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INTERSECTIONS

CRITICAL ISSUES IN EDUCATION

Fall/Winter 2020 • Volume 4, No. 1



Above: "Lost in Mass Ascension" by Harley Kirschner. Mixed Media on Cradled Birch (24" x 20")

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INTERSECTIONS

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Cover Artist: Harley Kirschner is a working-class, Irish, Jewish, transmasculine multi-disciplinary artist, activist, and writer. Originally from upstate New York, Kirschner relocated to Albuquerque, New Mexico to transition less visibly. Although he has experience in collage and visual journaling, Kirschner has worked primarily in experimental mixed media art since 2004. He is currently a senior at the University of New Mexico, where he focuses on painting, metalsmithing, and social justice issues.

The cover art, “Lost in Mass Ascension,” is the eleventh painting in *Silhouettes and Stories*, a twelve-painting series in which Kirschner created one painting per month for a year that incorporated natural materials collected during that month. The painting depicts Marsha P. Johnson soaring into the sky while surrounded by a sea of trans faces. Although the piece expresses grief and fear, Kirschner sees it as a “proper farewell, a prayer, an expression of honor and community.” “Lost in Mass Ascension” was originally accompanied by a zine that told the stories of many of the faces within the balloons.

For more information on Kirschner’s art, please contact Harley Kirschner on Instagram at [harleykirschnerart](#) or Facebook at Harley Kirschner Art.

Sponsored by the University of New Mexico’s Department of Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Studies, *Intersections: Critical Issues in Education* is an online, peer-reviewed, open-access academic journal. We seek to deepen understandings of how race, class, gender, sexuality, exceptionalities, power, well-being, and other subjectivities play out in educational settings as a means of advancing social justice for all people. *Intersections* serves as a forum for diverse voices and perspectives and reflects a variety of disciplines. Our focus is on work that interrogates, disrupts, and challenges oppression. We welcome a range of materials, including academic papers, personal perspectives, and other innovative forms of scholarship that may speak to an audience beyond academia.

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Between the Visceral and the Lie: Lessons on Teaching Violence

Brian Gibbs, *The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

Abstract

Drawing from two qualitative case studies, one researching how teachers teach about war to the children of soldiers and the other examining how teachers teach lynching near historic lynching sites, this critical phenomenological study weighs how much horror and how much hope should be taught if the aim of the instruction is a liberating education. The author argues that a balance of both is necessary. Students cannot be left in the hopelessness of knowledge alone but must also be taught how to engage their world with the possibility of making change.

Keywords: *liberatory education, critical pedagogy, hard history*

Introduction

Although it wasn't much of a window, the students continued to glance at it and through it. The classroom was on the ground floor and was covered with fencing and mesh to prevent break-ins. The students were riveted to the narrative the teacher was telling, but they were also absently tapping their pens or notebooks. The teacher, Mr. Jones, was talking about the escalation of nuclear war from the first atomic bombs up to the thermo-nuclear warheads in the current United States arsenal. He conveyed the information through lecture and notes on the board. Purposefully not referring to any photographs, Mr. Jones was concerned about the emotions the content might provoke in his students, the children of soldiers. Realizing the students' discomfort and fear, Mr. Jones ended his lecture earlier than anticipated. His lecture had included the blast and burn patterns of the first atomic bombs dropped on Japan, the escalation of missile types, how nuclear missiles were able to fly farther and faster, and what cities were targeted by the Soviet Union. Mr. Jones explained his teaching this way:

I knew students were getting nervous. Many of them heard about what happened on 9/11. The base was closed, [and] everyone assumed it would get hit by whatever was attacking the United States.... [S]tudents need to know this. The students can't understand current foreign policy without understanding nuclear missiles. Otherwise, the Iran Peace Agreement makes no sense, and our ongoing negotiations with North Korea, make no sense.

Mr. Jones, a white teacher who served in the military during the first Gulf War and the father of a recently deployed soldier, understood his students and their families. He and his family had experienced the emotional pressure that the students felt from family members' multiple deployments overseas. He was fully aware of the stress that students

were under, but he also knew something else. Students needed to know this information, not only to be informed citizens and voters aware of national policy (Flanagan, 2013; Ross, 2016), but also because their families and community were directly affected by it. When the history of war was taught, students told him they wanted to know more. “We don’t talk about this at home” was a common refrain Mr. Jones heard from students, but he also knew that what students want, was not always good for them. So “I walk a razor thin line,” he explained, “between the truth and the horror of war. I mean, I can’t lie to them...but the history of war is terrifying.”

“The history of the United States, when told honestly, is a horror story” (Gibbs, 2019b, p. 2). It is rarely taught this way. Typically taught as a gradual unfolding of greatness (Epstein, 2009; Leahey, 2010), history too often disregards the more difficult, horrible and violent narrative of the United States that is closer to reality. Seeking to determine how teachers can use difficult history as part of a liberating education, this research is driven by the question: *How can teaching history through a lens of horror and hope lead to student liberation?*

Theoretical Framework

A pedagogy for liberation was used as the theoretical framework for this project. A liberatory education might best be described as both learning to read the world and the word (Freire & Macedo, 1987). This means that schools do not just prepare students with academics, plying them with reading, mathematics, and science (reading the word) but helping students understand the context of their world (reading the world). Learning is a political act, as is teaching. What and how information is organized and taught reveals the politics of the teacher and impacts the politics of students. For it to be a liberatory education, reading the world and the word must be “both together in dialectical solidarity” (Freire, 1994, p. 105). Rather than only preparing students for college or the workplace, a liberatory education aims to make students aware of the world and their place in it. School and learning is constructed in such a way that students learn content that is connected to their own lives so that they use the knowledge gained to better understand the realities of their world. Through a liberatory education, students learn who has power and who does not (McLaren, 1993), what the levers of power are (Anyon, 1981, 2005; Apple, 2004), and how students can advocate for themselves and others (Gillen, 2015). A liberatory education is an abolitionist education (Love, 2018), an education for freedom, for escape, and for shifting future possibilities.

Paulo Freire (1970) indicated that conscientization, or the development of a critical consciousness (Duncan-Andrade, 2007, 2010), involves an awareness of who the student is and what place they hold in society, and the use of a praxis (Freire, 1970) or gaining new information and ideas, reflecting upon them and then taking action to correct past wrongs. To know only the racism, sexism, and classism of the world is a recipe for personal disaster. A truthful understanding of the world can lead to self-destructive and self-sabotaging behavior. For a liberating education, students not only need to understand content and how to read the world; they also need to be taught intentional skills of resistance (Gillen, 2015; Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001; Sondel et al., 2018).

Methodology

Critical and phenomenological in nature (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009), this study borrows data from two qualitative case studies (Stake, 1989). The phenomenon under examination is the use of horror and hope in the teaching of difficult knowledge; it is critical because it examines what balance between horror and hope is needed for a

liberating education. One study focused on the teaching of war to the children of soldiers and involved nine teachers at three schools. The second study involved eight teachers teaching about lynching in schools near historic lynching sites.

Data for both studies came from two 90-150 minute, semi-structured, and audio-recorded interviews per teacher (Stake, 1989), one of these an elicitation device (Barton; 2010; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). All teachers were presented with four descriptions of teaching, including teaching war for the war study and teaching lynching for the lynching study. I observed each teacher teaching either war or lynching from three to eight days. During these observations, I used a running record to note as much of classroom discourse and activity as possible (Wright-Maley, 2015).

Data Analysis

I transcribed, printed, and coded all field notes, observation guides, and interviews twice. The first time I open coded the data by hand (Saldaña, 2015). For the second round of data analysis I coded using Nvivo, a qualitative data analysis software, to store the axial codes (Saldaña, 2015). Initial codes included fear of content, confusion over how to teach this, and community pressure. These were expanded upon with the second round of coding with axial codes. Some of these codes included teaching horror, teaching hope, pedagogical choice, use of content, and reasoning for decisions. I wrote analytic memos as I began to see patterns emerging during the first round of coding and continued throughout the coding process to reflect upon my analysis and gain deeper insights.

Participants

All teachers involved in these studies are deeply connected to their school communities and have taught high school social studies for between eight and 28 years in rural schools in the American South. Of the nine teachers involved in the study of war three identified as Black, one as Latinx, and five as white. Four of these teachers identified as female and five male. Of the eight teachers involved in the study of lynching three identified as Black and four white. Five of these teachers identified as female and three, male. All schools were ethnically mixed to varying degrees, but white maintains the majority in each school site.

Context of Studies

I collected the data for both studies after the presidential election of 2016. The anger surrounding that election impacted the teaching described, as well as the decisions made. Recent studies have indicated (Costello, 2017; Rogers et al., 2017; Sondel et al., 2018) that verbal and physical attacks against students of color, particularly those who are recent immigrants or of the Muslim faith, as well as women, have escalated (Costello, 2017). Sondel et al. (2018) advocate for a pedagogy of trauma (Sondel et al., 2018) to help students counteract this rise in threat. Meanwhile, Hadley-Dunn, et al. (2019) found that, under national pressure to avoid controversial issues, teachers were intentionally not teaching complicated content nor were they choosing to teach content via a social justice lens.

The rural communities in which these two studies took place responded to the election by becoming hypervigilant to teaching that could be perceived as unpatriotic or anti-American. Teachers were dismissed or pressured out of positions for teaching controversial lessons (Grubb, 2017; Hawkins, 2016). These incidents have had a chilling effect. Teachers who want to teach critically and through a justice-oriented lens must reconsider this choice, as they feel intense scrutiny and pressure from the larger school community to avoid complex content.

Within this context, the teachers of these studies were teaching children of soldiers about war, and teaching about the history of U.S. lynching in classrooms located near historic lynching sites. This teaching was complicated. Teachers in both studies reported feeling pressure to not teach the histories of war and lynching critically (Gibbs, 2019a; 2020a; 2020b). Critical teaching calls for a deep analysis of historical instances, examining the racial, gendered, and homophobic aspects of them and weighing the justness and morality of choices made by historical actors. To teach war and lynching uncritically means to avoid or omit particular details or to paint the content in a nationalist narrative that frames the United States as having progressed since the time of the incidents (Epstein, 2009). Students demonstrated a desire to speak about both war and lynching, as well as an awareness of the outside pressure placed upon teachers and schools to not discuss these topics.

Positionality

I was a social studies teacher in East Los Angeles, California for 16 years. I taught through a critical and justice-oriented lens asking students to examine structural inequities such as racism, misogyny, homophobia and to investigate acts of resistance and change. I hoped my students would develop a critical consciousness, a habit of critiquing content and looking for the power at work behind the history (Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Freire, 1970). I also worked at having my students develop a sense of critical civic agency, or ways that they as students could engage in acts of advocacy for themselves, their community and others (DeVitis, 2011; Ross, 2017). Currently, a researcher and teacher educator of teachers who will educate children in the American South, I research how to teach critically in school communities where this approach is deemed problematic—in other words, how to teach critically and for justice in school communities that are ideologically or politically conservative or more interested in an unfettered and uncluttered history of their geographic area and the country. I am an outsider to rural Southern communities, have never served in the military, am white, male, heterosexual, and cis-gendered.

