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Examining Intersectionalities Among Male Faculty of Color on the Tenure-track

Melissa A. Martinez, Texas State University
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Abstract
This qualitative phenomenological study examined the lived experiences of 22 male assistant professors of color as they navigated the tenure-track process while working in various disciplines at four-year institutions nationwide. The notion of intersectionality provided a theoretical framework to unearth how participants’ experiences were shaped. The guiding questions for the study included: 1) How do male tenure-track assistant professors of color describe their experiences in navigating academia? (2) How does intersectionality theory assist with better understanding their experiences? Findings revealed overarching themes related to how they negotiated and struggled with their various work and personal roles and responsibilities, understandings of their unique experiences within academia, and how they recreated their perceptions of self and how others viewed them given their personal and professional roles and multiple social identities. Findings reiterate that the experiences of male faculty of color cannot be unraveled from their intersecting social identities, nor from the contexts in which they live and work. Supportive environments that allowed for fluid understandings of what male faculty of color can and should be doing were appreciated and seen in varying instances, although less common.

Keywords: Faculty of color, male faculty, assistant professors

Introduction
Faculty of color (FOC) remain underrepresented in higher education. As of fall of 2015, FOC accounted for only 22.5% of all full-time faculty working at degree-granting postsecondary institutions in the U.S. (Snyder, de Brey, & Dillow, 2018). The representation among full-time tenure-track FOC in particular has increased minimally over the years, with fewer FOC in the higher-ranking tenured positions of associate and full professor. As of fall 2015, only 17.5% of FOC were full professors, 23.2% were associate professors, and 25.9% were assistant professors. In comparison, in the fall of 2013, 16.4% of FOC were full professors, 21.8% were associate professors, and 25.3% were assistant professors; this is only a 0.6% to 1.4% increase at each rank within this time period (Snyder, de Brey, & Dillow, 2018).

To understand and improve the recruitment and retention of FOC, previous research has often focused on the shared experiences of FOC (see Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Diggs, Garrison-Wade, Estrada, & Galindo 2009; Johnsrud & Sadao, 1998; Sadao, 2003; Stanley, 2006; Thompson, 2008; Turner, Gonzáles, & Wood, 2008). Other research has considered the experiences of FOC in a particular field or discipline (see Dancy &
Brown, 2011; Martinez & Welton, 2015; Peters, 2011), as well as the unique experiences of female FOC (see Chang, Welton, Martinez, & Cortez, 2013; Gutiérrez y Muhs, Niemann, González & Harris, 2012), and male and/or female faculty from a particular racial/ethnic background (i.e. Latina/o, Black/African American, Asian, Pacific Islander) (see Warde, 2009; Williams & Williams, 2006). Overall, however, research has consistently found that the experiences of FOC are greatly shaped by social markers including gender, race, class, and sexual orientation, that given institutional and systemic inequities and forces can disadvantage and marginalize FOC. Consequently, some FOC experience feelings of isolation if they are the only or one of few FOC in their department (Stanley, 2006) and have dealt with such things as tokenism, racism, classism, sexism, and cultural taxation (Aguirre, 2000; Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Diggs et al., 2009; Padilla, 1994).

This qualitative phenomenological study (Creswell, 2013) focused on the experiences of male tenure-track FOC, specifically assistant professors, from varying racial and ethnic backgrounds, as there is a dearth of research in this area. Moreover, there is a need to consider how to recruit and retain more male FOC, when compared to their White male counterparts. Data from the fall of 2015 indicate the disparity in male FOC representation in degree-granting postsecondary institutions in the U.S., as there were only 19,032 full-time tenured and tenure-track Black faculty, 18,259 Hispanic male faculty, 45,095 Asian male faculty, 623 Pacific Islander male faculty, and 1,727 American Indian/Alaska Native male faculty at this time when compared to 312,185 White male faculty (Snyder, de Brey, & Dillow, 2018). Therefore, this study examined two overarching research questions: (1) How do male tenure-track assistant professors of color describe their experiences in navigating academia? (2) How does intersectionality theory assist with better understanding their experiences?

Supporting Literature

Previous research finds success and advancement for male FOC within the academy as wanting a palpable sense of collegial acceptance, accurate information and instruction from departmental colleagues, and from quality mentoring and networking experiences (Warde, 2009; Williams & Williams, 2006). A diverse student body, as well as increasing institutional diversity, can also empower a male FOC’s sense of inclusion on campus, by providing channels for student-mentoring, community-building, and ultimately leading to an improved social climate (Antonio, 2003). Yet the paucity of male FOC at major universities reflects national, institutional, and departmental failures (Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008) to organize novel networks of mentoring and support—guiding scholars toward potential tenured, and full-professor statuses (Warde, 2009). While some male FOC would prefer a potential senior mentor to be of their same race or ethnicity, many do not see that quality as being so crucial (Williams & Williams, 2006). To reiterate, the unique experiences of a faculty member of color can be understood within departmental, institutional, and national contexts with emerging themes consistently being identified within, and bridging, these three contexts (Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008). An emerging theme within a departmental context would be an undervaluation of a male FOC’s research interests; an institutional context would be a lack of student and faculty diversity; and a national context would be policy regarding affirmative action (Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008).

The journey from contract negotiation to tenure for a male FOC becomes a story that is priceless for future scholars of color and for higher education institutions – perhaps especially predominately white institutions (PWIs)– in the twenty-first century. These nuanced narratives of access and persistence within the academy provide new frameworks for future research to fight historic prejudice and academic exclusion (Stanley, 2006) and the perception that FOC are being controlled, through the fear that the tenure and
promotion process can induce (Urrieta, Méndez, & Rodríguez, 2015). The testimonies of male FOC reflect real, personal and professional anxieties – being both tokenized and quieted on campus – as they seek mentorship, and manage the merging of university culture with their own histories (Reddick & Saenz, 2012), while contending with vague and subjectively interpreted guidelines for tenure and promotion (Urrieta, Méndez, & Rodríguez, 2015). As the work of Reddick, Rochlen, Grasso, Reilly, and Spikes, (2012) indicates, for male FOC that are also fathers, there emerges an added struggle in the pursuit of tenure and attending to familial responsibilities, particularly for those that seek to be active fathers. The most useful strategies for dealing with such conflict include open communication, setting limits on work commitments, and drawing on family as a means to stay grounded amidst the stressors of the tenure-track. However, the culture of a department is key to providing the support an academic father of color needs, whether it be through offering paternity or parental leave, stopping the tenure clock if necessary, and fostering an open culture of communication and respect regarding work-life balance.

Similar quests for community, mentorship, and work-life balance among female FOC, across disciplines, tend to be ongoing (Blake-Beard, Bayne, Crosby, & Muller, 2011) and in some cases acutely assembled with class difference, isolation, social exclusion, and communication problems (Kachchaf, Ko, Hodari, & Ong, 2015). Empowered women of color, equipped with critical frameworks and social capital, can also endure a doubling of criticism and doubt, often initiated by white male gatekeepers. Conversely, seasoned faculty members and departmental chairs are in opportune roles to support, empower, and help quiet the doubt in emerging scholars (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Merging old systems and new knowledges empowers both the institution and the FOC, constructing new capacities, including multiple cultures, and building upon relevant frameworks: societal, organizational, interpersonal, and individual (Sadao, 2003).

A male FOC, one perhaps most prepared for success in the academy, still may not endure the same scrutiny and pressure to change his research agenda, as often as do female FOC (Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001). Male FOC, pursuing tenure or not, are quite likely to encounter any number of racial microaggressions on campus, which can negatively affect their mental, physical, and social health—devaluing both the potential of the person, and the institution (Sue et al., 2011).

### Theoretical Framework

In this study, intersectionality is used as a framework to examine “the dynamics of difference and sameness [as it] has played a major role in facilitating consideration of gender, race, and other axes of power” (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013, p. 787). Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), a legal Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Black Feminist scholar, was the first to specifically coin the term, *intersectionality*, to examine discrimination and marginalization against Black women in anti-discrimination law, feminist and antiracist work. However, intersectionality has been increasingly utilized across multiple fields and international contexts, and is considered a major tenet of CRT (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013).

In the field of education, CRT scholars Daniel Solorzano and Tara Yosso identify intersectionality as a part of the first theme of five “that form the basic perspectives, research methods, and pedagogy of a critical race theory in education” (2001, p. 472). They affirm “the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination” within education; where “...class and racial oppression cannot account for gender oppression. It is at this intersection of race, gender, and class that some answers can be found to the theoretical, conceptual, methodological, and pedagogical questions” (p. 472). Other education scholars like Griffin and Reddick (2011) and Zambrana, Ray, Espino, Castro, Cohen, and Eliason (2015) have successfully applied an
intersectionality framework to examine the experiences of male and female FOC in academia—specifically, the mentoring experiences of Black faculty at PWIs and underrepresented minority faculty at research-extensive universities, respectively. Urrieta, Méndez, and Rodríguez (2015) also utilize intersectionality as an aspect of their CRT, Latino Critical (LatCrit) Race Theory, and Chicana Feminist framework when examining the perceptions, experiences, and reflections of the tenure and promotion process of 16 Latina/o tenure-track faculty.

As Griffin and Reddick (2011) note, “those employing intersectional analysis strive to distinguish the ways in which individuals engage their environments based on multiple identities” (p. 1034). Such multiple identities go beyond race, class, and gender, to include other social markers distinct to communities of color; Latinas/os, for instance, might contend with racial, gender, and class oppression along with “immigration, accent, sexuality, culture, language, phenotype, and surname-based oppression” (Urrieta, Méndez, & Rodríguez, 2015, p. 1152). However, a sole focus on individual differences, based on intersecting identities, can be a pitfall of utilizing intersectionality as a framework (Anthias, 2012; Núñez, 2014). Therefore, we examine the experiences of the male tenure-track FOC in this study while recognizing that “intersectionality is inextricably linked to an analysis of power”, emphasizing “political and structural inequalities” (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013, p. 797).

Núñez’s (2014) multilevel model of intersectionality, which draws on the work of sociologist Floya Anthias (2012), assists in this process, as it can help explain how the “dynamics of identity, power, and history play out to shape educational experiences and outcomes” for individuals within three social arenas (p. 87). These include: 1) the first, micro-level where social categories and relations are defined, 2) the second, meso-level where multiple arenas of influence exist at the organizational, representational, intersubjective, and experiential levels, and 3) the third, macro-level of historicity, which “focuses on broader interlocking systems of economic, legal, political, media, and social power and classification that evolve over time in specific places, as well as social movements to challenge these systems” (p. 89).

Furthermore, as Urrieta, Méndez, and Rodriguez (2015) point out, inequalities in power are inherent in academia’s culture and the tenure and promotion process in particular. They note:

In the majoritarian narrative, tenure is said to be an individual meritocratic, gender-neutral, colorblind process, but it is a comparative and competitive process...Rationalist, white, masculinist knowledge and culture is the unspoken normative comparative standard for tenure and promotion. As a patriarchical [sic], heteronormative, racist regulatory process, tenure and promotion becomes the fiduciary of the knowledge production and cultural norms of academic life...Lack of faculty racial, gender, and class diversity serve to maintain and sustain these cultural norms and regulatory practices. (p. 1163)

It is with these various and expanded understandings of intersectionality and its application within higher education research in particular, that this study examines how the 22 male FOC navigated academia, focusing on how the inequitable social structures and power dynamics, particularly at the micro- and meso-levels, shaped their identities, opportunities, and progress towards tenure.

Methods and Data Sources

The dataset for this qualitative, phenomenological study (Creswell, 2013) was drawn from a larger research project examining the experiences of pre-tenure FOC at 4-year public and private universities nationwide. The larger project was guided
by two overarching questions: In what ways are tenure-track Assistant Professors of Color successful in navigating academia? What types of professional and personal challenges do tenure-track assistant professors of color face in navigating academia? The larger project included semi-structured audio-recorded interviews conducted both in person and via video call with a total of 55 tenure-track assistant professors that self-identified as being persons of color. Interviews were guided by a set of 12 main questions like the following: How does your life as an academic shape or impact your personal life? What would you say are some of the greatest successes and challenges you’ve had so far in navigating the academy as a professor of color? A team of five FOC working at various universities across the country collaborated to design and collect the data for the larger project; drawing on their own professional networks (i.e., listservs for professional associations, social media, professional academic conferences) and snowball sampling to recruit participants.

While various datasets from the larger project have been examined in previous publications, the interviews with the 22 male participants from the larger project (10 Black or African American, 7 Latino, 4 Asian or Pacific Islander, and 1 American Indian) have not yet been analyzed as a dataset. For this reason, along with the broad nature of the research questions posed in the larger study, the opportunity was taken to delve deeper into the exclusive experiences of the 22 male FOC, utilizing an intersectionality framework. When interviewed, male participants worked in the following states: Arizona, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Kentucky, Texas, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Mexico, North Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming. Male participants also worked in distinct programs of study, although a majority worked in the broader field of education. The research team for this study included the lead researcher on the larger project and two males of color navigating academia; one as an associate professor and the other as a doctoral student. Table 1 provides additional information for each participant; identified by their pseudonym.

Table 1. Additional information for male faculty of color participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Institution Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rodney</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Higher education and student affairs</td>
<td>Public, Research 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Higher education and student affairs</td>
<td>Public, Doctoral, High research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lonnie</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>Public, Doctoral, High research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tim</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>African American Studies</td>
<td>Public, Master’s university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orlando</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Curriculum &amp; Instruction</td>
<td>Public, Research 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alton</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Higher education leadership</td>
<td>Public, Doctoral, Medium research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Business-Marketing</td>
<td>Public, Doctoral, Medium research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irwin</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Public, Baccalaureate college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Educational Leadership</td>
<td>Public, Research 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Urban Education</td>
<td>Public, Research 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis began with a review of all transcripts, followed by inductive, open coding by each author where commonalities in the experiences of male FOC as they navigated the tenure-track were identified. In phenomenological research, “themes may be understood as the structures of experience. So when we analyze a phenomenon, we are trying to determine what the themes are, the experiential structures that make up that experience” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 79). Initial codes were discussed and compared by the authors to identify preliminary themes that were common among participants, and to eliminate codes that were not common among participants. The authors agreed on three overarching themes that spoke to some of the most commonly shared and unique experiences among the male FOC participants, which related to issues of negotiation and struggle, understanding their unique experiences as male FOC, and their perceptions of self. At this point, intersectionality was identified as the theoretical perspective to further analyze the emergent themes.

At this stage, the second level of analysis began, which drew on aspects of Hatch’s (2002) typological analysis strategy. In typological analysis, predetermined typologies, or categories, are “generated from theory, common sense, and/or the research objectives and initial data processing” (p. 152) and used to “find and mark those places in the data where evidence related to that particular typology is found” (p. 154). Once data related to a particular typology is gathered, summaries are created from the selected data and analyzed to identify patterns supported by data.

In this study, the first level of analysis that began with inductive, open coding generated three overarching themes that were considered typologies to further analyze data. However, we did not formulate summaries based on the typologies. Instead we reverted to the original transcripts to identify data that further elucidated the three typologies to unearth “something ‘telling,’ something ‘meaningful,’ something ‘thematic’ in the various experiential accounts” of participants (Van
Manen, 1990, p. 86). Quotes from participants served as rich, thick evidentiary support for the three themes discerned, with the notion of intersectionality in mind.

**About the Authors**

As qualitative researchers, the authors are forthcoming about their positionalities. The first author identifies as a Latina/Mexican American female who was born and raised along the U.S.-Mexico border of South Texas. She is a former teacher and school counselor, and is now an associate professor at a four-year, doctoral granting university that is also a designated Hispanic Serving Institution. Her personal and professional experiences as a student and scholar within P-20 educational settings shape her understandings of systematic oppression for communities of color, which inform her work. Her insider status as a FOC also particularly lent itself to examine the experiences of FOC on the tenure-track.

