral capacities (as implicated in SDT-related findings) on the one hand and (2) the broadening of social life contexts inherent within the Washington State's Grade Level Expectations for Social Studies (e.g., living in communities to living in a democratic societies) (Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2008) on the other, films like *Black Panther* (2018) that readily portray characters expressing diverse viewpoints may assist educators in their goals of fostering the development of thoughtful, considerate, and respectful citizens. But even if the film is not employed to these ends, Nucci (2009) suggests it would behoove educators concerned about the current and future iterations of civic life to carefully attend to children's understanding of the relations and distinctions between sociomoral concepts, the ways these concepts interact in different areas of social life, and the role(s) their understanding of situational features (e.g., effects of actions on others) may play in their sociomoral judgments.

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