Findings

The main argument of this paper is that teachers are forced to walk a fine line while teaching difficult topics—particularly, if teachers want to teach critically. In terms of teaching about the history of war, a critical pedagogy entails an examination of how the war started, how it was fought, the violence involved, resistance to war, as well as examinations of the racial, sexual, and gendered dynamics of it. Teaching the history of lynching critically includes investigating white supremacy, racism, segregation, racial violence, and the sexual aspects of lynching, as well as Black resistance to lynching and the history of the Black freedom struggle (Dray, 2001; Pinar, 2001; Theoharis, 2018). Teachers encounter fierce resistance to engaging students in critical inquiry. They encounter community pressure, school-based pressure, standards and testing pressure, student resistance, and their own lack of content and pedagogical knowledge in teaching about the histories of war and lynching in context. To teach both of these topics well to their student populations—children of soldiers and possible inheritors of historic lynching—a balance between horror and hope is necessary. The proper balance can reveal the systemic oppression that is present during warfare and lynching, while providing examples of resistance. Students can gain not only a critical consciousness but direction on actions to take to remedy current manifestations of violence. Ironically, several participants in this study indicated that real hope cannot be taught without an analysis of the horror; to teach otherwise is to convey a false hope, a hope that is thin, anemic, and inaccurate.

This, then, is the balancing act: teaching both the horror and the hope, but not leaning too much to one side. To teach the horror means to help students look directly at and come to understand the terrifying violence and complexity of war. Too often, wars are couched in defensive (we were attacked) or righteous (we are going to help) frames that offer simplistic explanations, avoiding the imperialistic, xenophobic, capitalistic drives that often influence foreign policy decisions, particularly as they pertain to war. As I have written elsewhere, history, when told honestly, is a horror story (Gibbs, 2019b). To teach the histories of lynching and war with hope is to include the counter narrative—that is, that there has always been and will always be resistance to both racial violence (lynching) and war. The stories of resistance, both historic and current, both national and local, need to be included in the narrative. The hope of this history lies in other choices that have been made: Soldiers, civilians, students, organizations, children, activists, mothers, and fathers have resisted. They refused to go quietly and fought for something better, a world without war, or at least without *this* war, and a world without lynching, or at least not *this* lynching.

This study reveals that teachers taught the violence of war and lynching differently. Teachers were more likely to teach the horror in their lessons concerning lynching than they were in their instruction on war. The reason seems to be, as one participant indicated, “I have to look them in the face, while I’m teaching this.” In other words, it is too close; the teachers worry about the socio-emotional stress this instruction could cause to students. In the teaching of war, there was a selective teaching that avoided historic moments of controversy that portrayed the United States and American soldiers in a negative light. In the teaching of lynching, most teachers used all content at their disposal, including specific and detailed writing describing the events and graphically violent photographs to depict the horror. They typically leaned into the horror, sometimes forgetting to teach hope specifically. To teach these topics as a liberatory education (Freire, 1970) a combination of both the horror and the hope is needed. Both must be analyzed and understood, and the hope, as one teacher indicated, needs to be “put into action.” That is, students need to engage, within the classroom at least, but also outside the classroom if possible, a dangerous citizenship (Vinson & Ross, 2010) where they understand how to enact hope for self and community growth.

Teaching the horror

When taught accurately, history is a horror show (Gibbs, 2019a). It is filled with resistance, struggle, sacrifice, and movements for justice, yes, but these are often in response or reaction to war, conflict, murder, oppression or injustice. To understand the reaction, often the hope, students need to understand the complex story of the historical horror. The teaching of horror can look differently depending upon the individual teacher, the students, and the school, and community context.

Teaching war. The teachers who taught war to the children of soldiers were all connected to the military. That is, they were either married to, divorced from, the child of, a family member of the military, a veteran themselves or a combination of these. The teachers were deeply embedded in the community and impacted by the heritage history (Levy, 2014; Lowenthal, 1998) of the school and larger community surrounding the military base. This emerged in classrooms as teachers often protected individual soldiers, typically portraying them as victims of circumstance when bad acts were committed. As one teacher, Mr. Green, indicated:

It’s hard. I want to show students a critique of not only military strategy and the choice to go to war, but also how it’s fought, how soldiers experience it, and what they do under the stress of combat. But it’s hard for me. My old man did three

tours in Vietnam. He didn't drive a truck, he was a Ranger¹, so I know he was engaged in some nasty, difficult combat. He never told me, but I know. I know mostly because of the alcoholism, depression and likely PTSD he experienced when I was in high school. So, every time I go to teach about the horror of combat I think of my old man and feel like I'm disrespecting him. If that's how I feel now, I can't imagine what some of these kids might feel. It's too close, too connected. So, I dance around it, offering up critiques of policy and generals, rather than the grunts, the individual soldiers and units.

Like most of the teachers, Mr. Green taught the history of war as distant events so that the actions and experiences of individual soldiers become blurry, both in terms of the horror they likely experienced and the horror they likely inflicted. Such teaching becomes more about the facts, such as when the war began, how it started, general descriptions of major battles, the leaders involved, and how the war ended. This typically allowed for an avoidance of much of the horror of combat. However, as the teaching of nuclear war described in the introduction indicates, even a general description of some military-related items can lead to either students feeling traumatized or stressed, since they connect the content to their lives, or teachers interpreting or assuming that students are experiencing an emotional reaction to the content. This was particularly true for more recent wars. As one teacher indicated:

I don't worry about teaching war until the uniforms begin to look like their father's. I mean, nobody's going to look at a musket or a tri-quarter hat and think of their dad. World War II and beyond is when I tread carefully.

The concern of causing students trauma or awakening a hidden trauma (Carello & Butler, 2015; Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016; Venet, 2018; Zakszeski, Bentresco & Jaffe, 2017) was strong amongst teachers and connected directly to teachers and their shared heritage history (Levy, 2014) with students. This deepened their weariness to engage students in an understanding of the horror of war, particularly in regard to individual soldiers. Teachers did not shy away from discussing elements of the Holocaust during their teaching of World War II or of certain bombings in other wars, but these moments were framed as acts that evil members of particular groups engaged in, rather than as acts of war and combat done by "our" soldiers.

One teacher, Ms. Smith, described her pedagogy as teaching critical social studies (Epstein, 2009; Leahey, 2010; Parkhouse, 2017) and intentionally taught moments where "American soldiers committed bad acts" as she described them to students. These bad acts included teaching how American soldiers stacked the heads of enemy soldiers like cannonballs and took photographs of them during the Philippines portion of the Spanish American War. This teacher also described the Ameri-Cal battalion's action in the My Lai Massacre (Hersh, 1970). Both descriptions of "misdeeds" were told through lecture, the typical format of teachers involved in the war study. While she told the stories vividly, she also told them quickly. Ms. Smith felt lecture was the best way. "I have control during lecture," she explained. "The lesson can't go sideways as easily, because I'm in control. If we have open discussion, it can get chaotic [and] students can get hurt." The lecture can educate students on what happened, but not have them sit with it and "stew" as Ms. Smith says. The stewing, as she refers to it, can cause emotional damage to her students. Ms. Smith wants students to know fully about the complexities and horrors of war, but not for too long. She fields questions during these lectures that sometimes end up in quick discussions, but she never plans for a deliberation or discussion based on evaluation or

¹ Rangers are members of the United States Army who qualify for and receive special training in weapons and tactics. They are members of elite units focused on combat and often insurgency qualifying them for more difficult duty and intense combat.

explanation of the horrors of war. Ms. Smith feels that would be inappropriate. As she says, “Why would I do that? Why would I possibly inflict damage on them? This way they get the information, I give it to them, the truth, they know about it, then we move on.” Although still relatively early in her career as a teacher (seven years), she thinks much about her students, who they are, where they are from, how they are military connected, and what is best for them. She watches out for students’ mental and emotional health throughout the year. While she does not, as she says, “pull back” from teaching the horror of war, she does “cover it quickly.” It is a compromise of sorts. Students learn the information but do not stay long enough near it to cause trauma or emotional damage. Although the information was taught, the complexity and horror of the content was not emphasized. The horror was largely removed from the teaching of war.

Teachers who were connected to the community and who feared causing or awaking trauma in their students largely avoided an examination of the darker issues of war. Even when a more critical (Parkhouse, 2017) and more complicated narrative of war was given or attempted inadvertently, the horror had little impact or was not recognized because of the pedagogical construct the teacher used. Students were instead left with a nationalist narrative of war being “bad” but often a “necessary bad,” as one student commented. This thin narrative avoids the more complicated reality of war and the difficulties and horror which are a central part of conflict, even when a country wins. As one teacher commented during an interview:

Every soldier sacrifices their life even if they come home alive from war; they’re just never the same. I don’t know how to teach that even in wars that are historic. It’s just too horrible of an idea.

Teaching lynching. Unlike the teaching of war where teachers largely avoided teaching the horror, in the teaching of the history of lynching, the teachers leaned into it. The horror, these teachers argued, was the point. It was necessary for students to understand. As several teachers indicated, it was not possible to teach lynching without describing it in gruesome detail. “It’s the third rail,” as one teacher described the teaching of lynching. “It’s everything you are warned not to teach. It’s racial violence, extra-judicial group murder with police involvement, it has accusations of rape, and often consensual cross-racial sexual relationships.” In short, lynching forces teachers to teach a series of complicated topics all at once.

Unlike the teaching of the history of war, when teachers taught the history of lynching, they considered their students fairly removed from the topic, even when their communities were located near historic lynching sites. With the exception of one teacher who knew he had a student directly related through family to a local lynching, most teachers did not take into consideration such connections until asked in the interview. Most records of lynching were hidden history—historical facts that were not readily known and discussed. It was not surprising, then, that teachers had not considered this. In response one white teacher, Mr. Louise, argued that direct connection to historic violence did not matter: “All students are the inheritors of this violence. Black students particularly, but all students really. All students in this area are connected to this history whether they know about it or not.” Mr. Louise indicated that he would not teach lynching any differently if he knew there were students directly connected to it in his class. Most teachers citing fears of traumatizing or emotionally damaging students indicated that they would approach the teaching differently with much less focus on the horror.

Typically choosing a teacher-centered pedagogy, the teachers usually taught the history of lynching using PowerPoint presentations in two or three day mini-units or as part of a unit focused on the Black Freedom Struggle (Theoharis, 2018). A few teachers threaded the topic of lynching throughout a longer strain of history, such as introducing

the concept of lynching in a unit on Southern Reconstruction, revisiting the phenomenon of lynching again during the 1920s, and then again during the 1950s and 1960s. Lynching became a theme that ran consistently through the course. This teacher-centered pedagogy resulted in teachers presenting the history of lynching through dramatic storytelling. One teacher, Mr. James, a Black teacher with 18 years of teaching experience teaching a mixed ethnic class, began the mini-unit on lynching with a detailed narrative of what he called a “typical lynching.” By this he meant how lynching typically happened in the American South. He described in general terms how a Black man—likely new to the community or in town for work, and possibly engaged in a consensual relationship with a white woman—would either be accused of an attempted rape, or arrested and then held in the local jail.