The second author was also born and raised in the borderlands of South Texas. Growing up as a Mexican American, he understood the complexities of identities at a very early age. As a public school student, he was labeled as a migrant, English language learner and honors student; yet, he was always perceived as an academically vulnerable student. He is a former public school teacher and administrator currently serving as an associate professor in a Hispanic Serving Institution. His experience as a practitioner influence his research and leadership preparation to better serve communities of color. Embracing the intersections of differences, as a single male he interprets masculinity as a cultural and fluid process, one that counters heteronormativity.

The third author identifies as a Chicano, multiracial male who was born in California and raised in Oregon. He is a former grant specialist and liaison between the university, local school districts, and underserved communities. His work developing creative curricula for students in juvenile detention has informed his doctoral research interests, which are based in equity and access, technology, and storytelling. The author acknowledges that his being a first-generation college graduate, a husband and a father, also help to form his intimate understanding of masculinity and academia.

**Findings**

The narratives of participants highlight three overarching themes related to how the male faculty negotiated and, at times, struggled in fulfilling their multiple personal and professional roles and responsibilities, how they came to understand their experiences as unique within the academy, and how they worked to recreate their perceptions of self. These themes arose in response to the first research question posed: How do male tenure-track assistant professors of color describe their experiences in navigating academia? The second research question related to the application of an intersectionality framework is further explored in the Discussion section.

**Negotiate: Time, stress, and uncertainty of role commitments**

While not all of the male faculty were fathers and/or had partners, all spoke to the importance of family as sources of strength in navigating the tenure-track—a finding that supports the work of previous scholars like Griffin, Pifer, Humphrey, and Hazelwood (2011) who concluded that “having social support from one’s family and friends may offer faculty the support and motivation they need to continue to do good work or may be common among faculty across all racial and ethnic groups” (p. 518). Even when family was not always aware of what faculty life entailed,
participants spoke of the general support that family members provided. However, in some cases, the time demands of faculty life put a strain on familial relationships. This was often the case for those who were married with children, as there was constant negotiating of time and needs related to work and family responsibilities (Reddick, Rochlen, Grasso, Reilly, & Spikes, 2012), suggesting greater institutional support and understanding of the significant role of family for FOC in general, and the specific familial roles for male FOC in particular.

A number of participants expressed a desire to sacrifice with their partners as an equal, in their roles as fathers, but expectations for them as faculty did not always allow this. Such expectations were also often not understood by partners not in academia. This was evident for Mark, an African American professor, who shared how attempts to meet both work and personal family demands meant losing sleep. “I may get up a little earlier or I may go to bed a little later. I’ve learned that I have to do certain things to be successful.” However, he admitted, “I’m still figuring that process out with my wife.” Rodney addressed the issue of prioritizing his children by sometimes limiting the time spent with his partner: “I’m obsessed about time, and it’s also hard to sort of put up appropriate boundaries, but you know what? Kids force you to do that; kids force you, not marriage, kids, because you can totally blow off your spouse and be like grrrrr talk to you later.” While Walter did not have children, he did “carve out...time with my wife or for time with friends.” This strategy of “actually protecting that time on my calendar” helped him negotiate his roles, a strategy he had “gotten from faculty colleagues around the country in talking to them and [asking], ‘how do you deal with these things?’”

Irwin, who had a three-month-old son during his first year as faculty, had warned his wife, “I told her, I said I’m going to be gone a lot, especially that first year [as a professor], and she said okay, cool, I understand, but she didn’t really, really understand.” The vague criteria offered by his institution regarding expectations contributed to his stress—a common critique of and experience with the tenure and promotion process among FOC (Urrieta, Méndez, & Rodríguez, 2015; Williams & Williams, 2006). “So they say do a good job at teaching; what does that mean? What do I have to do?” he inquired. Nonetheless, for Irwin, his family provided an opportunity to “bring things back into perspective.” This “perspective” elucidates the nuanced aspects of each participant’s experience as a male faculty member of color, one in which they simultaneously contend with academic expectations that are nebulous yet touted as meritocratic and objective, while family provides a culturally supportive environment in which one’s role and responsibilities are more clearly delineated.

As the only male scholar of color in his department who was married with children, Tim spoke to the distinct way that he negotiated familial and professional roles and responsibilities when compared to his departmental peers: “I’m expected to be mother, father, brother, aunt, uncle, cousin, teacher, and all those other things and still do everything else and the kitchen sink, where I have colleagues that come in, teach their class, they go home.” Because of his family responsibilities, Tim had to find a balance with his professional roles and recognized how the system favored certain lifestyles for the professoriate.

Yet others, like Quentin, found themselves negotiating culturally-bound expectations related to manhood and fatherhood that were placed upon them by extended family. As an American Indian professor, he shared how traditional family expectations began bumping up against the rigor and isolation of the researcher’s life since he began working on his doctorate. “The PhD program is foreign to them [family] as well, and there are certain stereotypes that are associated with that. ‘Oh,
when are you going to get a real job? You know you’re married and raising a family, and you’re fiddling around.” It is difficult to ignore critical thoughts around male and family roles, and even those ideas are fraught with non-conscious, individual and collective intersections of experience.

As Nico and Paulo’s wives were also academics, they believed this provided for a greater sense of understanding and an ability to negotiate work and family responsibilities. Nico shared how he and his wife “have a certain amount of understanding for how crazy our lives are... [Over the weekend, we were sort of, we call it tag-teaming, watching our two-year-old son because she needed to be out in the garden and I needed to finish some paper; it was just finding the balance between those two.” Paulo and his wife worked within the same field, which meant they were “close enough to talk to each other [about their work], so that’s nice.” He felt they were “very lucky” to work at the same institution, so they would “never have to live apart,” as might be the case with other partners in academia.

Lonnie and Carl, while cognizant of the responsibilities and stress that came with academia, were also appreciative of the flexibility that academia provided in comparison to other careers. “I’ve had a lot more time to spend with my family. I like the flexibility that it [academia] affords,” Lonnie explained. He was able to pick up his daughter from school regularly, which was “valuable” to him. Carl, who was married and had a toddler, agreed with these sentiments, recognizing that academia is a “very flexible job and I’ve benefited from that.” However, Carl also divulged, “I constantly have this sense of guilt and fear that I’m not doing enough” in both professional and personal realms of his life; he felt “caught up in that and trying to balance it all.”

Gus also spoke to the stress that came with negotiating his roles “as a father, husband...as a professor, as a mentor, as an advisor,” but relied on his “value system” and the support from his wife in this regard. He found solace in integrating his family in his academic life, “wanting to involve my girls more in seeing what I do...eventually being able to come to conferences, have my daughters see literally what I do, why I do it.” Don also found strength in his wife’s support, as she “understands what I am doing.” His family structures allowed for “a pretty good balance.” Don also referenced Robert Boice’s book, Advice for New Faculty: Nihil Nimus He described how “the basic principle of the book is that everything that you do in academia should be done with constancy and moderation.” It was an approach he began to adopt in his “life in general.”

Understand: Experiences of male faculty of color are unique

In interviewing the FOC in the larger project, participants were asked to consider how, if at all, they felt their experiences in the academy varied when compared to their colleagues, both those that were White, as well as other male and female FOC. Most male participants expressed a keen understanding of how their own experiences were unique, with a few explicitly referring to the role of intersectionality as a key determinant impacting their experiences. In this respect, participants referenced institutional inequities and issues of power in more subtle ways as they focused on their multiple identities more explicitly. For instance, some identified their international, first-generation college student, and/or English language learner identities as particularly significant in shaping their experiences within academia. For others, race and gender worked in unison to be more determinant factors in their experiences. Yet, there were a handful of participants who did not see the intersectionality of their identities as necessarily impacting them much differently when compared to others given their programmatic, departmental,
or university context, and a couple of participants considered their racial/ethnic background as an advantage.

Quite a few participants spoke to particular distinctions they saw in navigating the academy as a male FOC when compared to other white colleagues. Alton, an African American professor, expanded on the notion of disproportionate expectations for FOC, or cultural taxation (Aguirre, 2000), but included an affirmation of agency: “You have to bring your A+ game at all times. We’re just in a constant state in which we have to prove ourselves, [in the context of assumptions like] ‘you know you’re here because of affirmative action, you’re here because the program needed more diversity’ or something like that.”

Rodney and Nico spoke to various aspects of being “hyper-visible” in their roles as male FOC on their particular campuses, a concept other male FOC have spoken to in previous research (Reddick & Saenz, 2012; Williams & Williams, 2006). For Rodney, this hypervisibility was in part due to his having been hired at the same time as another male FOC colleague, who were both undergraduate alumni of the institution in which they worked. “As men of color who went to school here we’re hyper-visible; we’re very… we came here with a lot of fanfare, [and] people knew who we were. ‘I’ve heard about you’: I hear that in circles,” he explained. Yet he admitted, “sometimes you want to be invisible…sometimes as junior professors it’s good not to be seen because you want to do your stuff.” As a male FOC studying issues of race, Nico became hyper-visible on his campus as well, “It seems like every student of color wants to work with you in some way, shape, or form, or at least have you on their committee or [meet during] office hours.” He described, “mentoring a student over in Sociology because the way they do sociology here tends to be family, gender, and sexuality studies. Nobody does race and racism and so they come over.”

For those male FOC who had additional marginalized identities beyond race, class, and gender, the role of intersectionality became even more prominent in their understanding of their unique experiences within the confines of academia’s policies and structures. This was the case for Orlando, who identified as a first-generation college student, who also did not “speak English as a first language” and who was an international faculty member “in a foreign land” in the U.S. “Those are the challenges for me; you have to work double in order to get something that other people may do … just once.” Orlando expanded on his understanding of how intersectionality and hegemony impacted the experiences of all faculty, as well as students, within university settings: “I mean, at university as a straight male there are so many intersectionalities, [and there] are a lot of contradictions and complexities in that; you cannot just pick one and say, ‘oh, this person is a White professor, and that’s why he’s…’ The next time you see [that] there is a class issue, a question of seniority at universities; there are people who have been known more than others…. But we, as faculty, as people who work in these institutions, we do not interrogate how the university is structured and plays the gatekeeper for all people to come…I look at the hegemony of the university itself…How do we work? If we care about those things, then that’s when we begin to talk about the issues of what education should be about.”

Jose, a Latino living and working in a predominantly White community and university in the South, shared how the difficulties associated with being a male of color bled into his work as a faculty member who had to supervise pre-service teachers in schools. He acknowledged that to a certain extent being “light complected” and “male” afforded him some privileges, and so he “could assimilate enough as white,” although “they [his colleagues] know I’m Mexican.” He described an instance when he went to a school to supervise one of his White female
students, and he was asked to wait an unduly amount of time for clearance while his other colleagues were not. Jose felt that “It was about a deficit model rather than a racial model [being utilized], because this was actually non-dominant administrators doing this ignorance to me [sic].” For Jose, this experience points to the complexity of intersectionality. Jose felt unjustly treated by non-White educators who were, presumably, performing in a manner they would expect from White educators.

Hakim was well aware of the gender dynamic with students as well, and described the need to be cognizant of his interactions with his female students. However, Hakim did not necessarily acknowledge the role of his race/ethnicity in such contexts. In fact, Hakim first claimed, “I don’t think I’ve seen anything, ethnic or race-wise that has been a difference” with regards to his experiences in academia. However, he later added, “I think there is a difference when you are a male and that is kind of made pretty clear to you…. I generally prefer to have my door open so people can hear my conversations [and] so there can be no accusations with the female student.”

Most participants were also explicit about how female FOC must also navigate the academy in unique ways, and may confront misogyny, racial microaggressions, as well as other marginalization in their journeys. Edgar noted such distinctions from his own experience, “There is that female dynamic …just the way folks talk in that area of Texas [speak to a woman]. You know, What are you doing little lady? What are you doing in a meeting like this? You know, those kinds of things. Those undertones can be really difficult.” Ulysses, similarly shared how conversations with women FOC revealed some of the challenges they experienced in “being challenged in the classroom by students regarding the way that they do things, for example. Not to say that I’ve never been challenged. I have, but, it seems that it’s not been as frequent as the women with whom I’ve spoken.”

There were only a few participants that either did not see their identities as male FOC impacting them as differently when compared to other colleagues, or even saw their race or gender as an advantage within their field of study. Carl indicated, “I’ve never felt like it’s [being a male FOC] been an issue for me.” Admittedly, he felt “It’s weird for each of us [in academia], just in different ways.” He did not expand further on how the intersectionality of his own identities provided him with a unique experience, but reiterated how faculty’s experiences varied on an “individual level.”

Braulio was an undergraduate alumnus of the institution that hired him as a faculty member, and so when he was hired he was welcomed and touted as a “great example...of a young scholar of color.” He admitted that, given this context, “I’ve been showed a lot of love, from just about everybody I’ve encountered here, support.” He expanded on this, wondering whether some of his White colleagues had such a positive experience, and recognized that his experience as a male FOC could have been different at another institution:

I feel like I’m greatly valued by this institution. I’m in a department that is majority Hispanic now in terms of its faculty, or just about. Now in fact I … wonder if [my White colleagues] feel out of place... So it’s been completely the opposite world, bizarro [sic] world…I feel like the fact that I’m Latino is an asset to this university somehow.

Much like Braulio, Saul saw his racial background as an advantage in his university context, as well as in his field of biology. As an international scholar originally from Mexico who was working at a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), he saw his racial and ethnic identity as “an advantage” that provided him the opportunity to apply for funding that was only available to faculty at HSIs and that provided him the opportunity to work with Hispanic students, and “make an impact
on the Hispanic population.” The nuanced experiences for each participant contextualizes the category of “male faculty member of color” in various, real intersections.

Recreate: Perceptions of self and others

A majority of participants also discussed or implicitly revealed ways in which their roles in academia while on the tenure-track provided a means of reconceptualizing their own perceptions of self and the perceptions that others had of them, as male FOC. Similar to findings in previous literature, helping change previous deficit oriented or stereotypical notions held among students, faculty, and staff with regards to male FOC was also significant to most participants, which impacted how they navigated the academy and made sense of their professional identity (Reddick & Saenz, 2012; Williams & Williams, 2006). At the same time, most faculty were also cognizant of how the intersectionality of their own identities impacted others’ perceptions of them, and thus their experiences within academia.

Lonnie spoke to the latter notion very explicitly, “I think when it comes to academia…, I see two parts. There’s my perception and then the perception of others… How I have found myself with respect to students [is] that students many times dig further to see exactly what I am and gravitate towards me based on that.” Lonnie provided an example of how his varying social identities, as Caribbean and Black, were at times simultaneously perceived differently by students, “So for instance, Caribbean students who we see here, once they find out that I was a Caribbean staff, sort of gravitate towards me. And that’s interesting because I advise a Fraternity on campus as well, and they saw me as Black, but sometimes as an outsider because I wasn’t one hundred percent, I guess, pure African American.”

Mark actually spoke to how navigating as a male FOC in and outside of academia was “an intersectionality of multiple worlds” and this impacted his sense of self professionally and personally, and how we was viewed by others. He spoke to the power of the doctoral title, and how “when I deal with the majority culture and I feel like I’m not getting the kind of reception I should get…which is just being treated equitably…. It’s funny how their demeanor changes when they find out that I am a faculty member at the university.” He was often subsequently treated with respect, but he reiterated, “You should have done that when it was just ‘Mr. X’.”

Other faculty like Ken, a Filipino faculty member, expanded on the positive impact they hoped to have on students, through their own roles as male FOC. Ken shared his hope that, “I’ve presented to my students, my undergraduate students, some successful models of a person of color teaching them, a PhD, knowing something and influencing them.” This was important to him as, “sometimes some of my students will say … they haven’t worked or been to school with or [been] taught by a person of color…..” Thus, for Ken, “that’s a success, being a positive role model.”

Quentin, who worked at a PWI, spoke to his efforts “to challenge the popular understandings of what it means to be Indian, what that looks like, especially up against the headdress and all these stereotypes of what that means” through his teaching, research, and service. Yet Quentin also expressed how this prescriptive approach can leave many emerging scholars to think too narrowly about their work, and their place in the academy:

I think one of the hard parts is to feel that your only contribution is to be a faculty of color and you have nothing else to offer. When I was introduced at the first faculty meeting, I was introduced as This is Quentin. He does a lot of Cherokee work, and he’s doing Cherokee outreach, which mentions
nothing about my scholarship, nothing about my academic interests and that was pretty frustrating. And the fact that I didn’t get to speak for myself, that was also frustrating. So, I remember early on, I tried not to do it and I kept being pushed back to it, so I think there was an expectation there…[that] I’m Native and I’m going to do Native stuff.

Finding the best means to speak up for himself as a male Native faculty where he had “a voice automatically” in his small department, he felt, “I think the hardest thing is just to see myself as a professor.”

Nico provided an alternative perspective of how males of color within the academy, whether as graduate students or faculty, can also limit themselves if they rely on a very narrow, or even hyper-masculine view of themselves that draws on cultural notions of men of color needing to express bravado. In this way, Nico urged males of color in the academy to reconceptualize their identities, particularly when it came to being willing to seek mentorship and support:

All too often as men of color in the academy we resist opportunities for mentorship. We do not accept influence….We would prefer in class, even in social situations, to act like professors…Not realizing that some of the most successful people who I have met along this crazy journey are willing to admit publicly when they don’t know. Admit that they are incomplete and they don’t have all the answers…Because the way that we construct how it is to be a man is the opposite. ‘I have to know, I have to be in control, I have to…’

Fred understood that his platform as a scholar of color could impact and provide for a new understanding of self. “I don’t have to go to a big name institution. …My title, my institution, my publications don’t define me. I define myself,” he explained. In this respect, Fred advised students of color seeking to join the professoriate to consider whether the profession, “make[s] sense for them personally, professionally, and when they go to bed at night, it has to sit right in their mind.”

Similarly, Don revealed how he purposefully did not compare himself to others, whether colleagues of color or his White peers, in conceptualizing his own identity as male FOC. While he recognized there were distinctions in expectations between him and his White counterparts, “I realize that as a reality. But it isn’t going to affect what I do and I don’t compare myself to what they do.”

**Discussion**

The narratives from the 22-male faculty of color participants highlight the complexities of navigating tenure in academia. More specifically, participants’ experiences were associated with negotiating time, stress, and the uncertainty of role commitments within academia and family life, how male FOC interpret their uniqueness given their positionalities, and how they work to recreate their self-perceptions and those others form of them within academia. Applying an intersectionality framework to these findings can help further elucidate how the larger power structures of academia and the unique contextual politics of each participant’s field, institution, and department or program shaped the experiences of the male FOC. This application is consistent with that of previous scholars examining FOC experiences in the academy (Griffin & Reddick, 2011; Urrieta, Méndez, & Rodríguez, 2015; Zambrana, Ray, Espino, Castro, Cohen, & Eliason, 2015).
The first theme, “Negotiate: Time, stress, and uncertainty of role commitments” was fraught with contradictions; most male FOC noted the negative impact of academia on their ability to negotiate and attend to their varying roles and responsibilities as fathers and/or husbands, while few recognized the advantages of a flexible faculty schedule to familial involvement. Yet it is reasonable to consider that some of the flexibility provided to participants at their work is largely due to the nature of the work that does not adhere to a traditional 8 am to 5 pm schedule. In this same vein, while time with family and friends was constrained because of academic demands, it was these social networks that often provided the most authentic support for participants, although some male FOC experienced tension with family because of their inability to devote sufficient time to the home or fulfill cultured and gendered expectations in their roles as academics. In sum, male FOC’s experiences in negotiating varying expectations and roles in academia and with family reiterate the bicultural skills FOC often develop in order to switch between these two cultural contexts (Sadao, 2003).

Many of the examples and the language that the male FOC used to describe how they negotiated the road to tenure reflected inequitable, systemic power dynamics. For instance, references to “protecting” time on one’s calendar in order to socialize with family and friends, as well as needing to decide between caring for one’s children while “blow[ing] off your spouse” suggests an academic structure that is demanding, unforgiving, and lacking in the necessary supports for male FOC. Partners of the male FOC were often warned of needing, “to be gone a lot, especially that first year [as a professor],” and as a result, some male FOC found solace in the support that their partners provided while others recognized that their partners were less understanding. There was an unwritten expectation that academia had to be prioritized at the expense of familial relationships and responsibilities, leaving some male FOC to realize that such a work environment favored certain lifestyles. It could be argued that all tenure-track faculty might have similar experiences, but the negotiation of responsibilities that male FOC encounter becomes apparent when they begin to see differences in how they are treated and what they experience when compared to their peers. Male FOC often referred to how they held more roles and responsibilities than some of their White counterparts, who can “come in, teach their class, they go home,” while FOC also deal with what they perceive as vague expectations for tenure (Urrieta, Méndez, & Rodríguez, 2015), greater advising and service commitments (Griffin & Reddick, 2011), often with fewer mentors to turn to in the process that look like them and can “provide the emotional, cultural, and personal support” desired (Tillman, 2001, p. 317). Thus, this theme highlights the polarity of lived experiences of male FOC given their own academic expectations and familial responsibilities.

In the second theme, “Understand: Experiences of male faculty of color are unique,” the participants referenced how their positioning within academia was distinct when compared to their White male and female peers, as well as their female counterparts of color, as they navigated the tenure-track. As self-identified men who are negotiating a work-life balance, while carving out their own space within the academy, a myriad line of influence come to intersect: race, class, gender, economics, social progress, and institutional norms. This intersection is not based on the list approach, but rather trying to better understand how the complexity of each context helps influence an identity for each male FOC (Anthias, 2012).

As male FOC, many shared their experiences of being compared to other White colleagues and in doing so referenced the cultural taxation that FOC often face (Padilla, 1994), needing to “bring your A+ game at all times.” This feeling of needing to “work double in order to get something that other people may do … just once” was intensified for those participants who experienced increased marginalization in being first-generation college students, non-native English speakers, or international faculty, for instance. Often
being the only or one of few male FOC in their programs or departments, some participants experienced pressures associated with hyper-visibility. This hyper-visibility acted as a double-edged sword, with some participants feeling greatly valued, yet overly sought out by students of color for mentorship or viewed as tokens on their campuses, while at the same time feeling overly surveilled in the process. These experiences parallel those noted by some of the Black male professors in Griffin and Reddick’s (2011) study in which they found that some “sensed that they were being watched and how this translated into concerns about misperceptions of their relationships with female students—and worries about accusations of sexual impropriety” (p. 1048-1049). The experiences of Jose and Hakim speak to this need to approach “relationships with students with prudence and boundaries” (p. 1048).

For those male FOC that found value and additional support in their hyper-visibility, they shared how they harnessed the privileges associated with their positionality to assist them in reaching their academic goals and to further their commitment to uplifting communities of color. This was the case for Braulio, who felt that being Latino was “an asset to this university somehow,” and for Saul who used his Latino image within his discipline of biology to “make an impact on the Latino population.” Yet, these findings reiterate how the overall underrepresentation of male FOC on higher education campuses creates more demands for the few in academia, and as a result, creates unrealistic demands for FOC as they navigate the tenure process. This underrepresentation continues to be an area in need of further interrogation and attention, as Orlando suggested when he referred to the need to question “how the university is structured and plays the gatekeeper for all people to come.”

In the final theme, “Recreate: Perceptions of self and others,” participants shared how they have been able to redefine themselves within a higher education system and tenure-track process that fosters an inequitable distribution of power and roles. While most of the male FOC acknowledge contributing in some form to the ongoing bureaucratic oppression within the academy, they utilize their agency to reconceptualize the expectations and perceptions they have for themselves and those others have of them in academia. In this way, the conceptualization of one’s identity goes beyond the physical characteristics of the self for many of the male FOC in this study. Yet concomitantly physical attributes, via gender and race, provide the basis to forge a space, formulate their identity, and resist hegemony within higher education.

For most participants, the work around teaching, research, and service centers on how to redefine their identity beyond their visible physical characteristics to counter gender, racial, and cultural stereotypes of males of color, knowing that revealing the complexity of their identities further shaped how others perceived and treated them. For instance, Lonnie, who is Caribbean Black, shared how his identity was most readily assigned to him by others based on his skin color. Perceived by his physical characteristics in being a Black man, this identity became more complicated when he revealed his Caribbean roots, providing him a means to connect with some Black Caribbean students more easily, but consequently shifting how some African American students viewed and treated him, as an outsider. This example highlights how intersectional aspects come to provide a sense of comfort, connectivity, and empowerment for some participants. Other male FOC shared similar shifts in perceptions by others, particularly when living and working within the community, based on being a faculty member and holding a PhD; this provided for them being treated with greater respect. Those male FOC who shared this experience scoffed at the need to reveal their professional identities in order to be respected in some spaces, although they harnessed this privilege when necessary.

In sum, male FOC’s experiences with regards to how they negotiate their multiple personal and professional identities while working towards tenure reveal the continued
essentialization of FOC’s racial and gender identities. It was this essentialism that some participants like Quentin, a Native American faculty member, and Fred, an African American faculty member, sought to combat so that they could redefine their own identities for themselves. Both male FOC understand that expectations of their work are generated by the blatant and hidden systemic culture of academia itself. However, said expectations become internalized, and help create a richer institutional context within which a male FOC comes to experience their own identity, and that of said institution.

Conclusion

Overall, findings reiterate that the experiences of male FOC on the tenure-track cannot be unraveled from their intersecting social identities, nor from the contexts in which they live and work. Although identities can be fluid, and constantly in flux given academic pressures and familial responsibilities, this was seen in varying instances with how faculty perceived themselves and how others perceived them differently depending on others’ own social identities or group affiliations. Supportive environments that allowed for fluid understandings of what male FOC can and should be doing, were appreciated although less common. This finding aligns with previous research in which FOC note the significant role of welcoming and supportive departmental and institutional climates to assist them in finding work-life balance (Reddick, et al., 2012; Turner, González, & Wood, 2008).

It was also apparent from some participants, more than others, how there was often tension between cultural expectations and institutional understandings of their roles as male FOC that played out and shaped faculty’s experiences. However, some faculty exhibited agency in forging their own identities as males, as fathers, as husbands, as mentors, and as colleagues, with most relying heavily on cultural support systems, especially from spouses. While a number of participants shared many common experiences with women FOC, there was not a collective theme of scholarship rejection from superiors, nor the subsequent self-doubt often reported by women of color working in academia (Gutiérrez y Muhs, Niemann, González, & Harris, 2012; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001). This missing expression may further implicate the role of gender in operating as a means to dominant cultures and expectations.

Also, important to note is that none of the participants explicitly identified as transgender males or gay. Future research should consider purposefully examining the experiences of transgender or gay male FOC, as their experiences may be distinct, as well. Although the topic of masculinity as experienced by faculty members of color—regardless of gender—is too much to explore in this study, there is also a need for understanding this crucial intersection of gender, race, institutional norms, and expectations within the academy. This study embraces a growing body of research that highlights the need to better understand how intersectionalities influence the unique identity of male FOC in the tenure process. It is through continued scholarship that male FOC can provide institutions with heuristic ways to support their personal and professional advancement in academia.
References


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Settler Colonial Legacies: Indigenous Student Reflections on K-12 Social Studies Curriculum

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Abstract
This article explores how Indigenous students make meaning of the dominant structure of settler colonialism within their K-12 academic experiences. I build on previous work done on settler colonial ideology by linking structural forms of settler colonial power to the lived experiences of Indigenous students, and using their voices to describe how pervasive settler colonial ideology is in practice. Through their descriptions of the curriculum narratives in K-12, the participants create a compelling image of the influence of settler colonialism in their educational experiences. Confronting settler colonial ideology is not just about providing a more accurate historical record of what occurred in the United States. Confronting settler colonial ideology reaffirms the value and importance of Indigenous people.

Keywords: Indigenous education, settler colonialism

Introduction
As a young Native child in mainstream public schools, I became intimately familiar with the concepts of “home knowledge” and “school knowledge” when introduced to social studies and U.S. history curricula. School knowledge involved the content my teachers taught about the development of the United States, which often directly conflicted with the information shared by my parents at home. As my teachers told story after story of American exceptionalism, my parents reminded me of the incredible damage the quest for American exceptionalism did to Indigenous communities. My lack of understanding about settler colonialism within the context of U.S. history meant that memories of my experiences in K-12 revolved around reconciling these two versions of the United States. These formative experiences in K-12 led me to study how Indigenous people make meaning of settler colonial ideology within their own educational environments. The purpose of this article is to acknowledge the role of settler colonial ideology in educational experiences. To do this, I present data from a qualitative study on Indigenous students’ reflections on settler colonial ideology and their experiences in K-12 education. I focus specifically on K-12 education because the curricula represent one such structure that maintains, reinforces, and replicates settler colonial ideology (Calderon, 2014b; Leonardo & Singh, 2017).

Given the social and political location of my participants as Indigenous people in the United States, my work highlights their experiences with settler colonialism. The most significant distinction between settler colonialism and other forms of colonialism is permanence. The process of settler colonialism is not an event, but instead is a structural process meant to replace the local population with the settler population (Wolfe, 2006). Despite the U.S. being a settler colonial state, social studies curricula often treat colonialism as a one-time event in the educational system, and does not address the distinction between
colonialism and settler colonialism. For example, social studies curricula often suggest that the U.S. challenged British colonial rule (true), and that challenge ended the process of colonialism in the U.S. However, this depiction ignores both the process and effect of settler colonialism. From a settler colonial perspective, colonization is an ongoing process built into societal structures, and people continue to experience these effects, particularly those who identify as Indigenous. Because a disjuncture exists (e.g. how colonialism is taught versus how it operates), more work is needed on how students, especially Indigenous students, understand settler colonialism. The purpose of this study is to understand how a group of Indigenous students connects colonial ideology to their previous educational experiences.

The outcomes of this study will engage with the ongoing battle to fight the effects of colonialism for Indigenous people, particularly because work advancing “postcolonial” theories rarely acknowledges the ways in which colonialism permeates present-day societal structures. As Smith (2012) argues, “A constant reworking of our understandings of the impact of imperialism and colonialism is an important aspect” of Indigenous politics, culture, and critique (p. 25). Therefore, the goals of the study are to question the assumptions made regarding Western ideals and practices, and to tell an alternative story through the perspective of the colonized (Smith, 2012). This article also demonstrates how academic systems are often entrenched in settler colonial ideologies that privilege certain Western perspectives as legitimate while marginalizing Indigenous perspectives (Rizvi et al, 2006).

This research is significant for several reasons. First, it focuses on Indigenous students’ educational experiences by looking specifically at coloniality, which “has not been a valued concept when studying race and schools” (Leonardo & Singh, 2017, p. 95). This is particularly important since raising awareness of the permeation of settler colonialism in educational spaces changes the experience of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and educators by offering a structural explanation for the ongoing challenges encountered by Indigenous peoples. Second, this work explores the dominant structure of settler colonialism and demonstrates the purposeful entrenchment of settler colonialism in the U.S. educational system.