“Next,” the teacher explained, “a lynch mob would form either breaking into the jail or with the help of the police [and] would take the accused out of jail and hang him by the neck from a tree in the woods.” He described the community celebrating the death, leaving the murdered man dangling from his neck as children, women, and men ate, drank, and visited. He explained that perpetrators often kept souvenirs—describing how pieces or parts of the murdered man would be cut off—and took photographs. Mr. James wanted students to understand that there was a historical pattern. He wanted students to understand that these events were not unique, but ordinary.

After his vivid description, which had brought silence to the classroom, he assigned students to read selections of Philip Dray’s *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America* (2001) that described the history of lynching from Judge Lynch’s law into the 1920s. The following day, Mr. James turned his attention to a lynching that had occurred in the school community. He deftly described what was known about the murder, describing with precision the places the victim visited, the location of the historic police station where he was held, and approximately where he was lynched. Although some of the names were familiar to students as landmarks and local businesses, none were attached to current students.

Mr. James, like most teachers in this study, referred to photographs of lynching. To anyone with Internet technology they exist only a few keystrokes away. Teachers used these photographs to instill the horror of lynching. As one white teacher argued, “I have to use the lynching photographs. Students need to understand the depravity and just the sheer horror that humans can stoop to. Photographs do that. They are raw, they are truth.” This was common sentiment amongst teachers. To present the students with the horror of lynching, they needed to see it. Very few teachers chose not to use lynching photographs. These few argued that using photographs of the lynched men only continued the cycle of desecration started by the lynching itself. Several teachers argued that using the photographs could also marginalize students, particularly students of color who were unprepared to see the images. Choosing not to share lynching photographs came with complications, too, however. Students indicated that they sought out the photographs of lynched bodies on their own. With just a few key strokes on a computer, students were confronted with uncensored photographs of violence. Without a thoughtful teacher to help them navigate and better understand what they were seeing, the students revealed that they were unprepared for what they found.

Teachers who referred to photographs of lynching used them to support the general narrative of lynching that was part of a lecture; they did not provide students with particular details of the people murdered. The images therefore became disengaged from any individual narrative—a blur of unknown and unnamed Black men. Simon (2014) argued that images presented in this way can further the desecration of the murdered individuals. Images used in classrooms should instill knowledge indicative of the horror and violence done and propel the viewer to act on the problems depicted (Simon, 2014).

Most teachers used images as a backdrop to their general narrative of lynching. The teachers who chose not to provide more precise information on individual images and victims caused a general conflation—that all victims and all perpetrators were the same. The victims became an amalgamation. All Black men who were murdered were the same and all white murderers were likewise the same. Few teachers taught students how to examine the photographs and how to understand them. Instead, they were used as evidence of the macabre only.

Teaching the hope

Although there is much horror in the history of the world, there are also moments of stark beauty. These can be captured in stories of resistance, sacrifice, and struggles for justice. To avoid cynicism while teaching difficult history (Bigelow, 1985) students must also learn about the struggles for justice and many acts of resistance. The hope that is taught needs to be truthful and unvarnished; otherwise, it diminishes the horror and tragedy and can lead to complacency. It is a difficult balance for teachers to make when teaching the histories of war and lynching, as the horror far outweighs the hope.

Teaching war. Teachers teaching the history of war to the children of soldiers largely avoided the horror of war. This was often the result of teachers' own connection to the military, soldiers, and the larger school community and their concern that their teaching would inflict or awaken trauma or emotional damage. It was also caused by community pressure to teach to the test and not offer critiques of the current foreign policy of President Trump. In the absence of a critical examination of the horror and damage inflicted by war, the framing of U.S. history as a story of unfolding goodness and nobility (Epstein, 2009) remains undisturbed. The condensed story of this nationalist narrative is that, while mistakes were made, the United States is progressing and changing. In terms of war, this means that the United States enters war regretfully, but for the "right reasons" and on the "right side."

This conveys a false narrative of hope that is similar to that of an average war film (Stoddard, 2010): The United States does not *want* to go to war; instead, we sacrifice, through the death and wounding of many soldiers, to make the world a better place. By maintaining this narrative, some teachers engaged a pedagogy of patriotism (Gibbs, 2020). This pedagogy intentionally confirms and deepens the largely hopeful narrative that the United States' choice to engage in war has been positive. As Ms. Jones explained:

I teach Memorial Day and Veterans Day.... Well, all the days (she laughs), but I teach the history of where these came from, why we celebrate them...that it's not just a day off that it's like church on Sunday; we don't have school to honor what was done. Where else are they going to learn this if not here?

Ms. Jones and other teachers frame these events in patriotic terms that highlight sacrifice and devotion to country, rather than as solemn moments to reflect on the loss of life and tragic choice of war. Instead of engaging students in dialogue about the meaning and significance of these days, some teachers engage students in an authoritarian (Westheimer, 2010) or blind (Kahne & Middaugh, 2010) patriotism. Both promote a patriotism that encourages blanket support for the choices and decisions of the United States rather than fostering a critical examination of history and individual student decision making. This, in turn, pushes the larger narrative of the hopefulness of U.S. history connected to war: The United States did the right thing, and its citizens should support that. This was evidenced by how some teachers handled the saying of the Pledge of Allegiance. In the school districts where data were collected, students and faculty recited the Pledge every morning over the public address system, but all students, faculty, and staff had the option to stand and recite it or not. Many teachers took pains to encourage their students to stand. One teacher shared:

I spend a large amount of time on the first day of school around the Pledge. I tell stories of the sacrifices made by soldiers I know in the community and that students might know. I stay away from the direct parents or family of kids in the room, but soldiers that they might have heard of. I share their stories, and tell them that they [the soldiers] didn't have to do what they did but they did it for us. For you. For me. We can show our appreciation for what they did...for risking their lives very easily every day. All we have to do is stand up and say the Pledge.

This teacher made a direct outreach and argument for why students should stand for the Pledge. His narrative was that standing for the Pledge supports soldiers past and present who are sacrificing for the safety of the country. He did not explain the words and language of the Pledge, where it was developed, how it was developed, or how it changed over time or how different thoughtful people interpret its words and meaning differently (Parker, 2010). His narrow narrative was that, by standing, we honor and celebrate soldiers. Another teacher, Mr. Jess, took a more direct approach. He said:

I tell my students directly, "you get to choose whether you stand for the Pledge of Allegiance or not. It's a county rule and I can't do anything about that. But, I checked with the county and see, I own these chairs in this classroom. So during the Pledge you are not allowed to sit in them. They're mine," that's what I tell them. So, yeah, I make them stand for the Pledge. It's a lesson in capitalism and patriotism, I guess.

Even though students were allowed by country and district guidelines to sit during the pledge and not participate, this teacher made students stand. Mr. Jess argued that it was the first step to having students develop a love and understanding for the United States and that the purpose of social studies was to instill this love and admiration. "It's the greatest country ever," he explained, "not perfect, but greatest." He argued that the United States was an exceptional country and its citizens, as well as those whom, as he said, "reside within its borders," ought to treat it as the amazing country that it is. "We win wars and students need to know this," he added. "Not all of them, but almost all of them and even the ones we lost, we won." Mr. Jess argued that in the complicated, difficult world of today, knowing and understanding the sacrifices of soldiers and having a core understanding that the soldiers and the country did the right thing offers students hope in an otherwise dark world.

Even teachers not teaching with a pedagogy of patriotism generally taught war as hopeful. The United States was typically framed as the victor: *The Americans won the Spanish-American War and spread democracy to parts of the world, freeing many from the yoke of colonialism. World War I ended when the United States got involved. World War II ended because of American sacrifice and know-how against the Axis powers.* These were some of the untroubled, simple narratives observed during classroom instruction. By not troubling the typical narrative of history—whether due to the fear that trauma could be inflicted, or pressure to steer clear of controversial topics and prepare students for tests—teachers conveyed the information to students quickly rather than allowing time to discuss, investigate, and critique.

This narrative of hope was a largely narrow, thin, and uncomplicated description of what occurred. Students were typically taught neither the skills to critique, explore, question, and examine nor presented with questions, content, or a larger narrative that would stimulate students to engage in a more robust exploration of war. The history of war is central to all social studies, particularly war curriculum and teaching (Noddings, 2012). War is the central organizing point of standards, textbooks, and curriculum; students encounter it in elementary school through high school. A thorough and strong examination of war could lead to a stronger understanding and a narrative that is hopeful.

Students could learn about resistance movements throughout history, develop an understanding of how to engage in change, and come to an understanding of when the United States should engage in war and when historically, the United States did engage in justified military conflict.

Teaching lynching. Teachers who taught the history of lynching typically used the horror of lynching and photographs of lynching to help students better understand and respect the impetus for the larger Black Freedom Struggle (Theoharis, 2018) and Civil Rights Movement. Although a few teachers shared hopeful stories of victims who escaped, fought back or of others who struggled to free them, the narrative of lynching was focused on the horror. As one white teacher indicated:

.... I know there were struggles before and during lynching, but I focus on how terrifying and just how horribly awful lynching was. It wasn't that there wasn't struggle; I assume there was. I just focus on the harshness of the violence. It makes the violence faced during the struggle, the dogs, and water hoses, the nights in jail, so much easier to take.

One white teacher who struggled outwardly with how to frame lynching feared that focusing on just lynching as horror could have unanticipated consequences. His concern was that students might catch the incorrect narrative that Blacks were continual victims who did not resist in the moment of lynching but waited till decades later for the Civil Rights Movement. He explained:

I teach in a multi-ethnic school and have a mixture of ethnicities in my classroom. If I let the narrative stand that Blacks were lynched over and over and over again and they allowed themselves to be lynched without fighting back...that just sets up disaster.

This teacher works to help students understand the racial psychology and groupthink that occurs during acts of lynching; he shares specific stories and names of those killed, as well as moments of resistance he has discovered in the historical record. As he explained,

It can't just be Ida B. Wells and that's it till Dr. King... Students need to know in the moment that you teach lynching that Black people did not go down without fighting...without struggle...that's a hopeless dangerous narrative. I need to be very careful of how to leave the history.

Regardless of whether teachers embedded the history of Black resistance within the narrative of lynching or used the lynching narrative as a propellant in the story of the Civil Rights Movement, they knew that the horror of lynching could not stand unchecked. Students needed to understand that Black Americans in particular, but others as well, fought and struggled against lynching to secure rights for all. As one Black teacher indicated:

If I left the story there, I mean, that's just a recipe for suicide. I mean, that's being bombastic, but it's kind of true. Students need to hear the narratives of resistance, how communities and individuals fought back. I mean, learning how to create change is the point of history class, isn't it? I'm just not doing my job if students don't learn more than the horror.

The history of lynching can be one link in the long chain that led to the struggle and push for change. Interestingly, teachers used the narrative of racial violence to propel the Civil Rights Movement but did not pursue racial justice movements past the year of Dr. King's death, 1968. The teachers purposefully maintained a distance between lynching and current incidents of racial violence, so that lynching was presented as a past historical event. Asked if lynching could or should be connected to present moments of racial

violence, specifically the killing of Black men by police officers and the resulting Black Lives Matter movement, teachers universally indicated that, while those connections could be made, they chose not to. Teachers also questioned whether the Black Lives Matter movement was a movement similar to the Black Freedom Struggle or just a civil rights organization. They saw a difference between the historic violence of lynching, a community act of violence that involved the police, and the institutional racism of police in contemporary acts of violence against Blacks. They also shared that what allowed them to teach the racial violence of lynching was that they conveyed it as historic or past event. As one white teacher argued:

If we bring that to the present, that's where there'll be static. It's where there will be trouble. Right now, my students understand lynching, wrestle with its complexities. I can't jeopardize that.