**Settler Colonialism in Education**

Although many academic disciplines engage in conversations about the influence of settler colonialism, I look specifically at how Indigenous students understand settler colonialism ideology through their reflections on their educational experiences. Within education, settler colonial ideology serves three important functions. First, it reduces the power of Indigenous nations by ignoring and dismissing Indigenous contributions in U.S. society (Brayboy, 2005). Second, it assimilates and controls resources through the adoption of certain ways of knowledge and learning (e.g. Western dominated thinking), positioning Indigenous knowledges as inferior (Steinman, 2016). Lastly, it engages in ongoing narratives of erasure at all levels (e.g. political, structural, and educational) (Patel, 2016). Understanding how settler colonialism and education intersects is important because [e]ducation was and in many ways continues to be (1) a battle for the hearts and minds of Indigenous nations; (2) a colonial call for assimilation; and (3) a responsibility of the federal government arising from a series of agreements between Indian nations and the United States meant to open up land bases to a burgeoning immigrant population. (Brayboy et al., 2015, p. 1)

Education has its roots in a patriarchal, Eurocentric society and is often complicit in multiple forms of oppression, making it neither culturally neutral nor fair (Battiste, 2013).
Therefore, educational institutions reflect and replicate ideology present in the settler society, and represent a primary site for negotiation between settler colonial ideology and Indigenous recognition.

Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001), in their foundational work on anti-colonial frameworks, argue that “colonial” includes “all forms of dominating and oppressive relationships that emerge from structures of power and privilege inherent and embedded in our contemporary social relations…. [C]olonial is not defined simply as foreign or alien, but more importantly, as dominating and opposing” (p. 308). It is this settling that is most destructive to Indigenous communities. While forms of colonialism include the exploitation of natural and human resources, settler colonialism has a more specific goal: to acquire, control, and define these resources and the territory as a whole. To accomplish this, settlers engaged in genocide, forced removal, and assimilation, all of which occurred in the U.S.

While early settler colonial societies replaced Indigenous communities through physical assault and violence, another vehicle was needed because settler colonialism is also “an institutionalized or normalized (and therefore mostly invisible) ideology of national identity” (Lovell, 2007, p. 3). Moreover, because the goals and outcomes of settler colonialism link to U.S. ideas of nationalism, the structural nature of education (both church-based and governmental) made it the perfect vehicle for replicating and reinforcing settler colonial ideology (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2016; Glenn, 2015). Twenty years ago, Willinsky (1998) argued that the educational project of colonialism in Western countries was only the beginning, and, given its enormity, was to live on as an unconscious aspect of education. Therefore, it is essential to make conscious how entrenched and ongoing the process of settler colonialism is within the context of education (Calderon, 2014a; Calderon, 2014b; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013).

A key element of making conscious the role of settler colonialism in education is recognizing how everyone is implicated in settler colonial practices, even if they are unaware of this implication because of how normalized settler colonial ideologies seem in educational spaces (Calderon, 2014b; Tuck & Yang, 2012). This normalizing occurs in K-12 education through, most notably, the social studies curricula, which often only focus on the dominant narratives around settler colonial success and achievement.

K-12 Education: The Narrative of Settler Colonial Success

In the U.S. school system, students first learn about colonialism when they study U.S. history; this is also one of their first experiences being mis-educated in U.S. and Indigenous history (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2016). U.S. social studies and history classrooms are not neutral, objective spaces. Instead, they are “contested arenas where legitimacy and hegemony battle for historical supremacy” (T. Lintner, as cited in Dunbar-Ortiz, 2016, p. 1). Maintaining this historical supremacy often requires the failure to acknowledge Indigenous history after the 19th century. For example, a nationwide mixed-methods study (Shear, Knowles, Soden, & Castro, 2015) on the state standards for teaching Indigenous history and culture found 87% of references to Indigenous peoples are in a pre-1900s context. This is important because the standards often drive the curricula choices teachers make when teaching Native American content, and reflects the narratives they choose to tell students about early U.S. history. Steinman (2016) writes:

Textbooks and theorizations commonly note some distinctive elements of the American Indian experience but nonetheless represent them as a racial and ethnic minority. Thus, while making important advances, scholarship spurred by Red Power and published primarily in the 1980s and 1990s did not clearly disrupt predominating minority concepts of American Indians or locate the racialization of American Indians in relation to continuing colonial processes. (p. 2)
This lack of representation of Native Americans after the 1900s means Native Americans are most often discussed in three types of narratives: 1) the narrative of manifest destiny and westward expansion; 2) the narrative of American exceptionalism, and meritocracy; and 3) the narrative of the colonial savior.

The narrative of manifest destiny and westward expansion is a key element of U.S. history and is widely discussed in the curricula (Banks & Banks, 2010). Manifest destiny represented the belief that it was (White) Americans’ providential mission to expand their communities and institutions across North America (Appleby, Hunt, & Jacob, 1994). Therefore, the curricula describe manifest destiny as necessary for both territorial control and for liberty and individual economic opportunity (Appleby, Hunt, & Jacob, 1994). However, what the curricula do not address is the use of manifest destiny as justification to destroy Indigenous communities (Calderon, 2014a). Using this conception also justified the erasing of Indigenous communities as necessary for the development of American society, as colonial ideology views Indigenous displacement as American progress (Veracini, 2011).

The second narrative present in U.S. social studies curricula centers on the connected ideas of American exceptionalism and meritocracy. When discussing the early development of colonial America, the development is often linked to notions of American exceptionalism (Banks & Banks, 2010). American exceptionalism is the belief that the success of the U.S. is a result of the political foresight of the Founding Fathers; the virtues found in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution; the priority placed on individual liberty; and the hard work of the American people (Appleby, Hunt, & Jacob, 1994). However, to believe in the notion of American exceptionalism, one must believe only colonizers contributed to the development of the U.S. (Calderon, 2014a). Given that the settler colonial state defined and limited who could be considered exceptional, it is not surprising social studies curricula treat exceptionality as a product of colonialism, while ignoring how advanced Indigenous communities were when colonialism in the US began (Calderon, 2014a; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013).

Related to the notion of American exceptionalism is the belief in individualism and social mobility. The concepts of individualism and social mobility are connected to the notion of meritocracy, which is the belief that individual success is due to hard work and ability alone (Banks & Banks, 2010). Much like American exceptionalism is used to reinforce the notion that the people of the U.S. were better because of settler colonialism, meritocracy serves to support that narrative by acknowledging that the success of colonialists is a result of their ability as opposed to being the result of their violence against Indigenous communities. It is important to recognize this because much like settler colonialism defined who was “exceptional,” only colonists’ success was meritocratic. Howard (2006) argues this is also reinforced in education. He writes:

The academy functions as a space for the creation, acquisition, assertion, and reassertion of whiteness and the simultaneous rejection of non-Whiteness. The strategies that enable this are numerous. Among these are liberal notions of “merit” and “excellence” involved in determining, who gets into and belongs in the academy and why, and who then becomes successful by academic standards. (p. 50)

The notions of meritocracy and success are linked to both Whiteness and settler colonialism (Calderon, 2014a). Although social studies curricula often address the racial differences in colonial America, there is no acknowledgement that the goal of settler colonial is to “erase and replace” non-white communities with White communities. Settler colonial was not just about expanding colonial rule, but also the expansion of Whiteness (Calderon, 2014b; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013).

The third narrative present in U.S. social studies curricula is the narrative of the colonial savior (Calderon, 2014b; Stanton, 2014). Linked to both the narrative of manifest destiny
and westward expansion and the narrative of American exceptionalism and meritocracy, the narrative of the colonial savior creates a situation in which colonization is viewed as a necessary act to “save” Indigenous peoples (Stanton, 2014). To maintain the narrative of the colonial savior, which is essential for the ongoing justification of settler colonialism, the curricula often presents Indigenous people as savages, as unable to live peacefully, as incapable of functioning in settler society (Calderon, 2014b; Stanton, 2014). Because of this presentation, all colonial acts are viewed as necessary and important for the greater good of the Indigenous population. The narrative of the colonial savior means the social studies curricula do not interrogate how problematic settler colonial ideology is; instead, it accepts colonization as an untenable element of American history.

**Study Overview**

To determine how Indigenous students understand the relationship between settler colonialism and their educational experiences, I conducted a yearlong qualitative study with twelve Indigenous graduate students, focusing on their experiences in academia. In addition to interviews and observations, participants completed a series of journal reflections centered upon what they learned in K-12 schooling about colonialism and the role of meritocracy within the United States. Participants received journal prompts bi-weekly, and then we discussed their responses during our scheduled interviews.

Embedded in this study lies a form of resistance that attempts to disable the grand narratives of superiority and inferiority constructed by settler colonialism and identified in the curricula. One way to disable grand narratives is to study how individuals understand them in relationship to their own educational experience. To understand this relationship, I use two theoretical frameworks: Tribal Critical Race Theory (Brayboy, 2005) and Settler Colonial Dimensions of Power (Steinman, 2016).

Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) emerged from Critical Race Theory as a means to recognize the positionality of Indigenous people in the U.S. as both racialized and colonized. Brayboy articulates nine tenets that address the relationship between colonization and the experiences of Indigenous people in the U.S. Although each of these informs the meaning-making within my analysis, I draw most heavily from two: 1) colonialism is endemic to society, and 2) stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real and legitimate sources of data. One of the ways in which colonialism remains endemic to society is through the reproduction of settler colonial ideology in the curricula. Identifying this is important for the disruption of the grand narratives told about settler colonialism. The second tenet of TribalCrit disrupts the grand narrative by allowing Indigenous stories to serve at the center of this study; it also serves as a methodological justification to use the words and reflections of students as the primary data source.

I also use Settler Colonial Dimensions of Power (Steinman, 2016) to analyze the experiences of my participants. This framework articulates settler colonialism’s relationship with Indigenous people; assists in analyzing the patterns of resistance against these forms of domination; and addresses the salience of settler colonialism and its different forms of power (Steinman, 2016). Steinman uses these dimensions of power, “in conjunction with area scholarship, to identify and categorize well-established patterns of their empirical manifestations” (p. 4). I build on Steinman’s work by linking structural forms of settler colonial power to the lived experiences of Indigenous students, and using their voices to describe how pervasive and harmful settler colonial ideology is in practice. From their descriptions of the curricular narratives in K-12 to their beliefs surrounding the role of meritocracy in educational spaces, the participants create a compelling image of the ongoing influence of settler colonial power in their lives.
I also bring my own background as an Indigenous scholar to the study. Much like my participants, my experiences in both K-12 were marked with a consistent narrative of the value and importance of settler colonialism, despite the large-scale cost to Indigenous peoples. The failure of my teachers to address this cost was formative in my desire to research settler colonialism in school spaces.

**Reflections on Colonial Ideology**

The purpose of the journal reflections and interviews was to understand how Indigenous students made meaning of settler colonialism in relationship to their own educational experiences. The findings below present two areas that emerged from their journals and interviews: what colonialism looks like in K-12 curricula and how the narrative of American exceptionalism and meritocracy affects Indigenous students’ views on their own educational experience.

**Colonialism in K-12**

To understand what participants remembered about colonialism within their K-12 education, I asked several questions focused on the curricula, such as which key events they remembered from history and social studies classes, and what concepts or ideas they associated with colonialism. Within the context of K-12 education, participants indicated that colonialism was presented in two primary ways: as a series of events and as a necessary act required for US progress and achievement.

When participants discussed colonialism as an event, they referred to it as both an event of initial contact/arrival, and as a negative act experienced by Indigenous peoples. The narrative of initial contact/arrival was presented as a neutral or even a beneficial event for Indigenous populations. According to Steinman’s (2016) dimensions of settler colonial power, presenting the narratives as neutral or beneficial serves as a denial of settler colonialism. This denial prevents people from interrogating the harmful effects of settler colonial events. This was evident given how participants described the event of initial contact/arrival. Participants referred to “the arrival of certain European populations,” “the arrival of visitors to America,” and “the start of US civilization.” During one interview a student reflected, “Yeah, we learned that the settlers arrived and that was it. Once they landed, they became Americans and that was the end of colonialism.” Another participant remembered colonialism being discussed as a positive development for Native Americans who “would benefit from European ideas and advancement.” When students learned about negative acts experienced by Indigenous people, the curricula make no link made between those acts and colonialism. Treating these acts as singular and disconnected from colonialism represents another form of settler colonial power: the diminishment of settler violence. These acts are portrayed as stand-alone events, not part of a larger project to destroy Native American communities. Despite the treatment of these events in the curricula, my participants saw those events as examples of colonialism. As one participant wrote in their journal, “We only talked about events like the Trail of Tears. So, unless it was something well-documented like that, there was little to no mention of anything related to Indigenous peoples.” Several other participants mentioned learning about the Trail of Tears as the one significant act experienced by Indigenous peoples.

According to my participants, the second way the curricula presented colonialism was as a required process for US progress and achievement. Presenting colonialism as a necessary action represents another dimension of settler colonial power, which is the ideological justification of settler colonialism. All participants referenced learning about manifest destiny. They also learned how vital it was for US expansion. Manifest destiny serves as
the largest justification for colonialism by arguing that the settlers felt like it was their divine right to expand the U.S. with no regard for its original inhabitants. As one participant wrote, 

In classes on American history, the atrocities committed by the US government against the Indigenous peoples has [sic] always been written as a necessary act, something that had to happen for the greater good. Manifest destiny became the cry for expansion, no matter the cost to the people already living in the territory.

In addition to manifest destiny, participants also remember learning that Indigenous peoples were “uncivilized” and that colonization was fundamental for their development as citizens, without any acknowledgement of the contributions of Indigenous peoples. Describing Indigenous people in this manner is another example of the ideological justification of settler colonial power. One participant wrote:

What I learned about colonialism is that settlers that came to America deemed that the Indigenous peoples needed “saving.” So, settlers brought missionaries in to give the people Christianity and teach them English. Essentially colonialism suppressed the culture and language of the Indigenous people for the Western culture as it was deemed more civilized. Colonialism became a game for land and resources while removing the land and culture that had been present for centuries.

All participants mentioned how the narrative about “saving” of Indigenous people was central to their perspective of colonialism. One of the ways the curricula replicates settler colonial power is using different forms of ideological justification to erase the harmful effects of settler colonialism on Indigenous communities.

The role of meritocracy

One of the primary functions of settler colonial power is to naturalize and deny settler colonialism. The naturalization occurs in the stories told about settlers, particularly around individualism and their ability to “succeed” in the frontier. The denial then occurs when curricula ignore the contributions of Indigenous peoples in assisting the settlers in their survival. Taken together, this naturalization and denial of settler colonialism manifests itself in a narrative of meritocracy surrounding settlers in the U.S. I asked participants to reflect on the concept of meritocracy and if the United States can be defined as such. I did so because meritocracy is a myth often perpetuated by settler colonial ideology within the K-12 curricula. As described in the dimensions of settler colonial power, much of the narrative surrounding colonization depicts colonizers as individuals who colonized the U.S. of their own volition and merit, without acknowledging the assistance Indigenous people provided to the colonizers, nor acknowledging the many contributions Indigenous people made and never received credit for. Journal prompts for this concept focused on personal definitions of meritocracy, as well as reflections on who higher education benefits and how. While participants acknowledged that colonialism prevented the U.S. from being a meritocracy, (most referenced their identity as Indigenous peoples as a reason for this) there was a strong undercurrent of wanting to believe this was something the U.S. could achieve.

For most participants, their understanding of meritocracy was linked to their identity as Indigenous students and concerns regarding their abilities and skills. While participants acknowledged that programs for minorities were a necessary action to provide underrepresented populations with opportunities, there was a tense undercurrent to this acknowledgement—that somehow admitting this called into question their own abilities and skills on campus. One participant wrote:

I appreciate affirmative action type things for acknowledging that minorities haven’t always been given the opportunity to be successful and rewarded for success. But at the same time, I do not want to be awarded or acknowledged
because I’m a minority. The thing that made me who I am [being Indigenous] allowed me an opportunity which I so appreciate. But is it ok to be rewarded for that once my foot is in the door? I just have very mixed feelings about this.

Other participants shared similar sentiments such as “I believe that hard work and talent is not enough to be rewarded. Sometimes it is who you know that can give you rewards” and “You may be rewarded for a small amount of merit but that is it. America has turned into a country where you have to know someone in order to get anywhere.” While merit is still acknowledged as being important, it is not viewed as the only element of success.

Other participants indicated a connection between colonialism and the idea of meritocracy. As one participant wrote:

While that [meritocracy] was supposed to be the main difference between the United States and the Old World version of rewarding one for the accomplishments of their ancestors, this is not the case. While the ability to move up is possible for some people in the U.S., there have always been limits on people of color, which of course would limit Native Americans in their quest for improving their own lives.

Despite the belief that the US was not a meritocracy, participants thought it could eventually become a meritocracy. This tension played out in several journal entries where participants stated that education was one of the primary places where meritocracy should exist, despite their own admissions of not being recognized or rewarded due to their own merits. One participant reflected that:

I graduated at the top of my class and there were no internships or job offerings. I feel if people applied themselves and succeeded there should be opportunities. There were no schools interested in funding me for graduate school. It just so happens a mentor, who was also a professor, watched me in undergrad and connected me with the people here. If it were not for that connection, I’d probably be working some dead-end job somewhere. But maybe that’s just me.

Another participant shared:

From my own individual experiences (on paper), I might tend to agree with the idea of working hard and having talent as prerequisites for societal awards. However, on a much more personal level I would say I disagree because I feel like (and I have described this to many people over the past ten years), that much of my “success” is coincidence. I think that [meritocracy] is an ideal of what the U.S. might be or might try to portray itself to be, but it is just incommensurate with the lived reality of many people due to such things as colonialism, racism, discrimination, social injustice, etc.

One of the primary functions of settler colonial power is to deny and naturalize settler colonial ideology. Meritocracy is a myth perpetuated by settler colonial ideology, and it is important to do so because it naturalizes the gains made at the expense of others. The settler colonial state is designed to reward certain people over others, regardless of their merit or ability. When this myth is replicated in education, it can prevent people from interrogating the structural reasons why students do or do not succeed, as opposed to attributing lack of success to an individual’s ability to work hard.

The Entrenchment of Settler Colonial Ideology in Education

One of the goals of this work was to analyze, evaluate, and problematize the dominant structure of settler colonialism and explore how settler colonialism remains entrenched in the U.S. educational system. One of the primary functions of U.S. history curricula is to
deny the existence of settler colonialism. Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) refer to this as “the covering of its tracks” (p. 74). This denial is most visible in the narrative of American exceptionalism and meritocracy. By presenting colonialism as a singular act—and not an ongoing process—there is no acknowledgement of how settler colonialism endures. As one participant acknowledged, settler colonialism exists whether it is addressed or not. In addition to the fact that the curricula present U.S. history from the perspective of the European colonizers, there is no mention of Indigenous people past the 1900s (the group most largely affected by settler colonial ideology) (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2016). This denial is a very large component of the participants’ understanding of settler colonialism and continues to exist within the dominant discourse on Indigenous issues. As participants noted, challenging the master narrative of American exceptionalism is not welcomed, particularly in classroom dialogue. This makes sense because one of the ways the narrative of American exceptionalism denies the existence of settler colonialism is by presenting the colonists as individual actors who succeeded through their own merit, as opposed to what really occurred—that their “success” was the result of violence, destruction, and their positionality as settlers (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013).

The concealment of foundational settler violence through the curricula is another form of settler colonial power. The concealment is managed mostly through the “circulation of its creation story” (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013, p. 74). These creation stories “involve signs-turned-mythologies that conceal the teleology of violence and domination that characterize settlement” (p. 74). Settler colonial violence is largely ignored, or its impact is diminished or shown as benevolent (e.g. colonization happened and thus grew U.S. civilization). For example, although my participants indicated that they learned about the Trail of Tears, it was not discussed as an act of genocide by the U.S. government or linked to the settler colonial ideology of “erase to replace.” Any negative consequence of the act is treated as a necessary element for the larger narrative of expansion. This is most evident in the narrative of the “colonial savior” present throughout the curricula. The colonial savior narrative suggests that colonial intentions were benevolent toward the Indigenous populations and that, without the colonists, the Indigenous populations would not survive or be successful. For example, some history texts “give credit to the U.S. government for the survival of Native peoples, as evidenced by “us” and “them” discourse” (Stanton, 2014, p. 661). The narrative also suggests any advancements made in the early development of the U.S. were at the hands of the colonists.

A third dimension of settler colonial power is the ideological justification for the dispossession of Indigenous lands and the naturalizing of settler colonial authority. Within the curricula, settler colonial ideology presents as a necessary component for growth and development in the U.S., which requires a minimization of the violent acts committed against Indigenous people. This ideological justification is introduced and maintained through the social studies curricula, most commonly through the narrative of manifest destiny and westward expansion (Calderon, 2014b; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). All of the participants mentioned how manifest destiny was discussed as a necessary act for progress. There was no discussion of how the attitude of manifest destiny and policies of westward expansion were harmful to Indigenous populations. And while the initial exposure to settler colonial justification occurs in the social studies curricula, the participants noted its reinforcement in their science and engineering programs, two fields where there is a “long history of exploitation of Native people and lands by “advancements” by science and engineering, particularly medical research and the energy industry” (Smith et al., 2014, p. 413).

Lastly, another dimension of settler colonial power is the denial and elimination of possible alternatives to the settler colonial story. One of the most damning factors of settler colonialism is that it essentially prevented the establishment of any other narratives. While the counter-stories of others have emerged, the dominance of settler colonialism makes it
hard to undo the long-standing damage done by settler colonial ideology. Within the educational system, this damage occurs in the social studies curricula, which maintain and replicate the settler colonial narrative by never giving any airtime to other stories. Even if the curricula address Indigenous issues, these issues serve in relationship to the settler colonial story, not as an independent story to be told (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). This creates and maintains the enduring nature of the settler colonial relationship.

**Confronting the Legacy of Settler Colonialism in School Spaces**

Confronting the legacy of settler colonial ideology is a monumental task, given that the current educational structure, by design, replicates and reinforces settler colonial ideology. While different types of interventions exist (e.g. multicultural education, culturally responsive pedagogy); most of these interventions fail because each tries to make change without challenging the white settler perspective (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). The reflections provided by the participants reveals the pervasiveness of settler colonial ideology in the curricula. While the insidiousness of settler colonialism is well documented (e.g. Alfred, 2004; Grande, 2008; Leonardo & Singh, 2017; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Wolfe, 2006), this study centers the perspectives of Indigenous students and their reflections on settler colonial ideology within their K-12 experiences. Blackhawk (2008) wrote, “As many Indian people know all too well, reconciling the traumas found within our community and family pasts with the celebratory narratives of America remains an everyday and overwhelming challenge” (p. 287). This work addresses that challenge.

While this article documents the way settler colonial ideology and discourse invade U.S. history and social studies curricula, there are several ways educators can use their classroom spaces to confront settler colonialism. Building on the work of Thésée (2004), I present three strategies for confronting settler colonial ideology in the classroom: redefining what is knowledge; questioning the aims and applications of settler colonial ideology in schools; and refusing to engage and/or support discourse normalizing settler colonial ideology and thought.

A key strategy in confronting settler colonialism is emphasizing the importance of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in comparison to Western-based knowledge systems. In settler colonial ideology, defining what knowledge is helps justify settler colonial permanence. Therefore, finding ways to introduce Indigenous knowledge into academic spaces allows individuals to question the role knowledge plays in maintaining settler colonial ideology. In K-12 education, teachers should include information about the advanced development of Indigenous communities and challenge any narratives that suggests Indigenous people were primitive, savage, or in need of colonists; assistance to survive. Likewise, students (Indigenous students, in particular) should be taught Indigenous ways of knowing, including different Indigenous languages, as a counter to prevailing Western knowledge. While this study looked specifically as social studies and U.S. history curricula, I encourage people to review ethnomathematics. Ethnomathematics is a pedagogical approach to disrupting settler colonial ideology in mathematics curricula. Using the curricula as a vehicle to provide additional non-Western knowledge is one way to emphasize the knowledge contributions of Indigenous peoples.

A second strategy is to question the aims and applications of settler colonial ideology in academic environments. In K-12 schools, questioning the aims and applications of settler colonial ideology requires interrogating the curricula and encouraging all students to analyze critically why the narratives of settler colonialism are retold (despite the depth of knowledge regarding Indigenous communities during the early development of the US). Questioning the application of settler colonial ideology also requires naming what settler colonial ideology is trying to maintain—white supremacy. Situating the settler colonial
narrative within a system of oppression allows students to problematize the history they learn in schools.

The final strategy is refusing to engage and/or support discourse normalizing settler colonial ideology and thought. In K-12 education, this occurs when teachers challenge the narrative presented in the curricula that positions settler colonialism as necessary for the development of the United States. It also requires identifying the long-term consequences of settler colonial ideology—settler colonialism is not a historical act, but instead is an ongoing process that harms everyone, not just Indigenous communities. One curricular example is how teachers discuss the Trail of Tears in relationship to the broader relationship between the U.S. government and Indigenous communities.

Throughout this article, I demonstrate how educational spaces are often entrenched in settler colonial ideologies that privilege certain narratives and forms of knowledge over others. Similarly, the pervasiveness of settler colonial ideology also marginalizes Indigenous peoples and communities. Challenging settler colonial ideology is not just about providing a more accurate historical record of what occurred in the United States. Challenging settler colonial ideology also reaffirms the value and importance of Indigenous people in the United States and gives space to recognize the contributions of Indigenous peoples. For those interested in creating educational spaces that affirm and value all people, confronting settler colonialism is a required act.

References


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What About Students’ Experiences: (Re)imagining Success Through Photovoice At a High-Achieving Urban “No-Excuses” Charter School

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Abstract
The article highlights the use of photovoice, a method that gives power to creators of images to capture experiences that are central to their life. Students verbal considerations of success in the context of the “no-excuses” school is included, as is a sample of students’ visual data about what success is outside of the “no-excuses” context. The study reveals the “no-excuses” orientation fosters an oppressive definition of success in the context of classrooms. However, the photovoice component reveals students are able to resist the limited view as four emergent findings reveal how students make meaning of success: (1) human connection; (2) educative experiences; (3) original composition; and (4) survival methods. Lastly, implications about what educators and school communities may learn, if students were seen as active co-constructors in the design and implementation of their own education.

Keywords: Photovoice, youth of color, success, “no-excuses” charter school, ethnography

As I approached the front door of Metropolitan City Charter Academy (MCCA), I could not help but recall my own first day of middle school growing up in Shaker Heights, Ohio. I remembered being excited to see friends whom I had not seen throughout the summer and catching up on all the latest chatter and gossip. Yet as I watched students at MCCA stoically filing into their homerooms to begin the 2015–2016 Preparatory Camp (PC), I could not sense any excitement or anticipation for the start of the new academic year. MCCA required that students return for a “mock” first day of school, an event that had been described by some MCCA teachers as the “indoctrination of the students.”

Students arrived by 7:30 a.m. and were met by Mr. Bleeker, the gym teacher, who performed “uniform checks.” Students that arrived after 7:30 a.m. or without full uniform earned an automatic detention. As students filed into the school, they walked in straight lines and were silent. Throughout the PC, students remained quiet, transitioning from classroom to classroom where they received teacher-led refreshers on how to reengage at MCCA. One such “crash course” that set the tone for my year of observation was titled “Living RAISED.” This was a refresher on the school’s character values.

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1 To maintain confidentiality, the school’s name, as well as that of the city, district, and individuals, are pseudonyms.
When I entered the classroom, students were sitting with their backs straight against the chairs, at desks that were evenly positioned in three columns. Students’ heads were perched, facing forward, while their hands were folded and rested on their table tops. As I tried to slip into the back of the classroom, a few students watched me from the corners of their eyes. Staring at the ground, I purposely tried to ignore making eye contact, not wanting my entrance to cause a distraction. Although this was my first day in the school, I could sense that an incident involving a student not paying attention to an adult speaking at the front of the room may have been grounds for a public reprimand.

Mr. Younger, one of the math teachers, was at the front of the classroom. He was flanked by Mr. Waters, the music teacher who also stood at the front and Ms. Foss, another math teacher, who stood on the side of the room. Mr. Younger was short in stature, and like the other teachers in the room, White. “Living RAISED,” he began to pontificate, was about a “set of shared values” that dictated students’ behavior at MCCA. The students were reminded that RAISED was an acronym that stood for Respect, Answerability, Involved, Sympathy, Eagerness, and Discipline. As the young scholars continued to stare expressionless, Mr. Younger elevated his pitch and cadence to perhaps lighten the mood from this rote speech. He suggested that students should “strive to live RAISED values every day,” and those who did could “earn RAISED dollars” and they would have the opportunity to redeem those dollars through an annual auction.

At the end of his presentation, Mr. Younger did not ask if students had any questions. Meanwhile, Mr. Waters and Ms. Foss remained stationed on the left and right side of the room, looking up and down the rows, presumably to make sure students were paying attention. As the time approached for students to exit the room and go to the next lesson, there was a specific set of timed instructions, what Mr. Younger referenced as “Steps 1 through Step 4” that granted students’ permission to make silent, uniform movements to exit their desk chairs and form a line by the door.

Introduction

The above vignette provides a glimpse into the everyday reality of Black and Latino/a/x students who attend MCCA, a self-described urban “no-excuses charter school.” Across the country, a polarized debate persists about how to increase the academic success of Black and Latino/a/x students coming from low-income communities. At the center of this debate is the extent of influence that market-based school choice policies should have in the context of urban education reform. In current school choice rhetoric, “no-excuses” models are viewed by some charter school advocates and policymakers as an effective solution to close what is seen as the persistent “achievement gap” of high-poverty Black and Latino/a/x students with their affluent or middle-class White and Asian peer groups (Davis & Heller, 2017; Dynarski, 2015). Many charter advocates, including teachers who have embraced the “no-excuses” model, have argued that charter schools are more successful than traditional public schools because they are innovative and more responsive to student needs. The “no-excuses” schools have emphasized frequent testing and dramatically increased instructional time, parental pledges of involvement, aggressive human capital strategies, and a relentless focus on math and reading achievement (Tbernstrom & Tbernstrom, 2003).

The “no-excuses” charter schools often operate a broken windows (Wilson & Kelling, 1982) method of discipline—that is, applying enforcement strategies in schools to prioritize punishing low-level infractions and policing common youth behaviors like
cussing or “horseplay” to curb future incidents. In his book *Sweating the Small Stuff* (2008), charter advocate Whitman profiles “no-excuses” public charter schools that he referred to as “new paternalistic” schools which operated similarly. These schools monitored the “small stuff” of their Black and Latino/a/x students with the philosophy that if small behaviors are controlled in school, with a set of supplementary character values that modeled “middle-class” behaviors and a reward system, this should reduce more serious school-related incidents and ultimately reduce social inequalities. Here, the “middle-class” often explicitly represents White cultural standards that concern what success in school (and subsequently beyond) looks and behaves like, and is implicitly constructed as superior to that of the students and families of color (Marsh & Noguera, 2018). The subtle (and not so subtle) socialization towards a predetermined definition of success can inform the ways in which teachers teach and students learn. And while the vast majority of students want to succeed in K-12 schooling and view school as important to being successful in life, sociocultural and structural barriers even inside school often stand in the way of this manifestation (Theoharis, 2009). Thus, students from working class families may not know the unspoken dominant norms concerning schooling success and may not recognize the structural inequities that can “live” in school contexts (e.g., classrooms, relationships, learning expectations among teachers, and institutionalized practices).