The hope in the teaching of lynching was that by understanding it—fully looking at the horror that it inflicted upon the Black community—students could then better comprehend how the community fought back. The Civil Rights Movement was birthed out of the continuation of violence perpetrated on Black communities. The darkness propelled the light.

Additionally, while only a few teachers intentionally taught students how to analyze photographs and other visual images, the students in those classes learned how to better grapple with their emotion responses and critique the photographs, learning not just to see the horror of lynching but to understand how visual media is made, why it is distributed, and what impact it can have. From this, students were taught how to develop visual media to advocate for themselves and others. Although a dark and complicated topic, if teachers demonstrate how to critically examine photographs, while drawing attention to civil rights' reactions and narratives of resistance, the horror of lynching can lead to hope. This begins with a better understanding of what happened and how it happened, and culminates in the knowledge of the connection between the phenomenon of lynching and the larger Black Freedom Struggle. Drawing a connection to something truthful but larger is important for hope to flourish in this incredibly dark time in history.

Discussion

Teachers revealed that it was possible to teach both the horror and hope of war and lynching, but it was difficult to strike a balance. Teachers taught these topics in a manner that was either too “hard” or too “soft.” That is, they either taught war or lynching with too much focus on having students know and understand the absolute terror of the events described or avoided horror by teaching it quickly and providing little or no opportunity for reflection. The focus on the hope was often part of teaching the topic too “softly” maintaining an undisturbed, uncritical narrative of the events or reinforcing a counterfactual patriotic rendering of the material. Additionally, teachers presented hope as merely a narrative of past, historical resistance rather than connecting it to the struggle for racial justice in our present moment.

This study provides evidence that one of the difficulties of engaging students in a truly liberating education has much to do with our present moment. Contemporary politics and ideology, as well as aggressive critiques of teachers, reinforces the notion that a critical teaching of history be reserved for the past and detached from current events (Gibbs, 2019a). Both war and lynching become tamed and robbed of their power. If brought to the present, both could be used as lenses to better and more deeply understand our current circumstance. Why we fight, how we fight, and how we resist or comply can be better

understood. The racial violence continually perpetrated against Black and people of color, as well as the resistance to this from the Black Lives Matter movement and others, can be better understood. Teachers' decisions to portray U.S. lynching, particularly the resistance surrounding it, as a past, historic event avoids the constancy of Black struggle (Davis, 2016), which could provide students with the opportunity to learn from and be inspired by resistance in its present form. Scholars and researchers need to continue to research how to engage in critical teaching in communities that are resistant to this teaching. This research needs to be embedded in teaching education programs—how to teach through a justice-oriented and critical lens, as well as what political and social moves teachers need to engage in order to do this teaching. Teachers also need to be willing to take risks in their teaching, to build within their students a critical consciousness regardless of community mores. This teaching is necessary for true student awareness and understanding, the development of engaged youth and adults, and the only way to change the world. Ways to bring this knowledge and understanding to the present in communities which resist this teaching needs to be further studied and solutions developed.

Based on teacher commentaries, it is clear that there are disputes as to what constitutes teaching the horror and the hope, but most teachers insisted both were necessary. Teaching the horror did not necessarily mean raising student critical consciousness (Duncan-Andrade, 2007), nor did teaching the hope focus on resistance and moments when the horror was corrected (Ross, 2016). Much of both war and lynching was considered a controversial issue to be avoided rather than engaged (Hess, 2009). In the teaching of lynching, this has had much to do with white fragility (DiAngelo, 2018). As long as it is kept in the past—something which has been overcome, and the country has grown beyond—it is fine to teach. To bring racial violence into our present, to have students understand the long chain of oppression and resistance, makes the knowledge far too dangerous for many in the broad school community. Also evident is the role of critical whiteness studies—specifically, how whiteness impacts the teaching of racial violence even by white teachers seeking to teach it with a critical lens (Applebaum, 2016). How does whiteness influence white teachers' teaching and their connection to the content, as well as their connection to students of color and students who are white? By presenting the concept of whiteness as a tool to understand the past and the present, teachers could lead students not only to a deep understanding how the past informs and creates our present, but to a greater awareness of the need to disrupt idealized narratives of U.S. history. If this is not known to students or shared with them, students will not understand the broader notion of whiteness as a colonizing force within the curriculum that silences both the horror and the hope in the narratives of people of color (Matias & Mackey, 2016; McKnight & Chandler, 2012; Chandler, 2009).

The study presented evidence of a consistent worry shared by these teachers, that by teaching about war and lynching more authentically, they would inflict trauma or emotionally wound students. In the teaching of war and lynching, it meant either avoiding the topic altogether or telling a narrative quickly, and then moving on to avoid trauma (Gibbs, 2019a; Gibbs, 2020). Teaching these topics quickly or generally led to non-specific stories, blending all Black victims together as one trope, and all wars and soldiers together. This concern of trauma also shaped the ways teachers presented hope. Rather than taking a more critical lens, teachers taught war locked within a nationalist and patriotic narrative focusing on parables of heroics (Gibbs, 2019b) that lessens a deeper examination (Epstein, 2009) and avoids the difficulty of a more truthful narrative (Zembylas, 2014). The hope of teaching lynching rested on historic acts of resistance, mainly Ida B. Wells-Barnett, but also other typically unnamed white and Black resisters.

To teach the horror and the hope. War is horror, it is terror, and it is destruction. It must be taught this way. Students must have time to marinate in the complexity and horror that is war. They must be given time to discuss, analyze, and consider war. This can be done by developing a more democratic and thematic approach to instruction (Gibbs, 2019a, 2019b, 2020; Apple & Beane, 2007; Hess, 2009; Hursh & Ross, 2000). Teachers can provide students with guiding questions—for example, what constitutes a just war? What causes a war to lose its justness? How should wars be fought? How do we end war?—that lead to a more thorough examination rather than simply an acceptance of content. Likewise, including the rich history of the anti-war movements during instruction of war can be useful (Gibbs, 2020; Hochschild, 2011; Kazin, 2017; Sokowler, 2013; Walzer, 1977; Zak, 2017). Students must also be taught the stories and skills of resistance, dangerous citizenship (Ross, 2016), and how they can act against war (Gillen, 2015). This can be done by examining modes of resistance in the historic and present anti-war movements. Similarly, students must learn the authentic history of lynching in all its horror and all its hope. Despite relentless racial oppression, even in the darkest, most horrific moments, there was always Black resistance. This is a testament to beauty that must not be denied and must be taught throughout history and directly connected to today. This will allow for a liberating education—one in which students continue to grow a critical consciousness, learn how to engage in acts of transformative resistance, and reflect upon history and future possibilities. Students must learn how to read the *word*, our past, and the *world*, our present and times yet to come. A liberating education is one that is truthful in all its horror and hopeful in embracing all the possibilities of justice. This can be most easily done by teachers who teach through a thematic approach. Rather than teaching the Black Freedom Struggle (Theoharis, 2018) as contained to the 1950s and 1960s, it can instead be taught from 1619 forward or from slavery or Reconstruction forward. This approach allows students to see the whole course of the Black experience in the United States, seeing and understanding repeated forms of oppression and the many acts and organizations of resistance. Combining both, the oppression and the resistance of war and lynching, offers both the horror and the hope and can lead to a truly liberating education.

Conclusion

History must be presented viscerally or it is a lie. How much misery, horror, and terror depends on context, students, the teacher, and the specific content, but the intent must be the same. There must be a balance between the complexity of content and a larger understanding of what was done to prevent it, resist it, and grow from it. Students need to see the horror to understand the hope. Teachers must, however, be mindful of not revealing horror to students for horror's sake, but presenting it in direct conjunction with hope. In a unit on Apartheid South Africa (Bigelow, 1985) the author admitted that the content could be depressing for students and leave them feeling cynical. Bigelow argued "I wanted to leave my students with the sense that change was possible; perhaps the unit could even offer them an opportunity to play a small part in creating change" (Bigelow, 1985, p. vii). The cynicism can be lessened, perhaps made momentary, when coupled with the hope of resistance, of change, of the possibilities of something else. Teachers must strike this balance in the teaching of hard, complex, dark, and horrific history. It is the best way to provide a liberating education.

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| **ARTICLE** |

A Theory/Practice Divide: Exploring Perceptions of Inclusion in Schools

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Abstract

This article explores the theory-practice divide with respect to actualizing how diversity and inclusion can be explicitly addressed in schools. This paper contributes important insights for teacher educators in terms of recognizing and challenging problematic assumptions teacher candidates (TCs) may hold. This research presses TCs to examine the structure of schools through a critical lens, as teachers, particularly those from the dominant group, tend to act in surface ways, avoiding conflict by using seemingly inclusive language and ideas, and either ignoring or not seeing the real challenges many historically marginalized students face. The assignment upon which this study was based was designed to make explicit and transparent the relationship between equity education and social justice action by generating targeted possibilities for classroom practice. TCs were asked to design and deliver anti-oppression lessons in a K-6 school and subsequently reflect on the experience. To gain insight into TCs' perceptions, their reflections were coded in terms of evidence of dysconsciousness and evasiveness, as well as critical consciousness.

Keywords: *pre-service teacher education; critical pedagogy; social justice education; equity; diversity; critical consciousness raising*

Introduction

As sites of social interactions, elementary and secondary schools are wrought with tensions. In Ontario, Canada, the tenets of diversity and inclusion are touted as ideals to strive for (see, for example, Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, 2009, OME); however, many Canadian teachers are ill-prepared to ensure that all learners are affirmed in their classrooms. Social hierarchies—constructed by colonization, patriarchy, psychology and capitalism, amongst others—are often reinforced within school settings. Individual responses to our social identities, as well as the structural and systemic organization of our lives, shape who we are. As such, social constructs influence how we perceive the world and engage in the work of schools. Social identities impact who we are as teachers, as well as how we perceive our students,¹ and whether or not our students succeed or fail, both in school and in life. Although there has been some visible institutional progress (for example, accessible gender-neutral bathrooms, Gay-Straight Alliances, and social justice clubs), comparatively little change has occurred with respect to disrupting the interlocking influences of race, social class, gender, language, sexuality and citizenship. Mandatory equity and diversity coursework in teacher education programs may lack the time, depth, and insights for real change in schools to occur.

¹ By students, I am specifically referring to those in elementary or secondary school. The term “teacher candidate” or TC will be used to distinguish those enrolled in a teacher certification program.

Despite decades of research, many educators may not be cognizant of the challenges countless students experience on a daily basis in school. This research explores the theory-practice divide with respect to actualizing how schools can explicitly address diversity and inclusion. In addition, this paper contributes important insights for teacher educators in terms of recognizing and challenging problematic assumptions that teacher candidates (TCs) may hold. Researchers have noted that many educators lack a “critical consciousness” (Freire, 1974; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Cross, Behizadeh, and Holihan, (2018) found TCs are more concerned with themselves, and the day-to-day “tasks” of teaching (i.e. lesson planning, classroom management, student engagement) than with critically examining the socio-cultural structures of schools and how prevailing conditions negatively impact students. As such, this research utilized a focused and purposefully designed lesson planning assignment to be implemented by TCs at a local Ontario elementary school as a way for teachers to be agentic in creating critical spaces in schools.