The purpose of this article is to urge the start of a new scholarly conversation focused on exploring the construct of success using students’ voices and lived experiences in order to develop policies that foster a learning environment that treats students not just as objects, but also as agents of reform and improvement. To begin this conversation, I first discuss the literature which examines the disparate academic and disciplinary outcomes for students of color in schools in the U.S. I also discuss the “no excuses” approach to teaching and learning and how this impacts students of color and how focusing on the “no-excuses” context in tandem with the photovoice method fills a gap in the scholarly discourse. Lastly, the article concludes with implications for theory and practitioners.

**Disparate Outcomes for Students of Color in Schools**

The ways in which teachers seek to understand their students, including addressing their assumptions, biases, and expectations, particularly about vulnerable students (i.e., low-income, linguistic, ethnic minority) and their families, are critical (Howard, 2013; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). Yet the literature on student achievement strongly suggests that Black and Latino/a/x students are generally perceived by their teachers to be less competent than Whites and more disruptive. A series of studies reveal that this perception gap concerning students’ schooling success has been brooding in American culture for a long time. Research dating back to Rist’s (1970) ethnography of elementary classrooms has shown that teachers rate Black children as having more behavioral problems and poorer academic performance than White children (Horwitz, Bility, Plichta, Leaf, & Haynes, 1998; Lindholm, Touliatos, & Rich, 1978). In his study, Rist found kindergarten students’ expectations from their teachers did not include any academic potential measurements, but were initially based on teachers’ perceived success factors that mirrored White, middle-class society, which was the teacher’s ‘normative reference group.’ As a result, the teacher reacted positively to those students whose lifestyle and background norms were familiar, and negatively to those students whose norms were not. In such a way, the perceived bad reputations of students of color took root.

Reputation in school is most relevant for low-income Black and Latino/a/x students overall and males of color, in particular. Black and Latino male students’ identities and
reputations are constantly being defined and confirmed by teachers and schools (Ferguson, 2000). Accordingly, Black and Latino male students are typically over-represented in academic categories associated with failure and dis/ability status, and under-represented in those associated with schooling success (Fergus, Noguera, & Martin, 2014). Pigott and Cowen (2000) also found that Black children were judged by teachers as having more serious school adjustment problems, more negatively stereotypic personality qualities, such as a preference for interaction or being nonsubmissive, and bleaker educational prognoses than White children. More recent work confirms that White teachers tend to view and evaluate the behavior and competence of students of color more negatively than White students (McGrady & Reynolds, 2013). In their recent study on “teacher discretion,” and the recommendation of gifted and talented programs in the U.S., Grissom and Redding (2016) found Black students, particularly Black male students are less likely to be assigned to gifted and talented services in both math and reading, a pattern that persists when controlling for background factors, such as health and socioeconomic status, and characteristics of classrooms and schools.

The “No-Excuses” Approach and Students of Color

The pernicious trends affecting Black and Latino/a/x students’ schooling experiences persist in public charter schools, especially for Black and Latino male students. For instance, one study examining racial disproportionality of charter schools in the state of California, found that Black students were mis/labeled and overrepresented in the specific learning dis/ability category of emotional disturbance (Fierros & Blumberg, 2005). Seider, Gilbert, Novick, & Gomez (2013) found in a study of three “no-excuses” schools that the students most likely to receive the worst penalties and become victims of adverse school-imposed labeling were Black males who were low-achieving. In a nationwide study, policy research firm Mathematica (2010) evidenced that the attrition rate for Black students in some charter schools is as high as 40%, yet praise and financial will for “no-excuses” public charter schools continues, at least in certain academic and policy circles (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009; Charter Schools Program State Entities competition of 2017; Finn & Wright, 2016). In the end, charter schools that comprise a majority of students of color living in under-resourced communities may be driven by a deficit-oriented framework that creates a curriculum and pedagogical approach in part by what school operators think students (and their families) may lack (Marsh, 2017).

This approach to learning resembles Bernstein’s (1990) concepts of classification and framing, which refer to issues of power and control in areas of curriculum and pedagogy. Accordingly, schools with strong classification adhered to rigid boundaries in what counts as knowledge, often excluding local knowledge forms (White, 2018). And schools with strong framing adhered to highly structured pedagogical rules that prescribed the transmission of knowledge (e.g., scripted lessons and Teach Like a Champion). Taken together, the concepts of strong classification and strong framing are akin to what Haberman (2010) identifies as the ‘pedagogy of poverty.’ These acts are performed to the exclusion of other forms of pedagogical taxonomies due to biases and stereotypes about the race and socioeconomic class of students being taught.

While there are existing studies that examine Black and Latino/a/x students schooling experiences (Hill & Torres, 2010; Noguera, 2008; Rolón-Dow, 2005), most of these have focused on younger children in elementary schools (Tyson, 2003; Langhout & Mitchell, 2008); students in traditional public schools (MacLeod, 1995; Ogbu, 2003) or Black students in a racially-diverse institution (Ferguson, 2000; Milner & Tenore, 2010). Few
empirical studies have been in the context of a “no-excuses” public charter school (Golann, 2015), but not many studies have asked students themselves to weigh in on the indicators of success within their schools. Students’ perspectives are seldom among the many who are valued to have a say in the discourse of the causes, consequences, and potential solutions to educational inequities whether at the micro-level (i.e., classroom), meso-level (school), or macro-level (city and state). This is an important gap in the knowledge base as “no-excuses” charter school models in some cities now make up a majority of the local charter school sector (Angrist, Pathak, & Walters, 2011).

Schools with a “no-excuses” orientation of learning think they are motivated by an equity concern—to close the achievement gap—which creates a college-going ethos and opportunity in which students are actively engaged in their communities and are charged to change the world. Yet, there continues to be limited empirical research documenting the ways Black and Latino/a/x students are treated inside these schools on a daily basis. Furthermore, there is a dearth of research centering Black and Latino/a/x students’ experiences, particularly using photovoice, a method that allows participants to create knowledge—in the form of photographs—representing their realities, which can then be used to stimulate critical reflection and contribute to understanding and awareness of their experiences. Overall, the research study explored the ways in which marginalized students make meaning of success in one “no-excuses” charter school and the ways in which structural characteristics, conscious and unconscious assumptions, and cultural norms may contribute to the success or systematic failure (i.e., lack of success) of particular groups of students through instantiated hierarchies of inequality. Below, I discuss the processes of site selection, data collection and methods, analysis for the overall project, and my positionality as a Black male researcher.

Site Selection, Research Methods, and Analysis

Due to the proliferation of charter schools in the United States and “no-excuses” public charter schools specifically being singled out in opinion pieces in popular media outlets (e.g., Langhorne, 2018; Leonardt, 2017) as the answer for “failing” urban public schools, I wanted to explore a middle school that identified and espoused to being a “no-excuses” school. The disclosure of being a "no-excuses" school was advertised in the school's mission, vision, purpose, values statement, institutional materials and protocols, or verbally expressed during exploratory conversations with administration. Moreover, I wanted to explore a school that was based in a neighborhood that served children from low-income, working-class communities of color within a metropolitan city.

The goal was to be at a school that was connected to a larger, national not-for-profit charter management organization (CMO). Here, “larger” is defined as a CMO operating at least eight charter schools. I presumed a school tied to a larger CMO had a shared, unified philosophy or set of pedagogical approaches concerning school and classroom success and achievement for all its students. Lastly, I wanted to work with a school site that would be willing to share the research findings across its CMO network, not because the data and analysis would be generalizable to other sites, but because it would be instructive for the network. Metropolitan City Charter Academy met the criteria.
Metropolitan City Charter Academy

Metropolitan City Charter Academy (MCCA) was founded in 2004 and is located in one of the largest northeastern cities in the United States. Since its inception, the network has burgeoned into 30-plus schools across six states, serving nearly 4,000 students. While the network’s mission is “to create citizen scholars for change,” the motto is “hard work is all you need to achieve at MCCA, in college and beyond.” MCCA is comprised of nearly 100% Black and Latino/a/x students, with nearly 90% eligible for free/reduced lunch. Identified within its larger charter network as the “gold standard,” MCAA outpaces its regional peer schools in Math and ELA assessment scores (Northeastern City Department of Education, 2016). Thus, the school is considered high-achieving.

Student Research-Participants

An essential component of my research, and the focus of this paper, was the time spent with 10 (seven boys, three girls) Black and Latino/a/x students in the seventh and eighth grade. The group of students was identified after I asked every seventh and eighth grade classroom teacher to generate a list of at least eight students that they suggest should be identified as “at-risk” students at MCCA, as well as a list of at least eight students whom they would identify as “ideal” students. Seventeen teachers responded to my request and, after aggregating, a list of shared student names became the student sample. This sample signified those students whom the teachers perceived as being “ideal” or “at risk” students within the school. Teachers were also asked to write at least one or two sentences why a student was being identified with the respective label. The hope was that the adult-generated lists and rationale for selection would give me an access point to begin to understand teachers’ philosophies and beliefs about MCCA students and perhaps offer insight into how teachers define and recognize student success or lack thereof within MCCA.

Table 1. Student-Participants at MCCA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Race/ Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Teacher-Identified Label</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jerome Kirkland</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>At-risk</td>
<td>Seventh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mateo Lopez</td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>At-risk</td>
<td>Seventh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sebastian Orozco</td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Ideal</td>
<td>Seventh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savannah Johnson</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>At-risk</td>
<td>Seventh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niyyat Owelo</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Ideal</td>
<td>Seventh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger Kinni</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Ideal</td>
<td>Eighth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamar Reeve</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Ideal</td>
<td>Eighth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felipe Smith</td>
<td>Black &amp; Latino</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>At-risk</td>
<td>Eighth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tameshiah Domingo</td>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Ideal</td>
<td>Eighth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Jennings</td>
<td>Black &amp; Latino</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>At-risk</td>
<td>Eighth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teacher Demographics

At the time of data collection, there were 22 seventh and eighth grade teachers—17, or nearly 80%, identified as White and of those teachers, nearly 60% were female. Sixty-three percent of the teachers identified as either a current member or alumnus of Teach for America. Further, 75% identified as coming from a middle- to upper-middle class family. The demographics of the teachers at MCCA mirror the current national K-12 teaching workforce (National Center for Education Statistics 2012, 2015).

Data Collection

To understand students’ experiences, I moved to Centralton because I wanted to live in the same community as the school and its students. In so doing, I sought to avoid conducting research from a new colonial perspective (Lipman, 2016) and entering the space without acknowledging the existing strengths and assets, collecting data without community input, and retreating back to a home locale away from the context, only to exploit and decide what is best for the community, its policies, and public institutions. Guided by Rodríguez and Conchas’s (2009) inductive open-coding approach, qualitative methods of field observations, interviewing, focus groups, visual ethnography and photovoice were employed in this study.

As such, multiple perspectives and sources of data were used. The data collection for the larger study combined nearly 900 hours of classroom and school-wide participant observations, 46 semi-structured one-on-one interviews with students or adults (caregivers of students or teachers), seven student focus groups and dozens of informal interviews with school and family stakeholders from August 2015 to December 2015; February 2016 to June 2016 as well as September 2016.

Leveraging Rubin and Rubin’s (2012) responsive interviewing, as well as Creswell’s (2013) interviewing techniques, a semi-structured interview protocol to conduct and guide one-on-one conversations with teachers/administrators, caregivers of students, and students was created. The questions served as a guide. The semi-structured approach allowed the interviews to serve as a medium for the participants to use their logic and generate their own narrative. If a participant was not comfortable answering a question, he/she was informed in advance that any question could be skipped. Different interview protocols were used for each stakeholder group and every interview was audio-recorded, with permission.

Interviews with students took place during lunch and were approximately 45–60 minutes. In addition, informal interviews were conducted throughout and, though not adhering to the stringent protocol, the interviews took place within designated areas of the school site. In total, the ten sample students were interviewed twice, for a total of 20 student interviews. Focus groups were comprised of students only. The groups enabled me to understand the philosophies of success and analyze any common themes or differences between and within students. The focus groups were unrestricted, meaning

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2 Teach for America (TFA) is a national nonprofit whose stated mission is to recruit, develop, and mobilize as many of our nation’s most promising future leaders as possible to grow and strengthen the movement for educational equity and excellence. TFA teachers—corps members as they internally refer to themselves—are “mobilized” and placed as teachers in under-resourced communities (i.e., low-income urban and rural) for two-year teaching commitments.
students did not have to be among the selected ten participants, but needed to be current students at MCCA. Focus groups lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and ranged from two to six students. In total, seven focus groups with 12 boys and nine girls were conducted; this included the 10 students from the sample, who each met in a group with at least one other student. Since MCCA-affiliated staff walked into classrooms with laptops, for the first two months, a notepad and pen were used to capture field notes. I wanted to distinguish myself from the other adults. However, I realized typing is much faster than my writing, so I began using an iPad with an external keyboard during the third month.

When I initially decided to conduct interviews with students, I did not consider how MCCA’s systems would inhibit my ability to build rapport. I underestimated the lack of communication and daily interaction I would have with students, even while sitting in classrooms. For example, I have worked in and volunteered with other “no-excuses” charter schools, and I was always able to engage with students during lunchtime or during designated after-school programs. From these experiences, I assumed MCCA would have allotted time and space when I could organically connect with the students. I emphasize organically because within the first few weeks I was told by both administrators and at least one teacher that if I ever wanted to speak with a student, I could just “pull them out of line” at will. This type of unrestricted power, in which adults seemingly were free to do and say anything to the students’ bodies, made me uncomfortable and separated the staff from the students. This made me feel as if student bodies and voices were to be used at my convenience—for my exploitation—and I did not want to be associated with that type of symbolic power. So, for several months my energy focused on observations.

After student consent and caregiver permissions were received, I met individually with those students identified by the teachers as both “ideal” and “at-risk” during their respective lunch periods. With the exception of one student who did not eat, the students were always excited to answer questions over pizza and sodas, or whatever snacks were present. Interviews and focus groups were recorded using a digital recorder. In addition, handwritten notes were taken.

During interviews, questions were clustered into categories: “past schooling experiences,” “description of self,” “description of success at MCCA,” and “student’s future success.” For instance, some sample questions included, How would your teachers describe you? How would you describe yourself and behavior in class? How can a student do well in this school? What does success mean for you at this school? Describe how teachers at the school convey/express what success means? At the close of the first student interview, students were given a digital camera and a set of instructions (details are discussed below in the subsection photovoice overview, procedures, processes, and analysis of photovoice). The information in the student focus groups allowed me to juxtapose the experiences of the students from the one-on-one interviews. Their collective voice revealed new understanding of how students experienced MCCA. The focus groups drew clearer understandings from the students’ perspective of what they understood, desired, and expected from the charter school. This allowed for group consensus, as well as exploring key nuances.