Understanding dysconsciousness

Freire (1970) maintained that in order to challenge dominant discourses in schools, dialogue and critical social consciousness or *conscientização* are essential components. As Darder, Baltodano and Torres (2003) explain,

Conscientization is defined as the process by which students, as empowered subjects, achieve a deepening awareness of the social realities that shape their lives and discover their own capacities to re-create them. (p. 15)

Milner (2010), drawing from Eisner’s (1994) concept of the “null curriculum,” suggests that by *not* addressing or critically examining existing power structures at play in elementary and secondary schools, TCs are learning, by default, that these are not issues that should be addressed in schools. They are not engaging in critical social consciousness. As Milner (2010) argues,

Teachers are learning something based on the absence of certain material. For example, if teachers are not taught to question or critically examine power structures, the teachers are learning something—that it may not be essential for them to critique power structures in the world in order to change them. (p. 120-121)

When TCs are not engaging in critical consciousness, they may, in fact, be in a state of what King (1991) describes as “dysconsciousness.” While King was specifically referencing dysconscious racism, her definition of dysconsciousness as “an uncritical habit of mind (including perceptions, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs) that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given” (p. 135) can be applied to multiple inequities. King maintains that her use of dysconsciousness “denotes the limited and distorted understandings...students have about inequity and cultural diversity understandings that make it difficult for them to act in favor of truly equitable education” (p. 134). As Anderson, Narum and Wolf (2019) assert in relation to a dysconscious mindset, “[t]he term dysconscious is then not to be understood as synonymous with unconscious, but rather as implying something real, yet habitually uncontested, and indicating that this acceptance is almost certainly unrecognized” (p.5). Unfortunately, much of the work done in Canadian schools is not contested or disrupted because, as Solomon and Levine-Rasky argue, “there is a gap between the hopes for equity in education and the realization of equity in actual outcomes” (2003, p. 41). The Canadian teaching profession is dominated by educators who experienced school in ways that reflect majority group ways of knowing and interacting in the world, despite researchers’, academics’, and communities’ calls for greater attention to disrupting the status quo. Rather than examining the structure of schools through a critical lens,

teachers—particularly those from the dominant group—tend to act in surface ways, avoiding conflict by using seemingly inclusive language and ideas and either ignoring, or not seeing, the real challenges many historically marginalized students face, which is a state of dysconsciousness. As Picower (2009) argues, “Whiteness remains masked from everyday consciousness, allowing [whites] to be blind not only to their own privileges but also to their group membership” (p. 198). There are quiet, guiding forces that encourage teachers from the dominant group to “play it safe” and choose their words, texts, and examples “carefully”—forces that work to maintain dysconsciousness.

Equity work and social justice: Locating critical consciousness and dysconsciousness

Numerous researchers press for teachers and administrators to do the work of addressing normative assumptions in educational institutions (Ahmed, 2012; Cochran-Smith, Ell, Grudnoff, Haigh, Hill & Ludlow, 2016; Payne & Smith, 2018). As Nieto (2000) writes, in reference to her early work, “most approaches to multicultural education avoided asking difficult questions related to access, equity, and social justice. These questions strike at the heart of what education in our society should be, and they are, above all, about schools’ institutional practice” (p. 180). Nieto tasks teachers, schools and teacher education programmes to make fundamental shifts in outlook, ideology and curriculum in order to challenge societal implications for all learners. And yet, as Cochran-Smith et al. (2016) argue, little has changed in almost two decades, since

... efforts to put equity [up] front in initial teacher education are daunting. They depend on nuanced and complex understandings that equity cannot be achieved by teachers and teacher educators alone. Rather policy makers and the public must acknowledge and address the fact that multiple factors, in addition to teacher quality, influence student outcomes, including in particular, the impact of poverty, family and community resources, school organizations and supports, and policies that govern housing, health care, jobs, and early childhood services. (p. 76)

To address and explore the ways in which equity and anti-oppressive work can be done in schools, teacher educators have proposed numerous paradigms which have become more nuanced over the past 20 years; these include, but are not limited to, “multicultural education” (Sleeter, 1991); “educating teachers for cultural diversity” (Zeichner, 1993); “culturally relevant pedagogy” (Ladson-Billings, 1995); “anti-racist education” (Dei, 1995); “critical multiculturalism” (May, 1999); “anti-oppressive education” (Kumashiro, 2000); “culturally responsive education” (Villegas & Lucas, 2002); “culturally responsive teaching” (Gay, 2002); “productive pedagogy” (Gore, Griffiths & Ladwig, 2004); “culturally responsive pedagogy of relations” (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh & Teddy, 2007); “linguistically responsive education” (Lucas, Villegas & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008); “teaching for social justice” (Cochran-Smith, 2010); and “critical praxis” (Arnold, Edwards, Hooley & Williams, 2012). The shifts in paradigms over time reflect a deeper understanding of equity not as “equity for equality,” but as a sociohistorical perspective on inequity, which “takes on the complex system that mediates why, how, and for whom access makes a difference, and the nature of that difference” (Tan, Barton, Turner, & Gutiérrez, 2012, p. 35). It is the notion of complexity that Cochran-Smith et al. (2016) explore in their investigation of making teaching for equity a goal of teacher education programs. It must also be noted that the topics addressed in diversity and inclusion courses for TCs are politically and emotionally charged (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). As Gallavan (2000) and Kincheloe (2008) assert, courses that address inclusion and equity thorough a critical lens challenge mainstream understandings that can trigger tensions not experienced in other courses. As Hollins and Guzman (2005) found, some initial teacher

preparation programs have limited, if any, influence on TCs' understanding and engagement with equity pedagogy, and thus there is minimal transfer into the classroom environment.

Pre-context for the research project: The lesson plan assignment

As a teacher educator, I took up the challenge to make teaching for equity a concrete aspect of a course I was teaching, *Socio-cultural Aspects of Human Development*. The course, mandatory in the teacher education program in which I was working, utilized a critical pedagogy approach (Darder et al., 2003) and raised many uncomfortable ideas and topics not typically discussed in other courses. While some initial teacher education program designs ensure that TCs have a form of practicum concurrently with their coursework (i.e. 1 day per week), this was not the design of the program in which I taught. Rather, the equity coursework (and some additional courses) was bookended by two practicum blocks. TCs did not return to campus after the second block but, if successful, went on to graduation. Thus, there was no opportunity to process their field experiences in relation to the coursework. In addition, TCs were not permitted to complete any university-related coursework while on practicum. As such, I tried to create an "in the field" moment within my course in order to link social justice coursework with the reality of schools. To achieve this, I approached a local elementary school with a request for teachers who would voluntarily welcome my 90 TCs into their classrooms to teach, in small groups, a 40-minute lesson of their own design. Five classroom teachers agreed: senior-kindergarten-grade 1; grade 2; grade 3/4; grade 4/5; and a grade 5/6 class. I developed an assignment which required the TCs to craft and teach lessons specifically focused on addressing issues of sexism, racism, ableism, gender identity, or homophobia to be taught at the elementary school during our regular class time.

Significant class time was devoted to helping the TCs develop their lesson plans in the course. Each lesson plan was presented to the whole class for peer feedback and subsequently reviewed by the instructor. Lesson plans were examined in relation to the curriculum expectations for the intended grade level and assessed using a critical framework, inspired by the work of Egbo's (2019) "Checklist for Conducting Critical Self-Reflection and Analysis." TCs had been examining their own positionality through in-class activities and key readings (i.e. McIntosh, 1990). The readings and in-class activities challenged TCs to examine the status-quo in schools, as well as to explore how change might occur. In the course, group identities and privilege were explicitly explored. To get additional input and feedback, I emailed all the completed lesson plans to the classroom teachers two weeks before they were taught. On the day the TCs were to teach their lessons, I met them at the partner school and ensured that they had sufficient time to return to the university for their next class. The teaching of the lessons was not assessed as part of their coursework. Rather, the TCs received 5% of their final grade for arriving at the elementary school and teaching their lesson.

The research project:

Examining dysconsciousness and critical consciousness

Egbo's (2019) "Checklist for Conducting Critical Self-Reflection and Analysis" was used throughout the socio-cultural course and informed the creation of the post-lesson plan reflection questions. According to Egbo, there are seven areas that should be examined in relation to diversity awareness and engaging in critical self-reflection: personal history and values; pedagogical beliefs and approaches;

knowledge of diversity issues; knowledge of students; assumptions about learning; assumptions about knowledge; and beliefs about society. Following the in-school lessons, TCs were asked to write a reflection on the teaching experience. The reflection prompts were:

1. What made you uncomfortable? In what areas did you feel comfortable? How might you explain/account for your comfort/discomfort?
2. What new knowledge arose for you out of this experience? What kinds of new connections are you making with the course reading(s)?
3. What would you do differently next time? Be specific about the kind of impact you would hope those changes would have.
4. How do you foresee taking this up in your own future work in schools?

The TCs' reflections were assessed for part of their grade in the course and constituted the data source for this research. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, a marker-grader was hired to assess the reflections. After the assignment had been assessed and returned to the TCs, they were invited to participate in the research project by voluntarily sharing a clean copy of their reflection component. Almost half of the TCs enrolled in my course (39 of 90) opted to participate in the research project (43%). The participants included six males and 33 females. Of the 33 females, six self-identified as visible minorities and one female participant self-identified as Indigenous. All six males self-identified as white. The average age of the students enrolled full-time in the program was 26.86 with a median age of 24. The youngest student was 21 years of age and the oldest was 47 years of age. TCs who gave informed consent to participate in the project submitted their reflections to a research assistant who removed direct identifiers from the assignments and replaced them with a code and pseudonym to protect the identity of the participants.

Initially, the TCs' responses to the four reflection questions were analyzed using process coding. The codes reflected the common and various themes that were identified from the data. The data was analyzed using what Tesch (1990) describes as "de-contextualization" to "separate relevant portions of data from their context" (p. 118) in order to identify themes and coding categories and "re-contextualization" or the reassembling of the data to create "pools of meanings" (p. 122) to present a unified and coherent picture. Finally, my field notes and observations assisted with data triangulation, using the techniques described by Bogdan and Biklen (1998).

As Cross, Behizadeh, and Holihan (2018) argue, "there appears to be a crisis of praxis; in other words, a failure for critical pedagogies taught in teacher preparation (if taught at all) to transfer into actual *application* in student teaching" (p. 128, original italics). Drawing on their insights, I sought to revisit my data to gain greater insight into how TCs might be seen as acting either dysconsciously or with critical consciousness—that is, how might equity work be either thwarted or critically examined by future teachers? I thus re-analysed the data employing techniques described by Creswell (2016), using process coding and layering the constructs of critical consciousness and dysconsciousness to add additional rigour. Anderson, Narum, and Wolf (2019) argue that further research on dysconsciousness could "allow educators to assess student learning skills and readiness and intentionally attempt to move students to a deeper, more applicable, understanding" (p. 4). With this in mind, I sought to determine the ways in which dysconsciousness was expressed by the TCs in relation to a specific imperative to address oppression in schools. The lesson planning assignment forced students to examine sites of oppression to intentionally push them into situations where the examination of privilege was not obscured but was the intended focus. I wanted a concrete

connection to the supposed critical consciousness raising that was the impetus of the course.