Data Analysis

Field notes were kept daily, each note including the day (e.g., Day 1, Day 2…Day 98) and the guidelines for capturing observations were relatively open. That is, field notes ranged from narrative to descriptive data. I also created frequent analytic memos based on varying events for later analysis. If there was enough time, between interviews or focus
groups I would listen to audio immediately afterwards and start to identify keywords that stood out. The terms were aligned with the respective file using a Google document and set aside until further analysis. The raw audio files were loaded to a secure computer with limited access and transcribed. After key sections of the interviews and focus groups were transcribed, a question-by-question analysis was conducted, examining responses for frequency. A code book was also created. The code book consisted of parent codes (and child codes, if and when applicable), definitions of codes, citations in current literature that reference the code, direct examples from the data (e.g., interviews, observations) that reference the code, and a section for reflection.

Open coding led the analysis. That is, first-level headings were found, generating dozens of loose categorizations of codes across the data (Rodríguez and Conchas, 2009). As I developed my analytic focus, I grouped these codes into broader categories, such as “ideology/philosophy,” “disciplinary structures,” and “schooling success dimensions.” After several iterative readings, codes were merged and new codes were created. Different stakeholder groups allowed for a critical triangulation of the data. The observations, interviews, and focus groups were used to identify and begin to understand emerging themes concerning schooling success at the “no-excuses” charter school. The article now shifts to a quick overview of photovoice, followed by my detailed procedures, processes and analysis of using photovoice as a method.

**Photovoice: Procedures, Processes, and Analysis**

Photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, Cash, & Powers, 2000) is a qualitative research method that entrusts research-participants, who are community members, with cameras and encourages them to visually identify and document their social landscapes through photography. Rooted in the Freirean approach to critical, emancipatory education (Freire, 1970), the method positions research participants as co-creators of the object of knowledge and stresses education as a social practice that is an interactive, collective construction (Gadotti, 2017). In the end, the immediacy of the visual image creates evidence and promotes a vivid participatory means of reflection, sharing expertise and the co-creation of knowledge for both research participants and the researcher (Wang, Cash, & Powers, 2000).

With the exception of one student who requested to write an essay, at the conclusion of the first interview, students in the sample were given new digital cameras. I placed each camera inside a 9x12 booklet envelope along with an instruction sheet. Printed on sky-blue paper, so it would stand out from the normal white paper handouts students receive at school, the instruction sheet was labeled from the top, Picture 1 to Picture 10 and asked students to take pictures of “what you think success is and/or what it means to you.” The instructions simply directed students to write at least one sentence as to why the captured image represented success.

During interviews, two participants asked, “what the pictures should be,” and I informed there was no set picture that had to be taken and reemphasized that the picture selection was entirely up to their imagination and how they conceptualize success. However, I told all of the research-participants that taking pictures inside the school may be problematic in classrooms, if teachers deemed it to be a distraction. While the teachers

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3 While the student requested an essay instead of taking pictures, she did not complete the essay before the conclusion of my data collection at MCCA.
and the administrators were informed at the start of the academic year that I was going to conduct photovoice and other data collection methods with student participants, I was cognizant of the rigid structures of MCCA. I informed each of the participants that I did not want to “get them in trouble” with this project, so if they wanted to take a picture inside the school, to first make sure they received permission from a teacher. I also informally added that if the pictures they planned on taking were of people, it would be a good idea to get their permission before taking them.

The research-participants had seven days with the cameras before collection. Upon receipt of the cameras, I copied students’ images to de-identified folders on my secured computer. I also scanned the blue instruction sheet with students’ rationales into an Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF). Next, the PDF instructions alongside the pictures were uploaded to a secure Cloud-based server, so that I could review the pictures and the rationale with the students during the next formal interview. I met individually with the 10 students for a second interview. At the beginning of this open-ended interview, using my iPad, the students were able to see their displayed images on the screen. Image by image, students were asked to explain in detail why the captured photograph conveyed “what you think success is and/or what it means to you,” providing rich insight into the students’ lives. As students addressed their captured photographs, I also reviewed their written response, looking to see if there were any discrepancies in the spoken and written text. The photovoice interview revealed how the students constructed knowledge and for many of the images, (re)imagined the notion of success. Their pictures revealed an important phenomenon concerning success that had not been captured previously in the school. With permission, research-participants’ images were also reviewed during a focus group session with another student who also took part in photovoice. When possible, I paired research-participants with the same gender and with their teacher-identified labels: “ideal” with “ideal” and “at-risk” with “at-risk.” This provided an opportunity to see if there was any consensus or divergence amongst students concerning their images.

During analysis, I placed individual images in groups based upon students’ spoken and written responses to describe their images during the interview and focus group. For instance, in describing several images, students highlighted the importance of human connection as success. Specifically, students’ spoke about the images of family members, friends, community/family traditions, and neighborhood symbols. Sebastian, a seventh grader, who was identified as “ideal” by his teachers for example, captured a picture of three individuals standing at the top of a mountain with their fists raised. When I asked about the image, he told me that it was a picture that he found on the Internet using search terms, as he indicated “teamwork and motivation.” During the interview, he described this image as a team of friends, “For the team, you need friends and stuff to be successful [and without friends] it’s a lot harder for individuals.” That is, if one individual reaches the top, and the other two do not, this was not considered success. Success according to this student was if all three “friends get to the top.” Subsequently, “human connection” became one of the emergent themes based on students’ images and narratives of success.

**Exploring and Positioning My Own Role in The Research Process**

My interest in researching the lived experiences of students of color was a personal as well as professional one. On one hand, I am a racial insider, as I identify as a Black male who cares deeply about the schooling (and consequently the life) experiences of Black and Latino/x males, particularly because of how our social construction of Black and Latino/x masculinity in the context of U.S. schools and the U.S. society, writ large is insidiously positioned. I purposely used the word “our” because I am not naïve. Since
becoming “woke” of my racialized Black male body as an undergraduate attending a predominantly White institution, I knew my gendered melanin is the primary factor people gaze upon, not my invisible characteristics: educational pedigree, familial socioeconomic stature, the “right” zip code, my father’s retired status of a physician, or other markers that may set me apart in the context of other communities of color, particularly the under-resourced Black and Latino/a/x communities that are often the backdrop of my research studies. I also care deeply about how Black and Latina/x females are depicted. Though I do not yet have daughters, I have nieces— all young ladies of color, whose mothers (my sisters) and fathers (my brothers) view them as beautifully and wonderfully created images from the Lord. However, this may not be the immediate characterization of females of color within the context of U.S. schools. As Monique Morris (2016) evidenced in her book, *Pushout*, Black girls are suspended from school at six times the rate of White girls. In addition, Black girls are often negatively positioned as being “ghetto” and “loud” in schooling contexts if they ask questions or otherwise engage in activities that adults consider affronts to their authority. Latinas/x, too face implicit racial and gender biases that result in harsh subjective labels to their character in schools. As I have reflected in previous writings (Marsh & Noguera, 2018), though my racial insider position provided me certain advantages and access in the field, my class outsider position may have inhibited my ability to recognize certain interactions that may have been favorable for the participants because they were so unusual to my experiences in a suburban public school. To address this limitation, I wrote analytic memos to reflect on the essence of the participants’ experiences and communicated with them throughout the school year to ensure I properly represented their lived experiences, instead of superimposing my own viewpoints.

On the other hand, as a researcher, I know that students of color, most often Black and Latino/a/x must often navigate through a sociopolitical landscape that reinforces multidimensional stereotypes and enervating narratives that negatively impact how their lived experiences and how they are understood (both in and out of school). Thus, I wanted to use my position as a qualitative researcher for two-fold purposes: first, to explore the meaning that students make of their lived experiences, specifically how they define and imagine success within the context of a “no-excuses” school; and secondly, and perhaps more intimidatingly, I wanted to contribute to teachers and administrators reflexive process of understanding their students through a different paradigm. In this case, it was established in part from students’ digital photography.

**Findings**

This section presents two key findings about the meaning of success that emerged during interviews, focus groups, and the photovoice project with the students who were labeled by their teachers as “ideal” and “at risk.” The first finding is centered on students’ interpretation of their classroom experiences, while simultaneously highlighting their (sometimes subtle) strategies of how to navigate the rules that govern the “no-excuses” context. The second finding focuses on four of the students’ broader, bolder notions of success captured through their photovoice entries and interviews.

**“Playing the Game”: Student Success Despite the “No Excuses” Environment**

Participants who were identified as both “ideal” and “at-risk” by their teachers shared similar dispositions about what success looks and sounds like for a student in a classroom
with a “no-excuses” orientation to learning. In particular, every participant believed there was a prescribed space of success that they could occupy with limited degrees of freedom that must never go beyond the school’s communicated mold. While participants’ behavior varied greatly, to ensure they never crossed the threshold, participants seemingly made strategic decisions that protected themselves from the school’s rigid pedagogical exchange. For instance, Niyatt, a seventh grader who was identified as “ideal” by her teachers, expressed the need to alter her persona to fit within MCCA. She stated, “In school, I try not to be that outgoing…because I don’t like getting deductions and ReStarts and [other negative consequences]. …You can’t talk or interact with friends here.” Niyat likened being friendly and socially confident, which is the definition of “outgoing,” as symptomatic to problem behavior that would be linked to the school’s detention space. Later, however, she confided, “When I am outside of school I can talk really loud, but not that loud. I am interactive…. ” Here, Niyayat owned her authentic self as someone who is “interactive” with others and, quite possibly, “loud.” But she is quick to highlight that her loud is an acceptable volume, which abides by the school’s “no-excuses” regulations.

Lamar, another student labeled as “ideal,” too, expressed a strategic modification of his authentic self to fit inside the “no-excuses” context. Lamar exclaimed to be a successful student at MCCA, “Don’t be different, …seem like you’re interested, always follow teacher’s directions.” And lastly, he said, always “keep opinions under wraps.” In his interview, Lamar spoke at length about the import of not sharing opinions, as in his mind, he learned the hard way. He shared that his caregivers applied to send him to a preparatory boarding school outside of the state, but one of the requirements was a recommendation from the school principal to which the MCCA principal did not show a bode of support. Lamar explained, “Mrs. Stockton wrote I was deceitful, officious, and very disruptive in the classroom.” He continued, “My grades were fine,” but Lamar believed the principal’s comments were in part because he had conflicting perspectives about the school. As a student who was homeschooled before attending MCCA, during his first two years at MCCA Lamar said, “I felt as if everyone was against me [at MCCA]—I still feel that way sometimes; the teachers are against me.” But during the year of the data collection, as an eighth grader, Lamar had learned what to say and not say publicly. With continued aspirations to attend a private boarding school, go to college and then medical school and eventually become a neurosurgeon Lamar believed public critiques of MCCA could only be an impediment for his trajectory. Thus, in his words, Lamar strategically “plays the game.”

Other participants in the study had a different approach to obtaining success at MCCA, one that seemingly rendered participants void of their humanity. For instance, Mateo, a seventh grader identified as “at risk,” and whom teachers described as “disinvested” from his education, indicated the only way for him to be successful at MCCA was to “Say what the teacher wants you to say…act in a way a teacher wants you to act.” While Mateo had one of the highest State math scores in the seventh grade, his words and actions needed to be in precise agreement to that of his MCCA teachers. Deviating from those norms would, in his view, illicit adverse consequences. Similar to Mateo, Abby, a seventh grader also labeled as “at risk,” summed up a successful student’s positioning at MCCA. She explained, “Basically become a machine—don’t move, don’t speak, don’t breathe unless they tell you to. And when they do, be very, very quiet so you don’t make a sound.” As a researcher and educator who values and incorporates the narratives of students, Abby’s interpretation of how students’ can be successful in this “no-excuses” context is meaningful. She equated a student’s behavior to that of a machine, or in the context of the criminal justice system (i.e., penitentiaries), as a prisoner whose bodily movements and sounds are constantly under surveillance and regulated.
Overall, participants’ narrow interpreted notions of success at MCCA gave insight into how teachers manage classrooms and as a result, manage students’ bodies within the “no-excuses” context. Simultaneously, students offered how they negotiate the context, with some acquiescing to the environment, some strategically navigating through the environment, and others losing their humanity.

(Re)Imagination of Success Beyond the Classroom through Photovoice

Even in an environment that the students described narrowly, there was a shifting in students’ conceptualization of success when they received digital cameras. Student-participants were asked to capture images that represented, “What you think success is and/or what it means to you?” The prompt yielded 74 images, and analysis of those images revealed that 80 percent of the student photographs illustrated four emergent themes of success: a) Human Connection; b) Educative Experiences; c) Original Compositions; and d) Survival Methods. Below, I highlight exemplar participant images and in students’ words, offer explanations about the images.

**Human connection.** Nineteen images revealed success is/what success means to students as family, familial and cultural traditions, friendships, and community-based symbols and artifacts.

As captured from Figure 1, Niyatt, a student who was considered “ideal,” took a picture of her mother and father, a couple who, in her eyes, represented unity, a unit of Black love that cared for one another. Outside of a few celebrated holidays (e.g., Latin Heritage and Black History Months), however, there were no deliberate conversations about family traditions or cultures at MCCA—certainly, not in a school-wide context of being an element in determining what success is and what success means for the students attending the school.

“That is family. I thought family was successful because it shows how they are able to commit and stay together and taking care of each other which could be simply successful for family.” (Niyatt, 7th “ideal” Black female)
during their interviews were the antithesis to success. Some teachers also had deficit orientations about the families, specifically the “parenting” of the students. In an interview with Ms. Spradley, a White seventh grade science teacher, vented about her experience with one such mother: “Some parents think we’re petty.” Ms. Spradley called Ashton’s mom because he was sent to the discipline room for “making noises in class.” Ms. Spradley continued, “His mom [has] not bought in. If you’re not bought into the system, and annoyed by what’s happening in the class or with the teachers, then why are you sending your kid here? The things that annoy you are also the same things that attracted you to us.” Ms. Spradley, like many of the teachers at MCCA was under the impression that the school knows exactly what it is doing as it relates to discipline and success, and it is the caregivers and families that need to get on board and buy-in.

**Educative experiences.** Fifteen images revealed success is/what success means to students as academic accomplishments and symbols representing higher education aspirations or related to their current public charter school.

“My brother’s certificate after he finished college and it inspired me. You have to be successful in the future. Be successful in college... and don’t make mistakes. My [other] brother owes $3,000 and is not allowed to go back until it is paid. I know not to make mistakes. And try to get a scholarship by doing my work and follow directions”

(Felipe, 8th, “at-risk” Latino/Black male)

![Image 2: Brother’s “college certificate”](image)

At first glance, it would seem that some of the participant photographs under this theme aligned with the mission of MCCA, such as the “willingness to work really hard,” as posited by one teacher. Yet, for some images, the students’ discussion about the image revealed critical meaning into the complexities of their lived experiences. Take for instance, Felipe’s photo, Figure 2, of his oldest brother’s “college certificate.” In our conversation, while he indicated that going to college was an indicator of success, there was a caveat, in that “you can’t make mistakes.” Felipe believes that you have to finish college, but also that one cannot make mistakes in the process. This mirrors what he’s learned in the “no-excuses” context. While there is emphasis on college, it hinges upon meritocracy, or in his words, “hard work and following directions.” Felipe also spoke about the financial constraints as a result of higher education, particularly as it affected his other older brother who owed $3,000.00 and could not reenroll into classes. Felipe saw his brother’s inability to repay a student loan as a character flaw, a “mistake” to be avoided. Felipe did not have a critical understanding of financial aid and the wealth gap in
the U.S., as he associated an individual attribution of irresponsibility, as opposed to structural implication of why his brother may not be able to repay a loan. Further, within the walls of MCCA, there was a privileging of students attending private, four-year colleges. In the school’s main office, there was entire display of the top 50 private four-year colleges/universities in the U.S. Each location displayed its rankings and uniqueness. In the hallways of MCCA, college pendants^4^ perched from every corner of the ceiling and every classroom was named after the college/university attended by a current MCCA teacher. Despite the emphasis on higher education, there was little mention of other conditions that factor into college attendance, namely financial literacy and debt. As the co-principal shared during her interview, “There’s a very strong ideology of what we do, the curriculum that we have, everything is based and couched in the path to a successful life through college. You—your end goal—is you must get to college.” Thus, for MCCA the articulated path to success seemed to just be about getting students into college, and perhaps that is why there was no emphasis on financial planning, debt management and most importantly, as it related to Felipe’s other older brother, retention.

**Original compositions.** Twelve images revealed success is/what success means to students as creative interests and talents.

“It’s success in its own way. You don’t have to be like everyone else to be famous or to even be successful.” (Mateo, 7th “at-risk” Latino male)

| Image 3. Living Weirdo |

Within the walls of MCCA, students are ostensibly granted two classes to exhibit creativity and agency in the context of the “no-excuses” context: music and theatre. Due to the space constraints of the school^5^ and the size of the staff^6^, students rotated between music, theatre, or gym during trimesters. When I first entered the site during the fall term, seventh graders were taking gym, eighth graders were taking theatre, and the sixth graders were taking music. This is important because according to nearly 17 percent of the student images, success had been (re)imagined to include students’ most creative pursuits and interests. Participants’ original

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^4^ Months into my research and after an informal interview with one of the administrators about the gulf of institutions that seemed to be missing from the walls (e.g., vocation, two-year, community colleges), new pendants were added to the school’s collection during the spring term.

^5^ MCCA is co-located with another school, meaning it shared its building and the general facilities (gym, cafeteria, playground, and auditorium) with another public school.

^6^ The only subjects that had multiple teachers in the same grade level were Math and Reading.
compositions were in the form of sculptures, book covers of favorite literary works, production equipment for music and cinematography, as well as drawings, like Mateo’s picture (see Figure 3). Mateo knows there’s value in expressing oneself—being heard, and creating, not just being an idle consumer, as he identifies as a “living weirdo.” But in the “no-excuses” context, even the spaces where students were supposed to have “freedom,” to use a term given by a teacher, these spaces, too, were restrictive and offered prescribed notions of success as these classes were not highly regarded spaces for closing the purported “achievement gap.”

**Survival methods.** Twelve images revealed success is/what success means to students as coping processes to overcome or prevent adversity. 

“For every shot [Jordan] makes, he takes a step forward. I tell myself just take one step at a time and keep moving forward, then I go to school. If you take a shot once in a while you’re going to make your shot. And if you keep shooting, shooting, and shooting that’s when you’re going to start getting good and you’re making progress.” (Patrick, 8th “at-risk” Latino/Black male)

Another type of success as elicited from the participants’ photos were individual survival methods (e.g. activities, routines or processes) that were used to overcome some form of adversity, and for some participants’ preventative strategies, if and when adversity came. For most, the method was in place due to adversity faced at MCCA. Some of the participant photographs literally represented activities students engage in outside of MCCA. As one participant labeled “at risk” described his picture of a basketball court, “[I go there] to get away, especially when I don’t do well in school.” Other images captured a snapshot of students’ routines that were used as daily forms of encouragement. As seen in Figure 4, Patrick shared a photograph from his routine that started as he exited his bedroom. Primarily identified by his teachers as “at risk” because he was retained twice, in our interview, he described his selection of Michael Jordan as a daily motivator to do better at MCCA, or in his words, “to keep making a shot.”

As a student at MCCA, there were some assaults on Patrick’s humanness and he, like others, was trying to find ways to keep going. However, depending upon a student’s label as affixed by teachers, coping processes had a double standard at MCCA. Whereas a student identified as “ideal” was encouraged to be reflective and develop a stress release like basketball or video games, a student identified as “at risk” was told s/he did not have time for a stress release. In the “every minute” counts, no-excuses context, “at-risk” students were not privy to reflexivity; instead, they were simply told to be resilient and exhibit grit.
Discussion and Implications

Students’ voices, perspectives, and imaginations often have little to no role in shaping school policies, processes and standards, at the local classroom, state or federal levels (Anyon, 2005; Noguera, 2003; Orfield, 2004; Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004; Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). This is particularly true in traditional public schools, and most certainly true in urban “no-excuses” public charter schools. MCCA resembled Bernstein’s (1990) view of strong classification and strong framing, whereby the daily curriculum and pedagogy and the control of how knowledge was presented (e.g., pacing, sequencing, and selection of activities) to students was predetermined.

As such, value for the cultural resources and prior knowledge of students was ignored, and thus every student, whether labeled as “ideal” or “at risk” had a common experience when thinking about how to be successful in the context of the school. This was defined as a pedagogical exchange that regulated voice, movement, and students’ authentic selves. Rooted in the ‘pedagogy of poverty’ which intersects students’ racial/ethnic identity, socioeconomic status, and spatial location, some students consciously created strategies just to subsist in the space. In the end, the “no excuses” context operated as part of a larger, yet tacit process that steered the conscious and subconscious assumptions about low-income, Black and Latino/a/x students and translated into explicit teaching and learning practices that have the potential to ultimately reproduce already marginalized youth.

However, as evidenced from the images captured in the photovoice component of the study, students were resisting MCCA’s reproduction, particularly in how they made meaning of success. Outside of the classroom, students had conceptualized success (e.g., human connection, creativity, survival methods) that operate both naturally and effectively toward their healthy development and well-being. Combined, the participants’ conceptualizations of success were what Ryan and Deci (1995) would posit as “psychological nutriments” as they were necessary to actualize inherent potential. Educators, however, still play an important role as students spend more time in school than outside of it. Thus, educators should be integrating students lived experiences and local knowledge into the classrooms which could enable teachers to have a more thorough, yet nuanced understanding about their students which can shed light to the assets (or obstacles) that may exist and impact the teaching and learning. Photovoice can serve as both the data collection method and analytical tool. Creating a safe space for students to visually identify and furnish photographs that can help teachers understand their interpretations of a situation or opportunity has the potential to promote teacher-student partnerships that forge a communal learning experience (Gay, 2002), one that is genuinely student-centered and equitable.

While most P-12 teachers agree in theory with the idea of valuing cultural and linguistic diversity of their students, as evidenced this is not an everyday pedagogical practice. Educators should strive toward pedagogies that are more than relevant to the cultural experiences and practices of young people, but support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic funds of knowledge of their communities while simultaneously offering exposure to dominant cultural competences (Paris, 2012). Efforts towards cultural sustainability require changing actions and deeply-seated teaching practices. These practices can only be accomplished by challenging and disrupting normalizing discourses in the policies
that inform curriculum design, instructional routines, and the pedagogies used in teacher education programs and in P-12 schools. But this requires humility and reflection. To truly (re)imagine “no-excuses” public charter schools, many of which have been purportedly designed to create opportunities for low-income students of color, teachers must allow the problematization of the conceptualization of success. Though photovoice is only one form of inquiry, allowing students to be active participants in the design and implementation process of their schooling (Freire, 1970), while honoring their voice and the ways in which they make meaning of success in their daily experiences, treats students not just as objects, but also as agents of reform and improvement.

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STUDIO

The Art of Zero Bey:  
The Man Behind the Brush

Glenda Lewis, University of New Mexico

Hailing from South Central Los Angeles, Zero Bey is a second-generation African-American painter and Africanist cultural scholar. He is a recent graduate of the University of New Mexico (UNM) with a double major in Africana Studies and English Literature. His creative inspiration comes from a critical and close reading of texts of the Black experience in the United States and the broader Pan-African World. Intersecting race, class, gender, and sexuality, his artwork seeks to illuminate unequal power-relationships and disrupt oppressive forces in the promotion of social justice, equity, and inclusion.

Africana Studies and African American Literature are the primary sources of inspiration for the content of his paintings, and Zero asserts that his paintings must be read as text; the interpretation of each piece will be dependent upon the cultural literacy of the viewer. The specific social issues presented in his work reflect his interpretation of our collective social reality. These factors contribute to the socio/politico themes and the execution of contemporary ideas appearing in any socially conscious art production.

Most influenced by American writers and authors within a historical context, Zero prides himself on being a voracious reader and has been inspired by the work of Ralph Ellison, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Richard Wright, Chester Himes, James Baldwin, Toni Morrison and, most recently, the comic-book and essay writing of Ta-Nehisi Coates. Zero also credits the influence of painters and artistic movements, all of which reflect his broad geographic and trans-historical interests: Jean-Michel Basquiat, Romare Bearden, Van Gogh, and Gustav Klimt, as well as artists of Abstract Expressionism and the Harlem Renaissance. Music, too, is integral to his creative process, particularly Afro-Asiatic music modes of jazz and rhythm structured sounds.

Zero sees his artistic career as an ever-evolving process that drives him to produce more artwork than can be exhibited publicly. Interest in his work has normally resulted from viewings in private studio meetings and social media networks, along with national and international collaborations. Recently, on the campus of UNM he has shared his artwork via community engagement presentations sponsored by the Project for New Mexico’s Graduates of Color (PNMGC). In 2016, Zero had a solo exhibition at the Augusta Savage Gallery, located on the campus of the University of Massachusetts, and in 2014, he had an overseas artist residency in Bangalore, India.

Zero Bey continues to experiment and test the limits of his subject matter. For example, he no longer stretches his canvas or utilizes framing formats for exhibitions. He has come to prefer the draped tapestry aesthetic of hanging paintings. In this process, he uses less cropping and more overpainting of the edges to extend the motion of the image and to widen the audience’s visual experience. His subject matter is masterfully gaged to initiate meaningful interaction with his audience and purposefully measured for shock value, resulting in the visual repulsion and attraction of the viewer. This is a method which he uses to alternatively effect the audience response. He sees the role of Instagram and image-heavy media platforms common today as an essential element in developing this viewership. As a result, these types of social media platforms provide direct and timely audience response with little effort on the part of the artist.
Americanization of Oggabooga

Zero Bey, 2016
Acrylic paint on canvas
33 in. x 24 in.

Blind Man with Pistol
Zero Bey, 2016
Acrylic paint, graphite on paper
48 in. x 38 in.
“America is ripe for revolutionary social shifts in the practice of democracy,” Zero explains. “As an artist, I’m obligated to comment on what I witness occurring historically in our American culture.” As such, Zero intends to continue to utilize his art to express injustice in the world, while promoting social justice, equity, and inclusion.

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Glenda Lewis is a Ph.D. Candidate in Educational Thought and Sociocultural Studies in the Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Studies department at the University of New Mexico. Her scholarly interests include colorblind ideology and intersectionality.
AFRO-ATLANTIC ODYSSEUS

Zero Bey, 2017
Acrylic paint on canvas,
55 in. x 55 in.
BOOK REVIEW

Critical Race Spatial Analysis: Mapping to Understand and Address Educational Inequity
ISBN- 978-1620364246

Neritza Díaz-Cruz
University of New Mexico

Looking at the intersection of race and education in an innovative way is what Critical Race Spatial Analysis: Mapping to Understand and Address Educational Inequity (2017) does. Using a spatial lens, the essays in this collected work, edited by Deb Morrison, Subini Ancy Annamma and Darrell D. Jackson, propose a new way of viewing how race affects educational equity. The book is organized into three sections. The first section, consisting of two chapters, introduces the book’s essays and clarifies their underlying theoretical framework. The second (chapters 3-5) explores methodologies used to study the intersection of race and education utilizing spatial theory. The third section, containing the remaining five chapters, offers application of the methodologies previously explored and concludes with suggestions for future research.

While chapter one gives an overview of each of the chapters and the reasons why this work is important, chapter two offers a definition for critical race spatial analysis (CRSA) by clarifying the connection between critical race theory (CRT) and spatial theory, more specifically the work of Edward Soja, and making a case for the use of CRSA in education. There is also a discussion of techniques used in this type of research, such as ground truthing, portraiture, and contextualized counter-geographic narratives. Although each chapter is rich in citations, there is not an in-depth discussion of the cited works, so it is expected that the reader will have some basic knowledge of CRT and spatial theory. In the concluding chapter, the editors highlight the types of tools and methodologies used by the contributing writers in this collection and showcase how they align with CRSA.

Besides CRT, many of the writers in this volume use DisCrit and LatCrit as part of their analyses. The book refers to many methodologies—such as education journey maps, augmented fotonovelas, and the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software—that challenge the reader to consider data collection in different ways. There are interesting discussions on various spatial topics, including the difference between racial space analysis and CRSA, and spatial visualization versus spatial analysis.

The third chapter explores the use of education journey mapping as a way to disrupt inequity in the classroom. Subini Ancy Annamma examines how such mapping allows students to identify power issues and discuss them in the classroom. In such a way, educational journey mapping gives students the opportunity to see not only what challenges they have experienced, but how they have resisted them. The following chapter challenges the reader to find the spatial component in teaching and learning in order to deepen understanding of inequities in education. It also discusses two methods for examining spatial data, visualizations, and spatial analysis, as well as various GIS tools for exploring education phenomena. In chapter five, Leigh Anna Hidalgo discusses a study she conducted within a community that had been exposed to predatory practices. She explains the use of augmented fotonovelas as a tool to reveal how white supremacy engages in the creation of oppressive spaces. The author highlights this tool as one which
is not bound to academic spaces, so a community can also join in the creation of narratives that are rich and vibrant.

In chapters six and seven, the practice of redlining is at the heart of the studies presented. While Solórzano and Vélez illustrate redlining through a survey of the history of communities around the Los Angeles area, Blaisdell adapts the concept of redlining to the practices of teachers within the classroom, demonstrating how classrooms can contribute to the racialization of space and segregation of students of color. Both chapters explore different tools to approach redlining analysis. CRSA is utilized in the analysis of community data in chapter six, but the study on classroom redlining uses racial spaces analysis. It is in the latter that the notion of the “spacing” of individuals is discussed, as well as the differences between distributive and spatial justice. This comes in handy when reflecting on the study results of Hogrebe and Tate, who used GIS software to look at differences in the opportunity to learn (OTL) for student populations accessing advanced mathematics courses across Missouri.

Chapter eight provides an overview of the difficulties and potentialities of using a spatial approach to study inequities in neoliberal urban education reform. While spatial approaches allow for a clearer visualization of the challenges, Waitoller and Radinsky warn academics on “how spatial representations can obscure, neglect, or elucidate complex forms of inequities at the intersections of race and ability and their relationship with the production of space” (p.162). The editors conclude by reiterating the purpose for the collection of research within the book, as well as their hope that this research will inspire others to continue this work. In this final chapter, the editors share the question that was asked of all of the researchers whose work is included in the collection: “How does space impact educational inequity?”

The book moves from very explicit applications to a discussion of using geospatial and temporal analysis within a neoliberal system. One of the strengths of the book is that the authors are adept in explaining concepts they introduced, such as geographies of despair and geographies of hope, and tying these concepts back to the main subject of the book, CRSA. Another asset of the book is that it exposes the work of academics whose work may not necessarily be as well-known as Lefebvre. In addition, most of the chapters build upon one another, making for a quick and interesting read. Although previous knowledge of the theories is useful, it does not prevent a novice in the field from being able to understand and engage with the material.

On the other hand, readers expecting to gain a deeper understanding of CRT will not find it in the pages of this book. Instead, they will discover possible applications of CRT in the analysis of spatial constructions. It is made clear from the beginning that this book is not for CRT beginners, but for those who already have a working knowledge of the theory. Neither is this a book for a spatial theory beginner. The topics within the book can appeal to a classroom teacher looking to create an equitable space in her classroom, to a graduate student thinking about spatial theory, and to a professional scholar looking at the possibilities of applying CRT analysis to new areas. This collection offers a strong sample of how a spatial lens can enrich educational research by critically highlighting what is happening not only inside of our classrooms, but also within our communities.

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