The assignment upon which this study was based was designed to make explicit and transparent the relationship between equity education and social justice action by generating targeted possibilities for classroom practice. As such, I examine the data in terms of evidence of dysconsciousness, as well as perceived evasiveness. Finally, I share examples of critical consciousness gleaned from the data.

Dysconsciousness

The TCs were asked to plan and deliver a lesson that would address sexism, racism, homophobia, classism or ableism in a 40-minute class. University class time was spent helping the TCs work through their concerns, brainstorm ideas, and obtain instructor and peer feedback. Many TCs struggled with the structure of the assignment itself: They thought they had to overtly teach the “ism” they were assigned, rather than examining the curriculum for a grade-specific topic or expectation that would allow for critical consciousness. To me, this was the first indicator that the equity and inclusion perspective of the course was not being internalized by the TCs as they were seemingly unable to transfer the theory of the course into the planning of the lessons. For some TCs, when the assignment was first handed out, they immediately responded in dysconscious ways by manipulating the assignment. For example, some TCs attempted to plan for overt teaching about their assigned “ism,” but chose seemingly less contentious topics such as “positive friendships” or “anti-bullying” and not clearly identifying the reasons why exclusion and bullying might be occurring (e.g. underlying issues of socio-economics, negative racialization, gender conformity, etc.), revealing their limited understandings.

In examining the data, I was struck by the self-interest that arose from many of the reflections. As Cross, Behizadeh, and Holihan (2018) similarly found:

TCs seem more likely to be critically conscious regarding their own positionality in schools, yet overwhelmingly dysconscious when talking about students and families.... In other words, when TCs themselves felt unfairly treated, they were able to point out inequities related to power, lack of autonomy, and limited rights throughout student teaching. (p. 139-140)

Examining the data through a critical consciousness/dysconscious lens has provided greater insight into how TCs might be seen as acting dysconsciously. First, many reflections revealed that TCs were treating the in-school lesson delivery experience purely as an assignment, rather than as an opportunity to imagine how equity work can be done on a regular basis; second, TCs were using their lack of knowledge of the students or the subject matter as a reason to excuse not having the knowledge/experiences/tools to craft inclusive/anti-oppressive lessons or, in some cases, to devalue the experience; and, third, I found a general sense of avoidance or evasiveness of certain topics. I drew from the data multiple subtle and covert ways in which dysconsciousness was evidenced.

In subtle ways, the TCs positioned themselves as “vulnerable,” expressing fear of the host classroom teacher and, tangentially, parental/caregiver concerns for discussing so-called “sensitive” topics. For instance, as Nicola queried, “Will the teacher be upset if she doesn’t agree with our definition and/or centers?” [Sexism, SK/1]. Yet I had shared the TCs’ lesson plans with the classroom teachers two weeks before they were to be taught as a way to ensure the teachers were prepared for the content and/or raise any concerns, objections or disagreements and provide

feedback. There were none. Some of the TCs used their trepidation to produce seemingly “neutral” lessons. Glossing over potentially challenging content is another way in which change is stifled and hegemonic structures are maintained.

Dysconsciousness was also expressed through the perceived limitations of the assignment. A valid concern was expressed by Lacy, “This lesson was 40 minutes, which is quite short to cover the topic of racism” [Racism, grade 6] and this comment by Shelley, “The workshops we ran were great; they seemed to go over well, but they are probably not enough” [Ableism, grade 3/4]. Rather than viewing this experience as a *taste* of what might be possible or exploring how to work within the confines of the curriculum expectations and the structure of schools and do equity work, some saw this as a one-off opportunity to be done for the assignment and not the start of long-term pedagogical practice.

Perhaps a common positioning among neophyte teachers, some TCs had not made the shift between seeing themselves as “student” to seeing themselves as “teacher,” as evidenced by this comment: “One of the things that made me uncomfortable was walking into a class I have never seen before, where I didn’t know the students, and they didn’t know me” [Sally Genderism, grade 2]. Rather than planning for the “unknown,” crafting a lesson that would utilize aspects of the grade-appropriate curriculum to challenge or disrupt conventional thinking (focusing on deconstructing inequities through a geography or social studies lesson or examining works of art the students are most familiar with and questioning why) the TCs seemed more focused on their performance instead of the critical content. With a critical consciousness lens, they may have been able to examine the assignment from its intended perspective and to find creative avenues to infuse equity teaching and learning which might become the foundation for their professional pedagogy.

Examining the data, I found a growing awareness on the part of TCs for the “need” for anti-oppression consciousness raising, but it was often tempered with a notion that it was not something the TCs were necessarily taking responsibility for enacting, as evidenced in this quote, “I feel that by participating in this workshop, I have better prepared myself for the possible reactions and questions I may receive in the future” [Macy, Homophobia, 4/5]. This quote reveals a teacher-centered focus and awareness of potential “gaps in TC knowledge” as opposed to a recognition of the conditions within schools that silence “uncomfortable” conversations and preserve the status quo.

Evasiveness

*“I responded in a way that I tend to do in uncomfortable circumstances.
I brush off the topic” [Krizia, Anti-Bullying, grade 6].*

Krizia’s comment above is probably a common response for many TCs: When in doubt, take evasive manoeuvres. In coding for dysconsciousness, similar to Cross et al. (2018), I found that I was often looking for what was *not* there. Of significance was that only one participant overtly commented on the demographics of the students she was working with, and even then, her language was coded. Sheila writes, “I was happy to see an Egyptian student and some Chinese students in the workshop” [Racism, grade 6]. It is interesting that Sheila chose to describe the students by geographic location.² The implication is that the students are “non-white,” yet it would be incorrect or improper to describe them racially or ethnically.

² As an aside, the student from Egypt had just recently immigrated to Canada and informed everyone she met of this fact. Without this self-disclosure, I am not certain how Sheila would have categorized the students.

Alternatively, the statement reveals the TC's limited understanding of how to talk with affirmation about race and ethnicity. Sheila is the only participant who makes any reference to demographics. The rest of the participants also avoided reference to race and ethnicity, revealing a sense of "colorblindness." While heavily critiqued and refuted by Gotanda (1991) colorblindness is still perceived in the teaching profession as a "progressive positionality" in our supposed post-race era, as in statements such as "I don't see race" or "I don't see color." It is a stance that some teachers assume to demonstrate that they are not racist because, to them, they do not see the "color" of their students (Milner, 2010).

A colorblind stance serves as an expression of dysconsciousness, negating the lived experience of historically racialized people. For example, I have heard students and faculty alike pride themselves on "not knowing" that a student was Indigenous because "it doesn't matter [to them]." These stances serve a key purpose: centering whiteness and diminishing the lived experience of historically marginalized people. However, the term "colorblindness" is itself a fraught term as it imposes a dis/ability binary. As Annamma, Jackson and Morrison (2017) argue,

The racial ideology of denying the significance of race should not be equated with blindness because it is an inadequate descriptor. Color-blindness, as a racial ideology, conflates lack of eyesight with lack of knowing. Said differently, the inherent ableism in this term equates blindness with ignorance. However, the inability to see is not ignorance; in fact, blindness provides unique ways of understanding the world to which sighted people have no access. (p.154)

The authors propose the term "race-evasiveness" which draws from intersectionality and asserts that avoiding or ignoring race is a form of power. In searching for what was not there, I noted TCs did not comment on the large number of white students in the elementary school, which I view as a form of dysconsciousness expressed through evasiveness.

Sheila, however, identified that there were students from historically racialized groups, stating: "I found that the three students who were the minority were looking a little uncomfortable; perhaps they were subjected to racist comments growing up" [Sheila, Racism grade 6]. The students in the school in which the lessons were taught were primarily white. Sheila is speaking about three racialized students who are in grade six. They are not "grown up" yet and may very well be currently dealing with racist comments. What is more probable is that they have not heard white adults specifically naming racism as it might pertain to them. Social dynamics play out in subtle and covert ways in our society yet teachers often erroneously believe that schools and classrooms are neutral spaces exempt from issues related to privilege and marginalization, particularly with younger students.

Sheila, the only participant to specifically comment on the demographics of the class, interestingly, also made this comment:

Planning the workshop was a bit of a challenge for the group as I noticed that many of the members who were from small towns were a bit more closed minded than myself, who is from the multicultural city of Toronto. [Sheila, Racism, grade 6]

Sheila is white and expressed race-awareness in several parts of her reflection; however, this sensitivity could be attributed to her assigned topic, which was racism. She also indicated she "was initially nervous about conducting this workshop in [this location], as I was not sure of the demographics of the school"

which is a form of dysconsciousness. It is not clear in what way knowing the demographics would change the lesson. Did the group “play it safe” so as not to offend the white students in the classroom? The suggestion is that the lesson might be presented differently depending on the diversity of the classroom, which warrants future exploration.

As I analyzed the data, with a lens of dysconsciousness, I noted a similar evasiveness in relation to sexual orientation. For example, this participant wrote, “We have relatives and very close friends that are gay, and we have been very open with our boys, [but] truthfully, I don’t think they even notice or think any different of them” [Matilda, Homophobia, grade 3/4]. While the TC is suggesting she and her family are inclusive and not biased because they have proximity to gay friends, that does not, by default, mean she is not homophobic or disrupting homophobia for her children. A critical conscious response would be that her proximity to same-sex relationships is an opportunity to expose her children to the ways in which power serves to undermine same-sex families and to introduce an open dialogue about how societal structures reinforce differential treatment of those who are Othered. Failure to acknowledge that the social experiences of LGBTQ+ members are different from those who identify as straight or cisgender is dysconsciousness. It is also a lost opportunity to invite spaces that discuss marginalization, exclusion, and privilege. By suggesting her children “do not even notice” the friends who are gay indicates a “straightwashing” of gay issues that privileges heteronormative relationships.

Critical consciousness

“I didn’t gain new knowledge, but it instilled in me a confidence that what we were learning this year in our course work is transferrable to the classroom” [James, Sexism, grade 2].

In the above quote, James has articulated what I had hoped this assignment would achieve: the transfer of equity coursework into the TCs’ future teaching practice and the development/articulation of critical consciousness. Of course, James’s comment might be similar to this participant’s comment, “I am not sure if the students changed their opinions because they truly believed it or if they changed their opinions because they wanted to give us the “right” answers” [Niki, Genderism, grades 3/4]. As Cross et al. (2018) found in their study with TCs, there are some key ways in which critical consciousness could be manifested:

TCs were questioning current structures in place in schools and the expressed beliefs and ideologies of others, and participating in critical action as they worked to engage in pedagogies and practices relevant to their students’ lives. They were also working to make sense of the practices and policies in place in their teacher preparation program, and in student teaching structures in general. (p.134)

I also recognize that the TCs are on a continuum of understanding and developing their proficiency to enact an equity pedagogy. As such, I was encouraged to read comments such as this one:

Through this experience, I have uncovered my preconceived notions about bullies and victims of bullying. This makes me question my own stereotypes of individuals who are bullied or bullies... Prior to this workshop, I was never consciously aware of my beliefs in these stereotypes. Therefore, I wonder what other stereotypes I hold that I am unaware of? [Krizia, Anti-Bullying, grade 6]

This quote reveals a shift in the TC's perspective that shows a growing awareness which might lead to critical consciousness.

An example of critical consciousness is evidenced in Nicola's statement, "I would use the centers concept to create an entire unit around this anti-oppression work and see how different the student's concepts are as generations go forth" [Sexism, SK/1]. Nicola's suggestion that she would create a kindergarten unit that actively addresses issues such as sexism *and* monitors the impact on students over time suggests a forward thinking, proactive, and conscious approach to critical pedagogy.

A similar critical conscious sentiment was expressed by Lorna who wrote, "Firstly, I realized we were not there just to present on homophobia. As educators, it is crucial that we provide opportunities for students to question the world and gain an awareness and understanding of multiple perspectives" [Homophobia, grades 4/5]. The recognition that anti-oppression work takes time and is on-going is key to providing an education for students that will expose them to the inequities in society and help them question the status quo. Xiomara also expressed similar critical consciousness:

I see myself using these concepts and many other 'isms' and issues that people are faced with into my daily routines. Preparing my students about how to make changes in their environment, our society, and how to deal with the situation if they are faced with is one of my responsibilities as a teacher. [Sexism, SK/1]

It takes time and consistent effort to dismantle the language of inequity and work towards an action-oriented approach to social justice.

Forging new paths

For the most part, schools continue to reflect majority group ways of knowing and interacting in the world. Numerous researchers have demonstrated that while the student population is becoming increasingly diverse in Canada and the United States, faculty and teacher representation remains overwhelmingly (80%) reflective of the dominant group (Ryan, Pollock & Antonelli, 2009; Gutierrez y Muhs et al., 2012). Statistical data regarding faculty and teacher race and ethnicity is difficult to obtain in Canada (Holden & Kitchen, 2016). Data from the United States (2016) indicates that 80% of elementary and secondary teachers are white, 7% are Black and 9% Hispanic (National Centre for Educational Statistics). For 3 years (2012-2015), I collected statistical demographic data about my students using an anonymous on-line survey (see Cho, 2016). The sample revealed 87% of first year TCs identified as white. As Holden and Kitchen (2016) argue, "if Canadian teacher candidates are a largely homogenous group, Canadian teachers will be as well" (p. 46). I recently re-surveyed my students (2020). Of the 335 respondents, 80% self-identify as white, 89% straight, and 84% middle to upper-middle class. Of issue is that many teachers, despite the best of intentions, do not realize the ways in which classrooms work in oppressive ways and do not affirm all learners. A contributing factor to majority-group thinking amongst teachers is the lack of teacher diversity in our schools (Cho, 2018). While having a more diverse teaching force will not solve the problem of inequity in our schools, the lack of voice and representation diminishes opportunities to hear the counter-narratives of those who will expose the gaps and systemic structures that are preventing access and the potential for change.

Conclusion

I am cognizant that not all teacher educators will perceive the data in the same way I have and may consider my analysis as unduly harsh. However, I contend that by not critically examining TCs' reflections on and responses to equity teaching, we continue to reproduce existing approaches, or lack thereof, to anti-oppression work. In King's (1991) paper on dysconsciousness published 29 years ago, she declared "prospective teachers need an alternative context in which to think critically about and reconstruct their social knowledge and self-identities. Simply put, they need opportunities to become conscious of oppression" (p. 143). The intent of this research was to expose TCs to a situation in which they could enact the critical stance embedded in the socio-cultural course: to put theory into practice. Teachers and educators, at all levels, need to see beyond their own experiences which entails examining things from an alternative perspective and implementing a critical lens. Examining the participants' reflections revealed both the subtle and covert ways in which a lack of engagement with equity work is expressed by TCs. As teacher educators strive to improve practice, we must unpack what is and what is not being said by TCs. In the institution in which I currently work, we have one mandatory diversity and inclusion course. It is conceivable that anti-oppression approaches might appear in other courses, but a specific mandate to integrate the study of social difference, race, and anti-racism into the mainstream of teacher education scholarship is a more cohesive approach that explicitly names and draws attention to the work that needs to be done. Biases need to be identified in order to be critiqued and contextualized. If the teacher workforce continues to draw from the dominant group, it is even more vital that opportunities to engage with critical pedagogies in the field become a pillar of teacher education programs.

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| **ARTICLE** |

English Proficiency or Post-School Success? The Miseducation of English Learners

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Abstract

English learners in the U.S. are academically unprepared at the secondary level, and such systemic barriers lead to limited opportunities for post-school success (Umansky, 2016). Additional research is necessary to examine the correlation between the impact of a school's ethnic diversity on the academic achievement of students identified as ELs. The purpose of this study is to investigate the educational outcomes of ELs at the high school level as a result of the school's ethnic diversity. This study provides quantitative data from the Ed-Data Education Data Partnership. The data is disaggregated by the ethnic diversity index, percentage of enrolled ELs at each school and the graduation rates, dropout rates, and rates meeting college admissions standards of ELs compared to all students at the high school. The findings of this study depict significant discrepancies between the high school graduation rates of ELs and their decreased preparedness for post-secondary admissions. These findings highlight the need for language minority students to receive equitable access to quality education targeting post-school success instead of focusing on English proficiency.

Keywords: *English learners, post-school, success, outcomes*

Introduction

The underperformance of English learners (ELs) on standardized tests can be attributed to the linguistic and cultural barriers impacting their academic proficiency (Abella et al., 2005). Garcia (2011) states that the population of K-12 students in public schools throughout the United States who are not English proficient has grown by 40 percent within the last decade. Similarly, Garcia (2011) identifies the presence of an achievement gap where ELs underperform their English-speaking peers by 30 to 50 percent on national and state assessments. Equitable access to advanced educational outcomes for ELs is limited by the implementation of federal policies perpetuating low expectations for linguistically diverse students (Rance-Roney, 2011). Teacher perception plays a major role in ELs' access to post-secondary success (Sharkey & Layzer, 2000). According to Callahan (2005), the limited English proficiency of ELs at the high school level leads to their enrollment in lower level courses and insufficient exposure to the content necessary for success in higher education.

Language influences learning by posing limitations related to academic content and student's performance on assessments. (Lucas et al., 2008). The academic proficiency of students who are identified as ELs ranges in both their native language and in English. At the secondary level, the education of ELs is driven by the need to meet state-regulated achievement standards as depicted by high-stakes tests (Rance-Roney, 2011). According to Thompson (2017), the accountability measures related to ELs focus on the development of

English proficiency rather than prolonged academic achievement. Sharkey and Layzer (2000) synthesize the relationship of language and power to examine the low academic success rates of students with a native language other than English. Thompson (2017) states the significance in the disproportionality between ELs and their English-speaking peers when it comes to post-secondary academic success. As the population of linguistically-diverse students in mainstream U.S. classrooms increases, school districts are responsible for effectively supporting their secondary to postsecondary transition (Rance-Roney, 2011). Limited English proficiency should not exclude students from receiving a quality education (Umansky, 2016). In-depth evaluations of federal policies impacting the K-12 education of ELs uncover the inequitable underlying principles that establish barriers to academic success (Hamann & Reeves, 2013).

The purpose of this paper is to quantitatively explore the correlations between U.S. schools' ethnic diversity, the educational outcomes of ELs at the secondary level, and their level of preparedness for post-secondary admissions. The data used in this study was gathered from the Ed-Data Education Data Partnership and is specific to high schools in a California urban school district. First, I begin with a review of the literature regarding the barriers to post-school success resulting from poor academic preparation of the EL student population at the secondary level. A thorough analysis of the Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP) theory will provide a theoretical framework of encouraging student-learning through practical application of knowledge and interaction with community for this study. Next, I present a study that provides disaggregated data on schools' ethnic diversity index, percentage of enrolled ELs and the graduation rates, dropout rates, and rates meeting college admissions standards of ELs compared to all students at the high school. Few studies have examined the relationship between schools' student demographics, student academic outcomes, and the post-secondary success of ELs at the high school level. Finally, I conclude with a summary of implication and recommendations that high schools can implement to ensure the adequate academic preparation of language minority students for attaining increased educational outcomes.

Literature Review

English learners

The cultural and linguistic diversity of ELs in the U.S. makes them a unique group of learners with equally unique needs. The literature informing this paper addresses ELs as learners, the academic barriers they experience, and the necessary strategies to extend their educational opportunities beyond high school. Freeman & Freeman (2003) define the three types of ELs as those who are newly arrived in the U.S. with formal schooling experience; those who are newly arrived with limited formal schooling experience; and long-term language learners. The effective education of ELs requires valuing the cultural and linguistic diversity that will ultimately serve as assets as they progress towards becoming fully bilingual (Ziegenfuss et al., 2014). De Jong and Harper (2005) propose that a misconception exists in teacher preparation programs that exclude bilingual or English as a second language (ESL) courses under the assumption that teaching ELs is only a matter of adapting current instructional strategies. Lucas et al. (2008) argue that linguistically responsive teaching requires explicit knowledge and skills of the second language acquisition process. As a whole, the post-school success of ELs requires intentional partnerships between school personnel and families (Hamann & Reeves, 2013).

In fall 2015, a reported 9.5 percent of students in public schools throughout the United States were identified as ELs (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], n.d.). Meanwhile, there were eight states in fall 2015 where the percentage of public school students identified as ELs was 10.0 percent or more (NCES, n.d.). The learning needs of

ELs are distinct based on the diverse characteristics of immigration and the nature of the language acquisition process (Rance-Roney, 2011). Language proficiency levels can vary from students who are newly immigrant and those who are categorized as long-term ELs (Rance-Roney, 2011). Therefore, educators face the challenge of addressing limited language proficiency alongside the pressure of providing adequate preparation for standardized tests (Sanchez, 2017). Cummins (1979) states that the language limitations of ELs is often viewed as limited intellectual and academic ability despite native-language proficiency.

In a qualitative case study of a seven-year old Mexican-American student and his family (Martinez-Roldan & Malave, 2004), the authors examine the negative impact mainstream classroom practices have on the cultural and linguistic identity of language minority students. In a detailed breakdown of the history of bilingual education in the United States, Gándara and Escamilla (2017) explain the ways in which the U.S. definition of bilingual education tends to emphasize English proficiency instead of full bilingualism. Despite claims of inclusiveness, English-dominant classrooms do more to push away students' native language proficiency than to preserve them (Garcia, 2011). Sharkey and Layzer (2000) conclude that the academic success of ELs is based largely on teachers' understanding of the process of second language acquisition. Grouping language minority students under the umbrella of limited English proficiency discredits various other factors that help comprise their academic and social identity (Short & Echeverria, 2004).

The influence of federal policies on ELs

Garcia (2011) argues that many of the policies related to the education of ELs throughout the United States are more restrictive of educational opportunities than they are inclusive. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 proposed equitable access to quality education to the nation's low-income students in an effort to help close the academic achievement gap (Ramsey & O'Day, 2010). The Bilingual Education Act (BEA) of 1968 recognized the growing presence of linguistic diversity throughout the country and made bilingual education a viable option for meeting the needs of ELs (Crawford, 1997). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was passed in 2001 with the intent of establishing clear accountability measures for the academic achievement of all students (Smyth, 2008). Garcia (2011) argues that NCLB reversed many of the progressive measures made by the BEA through its focus on English proficiency. NCLB outlined grade-level reading proficiency, the presence of highly qualified teachers in the classrooms, and evidence of school's academic growth throughout the school year (Smyth, 2008). Each of these factors tied into the consistent implementation of high-stakes testing through the academic school year (Smyth, 2008). The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 replaced NCLB and gave states the liberty to make informed decisions regarding the education of disadvantaged learners including, but not limited to, ELs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016).

Since the ESEA of 1965, federal policies have been implemented throughout the U.S. with the intent of closing the academic achievement gap. The low academic success of ELs has been defined by policies at the federal and state level using pre-set standards measured by standardized tests (Rance-Roney, 2011). However, many of these classification policies impacting ELs do more to impede language minority students' access to academic content that cultivates post-school success (Umansky, 2016). The process of classifying students as ELs incorporates policies that require mandatory services for English language development at the expense of core content such as literacy and math (Umansky, 2016). Garcia (2011) argues that policies involving the education of ELs are reflective of xenophobia and other political ideologies that ultimately block potential. Rather than promoting inclusive practices, EL policies denote the exclusion of culturally and linguistically diverse students in the preparation for post-school success (Garcia, 2011).

A study examining the process of reclassification for ELs (Thompson, 2017) depicts the discrepancies between the measures for initial classification and the limited opportunities for language minorities to exit the services. In *Lau v. Nichols* (1974), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled for school systems to both identify ELs and “to teach English to those not yet fluent in the language while also providing access to the general curriculum” (Thompson, 2017, p. 333). The issue arises when, under federal language policies, the education of ELs becomes more about assimilation and less about the respect of cultural and linguistic diversity as an asset to learning (Garcia, 2011). The English proficiency requirement mandated by *Lau v. Nichols* ultimately encompasses instructional models that restrict ELs from the mainstream classroom environment and contributes to the increasing academic achievement gap (Garcia, 2011). In considering the educational outcomes of ELs, federal and state policies are perpetuating exclusionary educational practices that deny the quality education promised to all (Rance-Roney, 2011).

Standardized testing and ELs

The use of standardized tests to measure grade level proficiency, as required by federal policies, has contributed to a negative teaching and learning climate (Smyth, 2008). Language minority students face the dichotomy of having to master the academic content while simultaneously acquiring the English language. The development of academic language poses an added layer of complexity for both ELs and their teachers (Short & Echeverria, 2004). In order to ensure that ELs demonstrate grade level proficiency on state assessments, educators must have the resources to provide sheltered instruction that makes content comprehensible and fosters the growth of English language proficiency (Short & Echeverria, 2004). As mandated by federal law, school districts are required to provide instructional support to make core academic content accessible to ELs until they are reclassified (Umansky, 2016). However, standardized testing for ELs holds ethical considerations regarding the language of the exams and students’ native languages. Rather than emphasizing the testing of students’ understanding of academic content, standardized tests administered to ELs are prioritizing English language proficiency.

Abella et al. (2005) explains NCLB’s specification that ELs be tested “in a language and form that is most likely to produce a valid measure of students’ academic knowledge” (p. 128). However, less than one third of major U.S. cities reported using a language other than English to administer high-stakes tests (Council of the Great City Schools, 2003 as cited in Abella et al., 2005). The equity and validity of standardized tests administered to ELs raises questions when the relationships between language and culture in the classroom are continuously disregarded (Solano-Flores & Trumbull, 2003). In a study examining the validity of English standardized tests administered to ELs (Abella et al., 2005), it was found that the results are not a valid measure of students’ knowledge. Testing language minority students in English goes against the practices of second language acquisition (Abella et al., 2005).

Barriers to post-school success

A study conducted to determine the various factors that impact ELL’s access to post-school success (Sharkey & Layzer, 2000) determined that classroom placement plays an integral role in students’ academic achievement. According to Sharkey and Layzer (2000), ELs are most commonly placed in lower track classes given their language limitations. The problem arises when the lower-level track classes limit ELs’ access to interaction with proficient language models (Sharkey & Layzer, 2000). Similarly, the proper exposure to language via instruction allows students to experience access to the curriculum that will aid in their opportunities for post-school success (Umansky, 2016). A study conducted to determine the influence of leveled and exclusionary success of ELs (Umansky, 2016) determined that language minority students are more often denied the ability to enroll in honors or higher-level classes. Umansky (2016) concluded that the models of leveled and

exclusionary tracking that is imposed on ELs is harmful for their overall post-secondary opportunities.

Understanding the end goal

The diverse characteristics of ELs throughout the country add to the challenges of ensuring that schools are able to meet their distinct needs. Although passing standardized tests appears to be the ultimate goal of K-12 education, postsecondary opportunities for ELs requires consistent guidance and support (Rance-Roney, 2011). Federal policies requiring that language minority students perform under English-only mandates promotes an understanding of assimilation in order to attain academic success (Sharkey & Layzer, 2000). Garcia (2011) provides insight on the ways in which the undervaluing of the cultural and linguistic diversity of ELs becomes apparent through the emphasis on English proficiency. However, the achievement gap between ELs and their native English-speaking peers is widest in U.S. states that implement such restrictive policies (Garcia, 2011).

The education of ELs requires the added layer of language support throughout content area instruction. In order to maximize the learning potential of ELs in the classroom, mainstream teachers require an awareness on the ways in which students' native language can serve as a support as they acquire a second language (Ballantyne, et al., 2008). Rather than negating ELs' academic abilities because of their language limitations, educators must receive tailored professional development on the ways in which they can support language development throughout the process of content instruction (Ballantyne et al., 2008). The role of K-12 education on the post-school success of ELs makes it necessary to have a complete understanding of the population, their learning needs, and the practices and strategies that can aid in the meeting of these needs (Freeman & Freeman, 2003). Educators who subscribe to the restrictive and exclusionary practices of federal policies are doing a disservice to a growing population of students who deserve the same quality of education as their peers (Garcia, 2011).

Secondary to postsecondary transitions

The successful transition of ELs towards postsecondary opportunities encompasses a strategic school and family partnership (Rance-Roney, 2011). Achieving the Dream is an example of an organization that was established by community colleges looking to identify successful factors that contribute to "student retention and achievement" (Rance-Roney, 2011). Students throughout the country, despite their language proficiency, deserve equitable access to the academic content that is required to take and pass college-level courses (Umansky, 2016). Given the fact that ELs are placed in lower-level classes in response to their limited English proficiency, they are being denied the opportunity to take classes at the secondary level that will assist in their transition to postsecondary success (Umansky, 2016). Although tracking is presented as a well-intentioned method of giving ELs the opportunity to progress towards language development, it is also proving to be harmful to their education beyond high school (Callahan, 2005). Many of the college course requirements are the same ones that ELs are not given access to because of their language limitations (Umansky, 2016). Rance-Roney (2011) proposes that school districts and school personnel should have pre-established transition plans, differentiated guidance, explicit grammar and academic English instruction, the option of extended time, and partnerships with postsecondary institutions in order to support the effective transition of ELs. Ultimately, effectively teaching ELs requires the restructuring and reshaping of practices and policies to meet the needs of this growing student population.

Supporting ELs in and out of the classroom

ELs require differentiated guidance as a result of targeted training that highlights the ways in which their cultural and linguistic diversity can be viewed as assets to their learning as opposed to limitations (Rance-Roney, 2011). Although academic success is an important

component of the education of ELs, educators must find a balance between meeting their cognitive needs as well as their affective needs (Sharkey & Layzer, 2000). Neglecting the affective needs of students in order to solely focus on the cognitive needs has harmful effects on their overall education (Sharkey & Layzer, 2000). Supporting ELs in and out of the classroom requires the respect and valuing of diversity as it relates to language learning (Garcia, 2011). The lack of respect and value of linguistic diversity in the classroom setting perpetuates the notion of assimilation over acceptance (Garcia, 2011). A study focused on exploring the impact of teachers' beliefs about teaching ELs at the secondary level (Gleeson & Davison, 2016) found that the practice of team teaching, where ESL teachers serve as a resource, is influential in allowing content teachers to provide instruction while understanding the process of second language acquisition. Overall, teachers of ELs require additional professional development beyond those that target mainstream classroom learners because teaching ELs bridges content with language (Gleeson & Davison, 2016).

Additional research is necessary to provide the correlations between school's student demographics and the postsecondary success of enrolled ELs. Few studies have looked into the ways in which the teaching and learning of ELs is impacted by the presence of certain student subgroups. This study addresses the gap in the literature by analyzing disaggregated quantitative data that depicts the relationship between graduation and dropout rates, and the meeting of college admissions standards by ELs and other subgroups. The data used in this study provides a breakdown of the ways in which ELs are performing in these previously mentioned criteria in comparison to other student subgroups. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the discrepancies in the teaching of ELs who are being pushed towards English proficiency over post-school success as depicted by the literature.

Theoretical Overview

The legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) theory will be used to guide this research. Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1999) established this theory extending the notions of the situated learning theory. Under LPP, Lave and Wegner explain that authentic knowledge takes place in learning communities that allow for collaboration and participation (Flowerdew, 2000). According to Lave and Wegner (1999), situated learning is not merely the social interaction during the learning process, but also the practice of fully joining the learning community (Lave, 1991). Learning that takes place through the LPP theory develops what Lave and Wegner describe as a discourse community where learners acquire knowledge through meaningful participation (Flowerdew, 2000).

Green et al. (2018) describe the three major tenets of LPP and situated learning. The first tenet is *authentic context*, which explains that learners need to be engaged in classroom activities and assessments that establish meaningful connections to real-world experiences (Green et al., 2018). According to LPP and situated learning, learners learn best when they are able to take what they have learned in the classroom and apply it outside of the classroom. The second tenet is *social interaction*, which emphasizes the practice of multiple opportunities to share ideas and learn from one another in the educational context (Green et al., 2018). The tenet of social interaction is focused on the increased likelihood for attaining understanding through interactive opportunities with other learners. The third tenet is *constructivism*, which focuses on giving learners the opportunities to build their learning through experiences (Green et al., 2018). Learners are able to maximize the quality of learning that takes place when they are given the chance to take ownership of the experiences that contribute to their knowledge development in the classroom.

The legitimate peripheral participation theory and the situated learning theory explore the ways in which learning is constructed in a social context. Therefore, denying students the opportunity and the access to the proper social resources through leveled and

exclusionary tracking is lessening their chances of experiencing post-school success. In regard to ELs, leveled and exclusionary tracking removes them from mainstream classes and places them in lower-level class in order to adhere to their language limitations. According to LPP and situated learning the removal of language minority students from mainstream classes is more harmful than it is beneficial for their overall academic success. Sharkey and Layzer (2000) explain Lave and Wenger's definition of LPP as an individual perspective on learning instead of as a strategy that can be implemented. Educators must be aware of their bias and perspective on the role of language and learning in order to grasp a full understanding of the ways in which the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities are detrimental to the long term educational outcomes of ELs. LPP and the situated learning theory are used to guide this research because they explain the ways in which language is used as power in mainstream classrooms throughout the country.

This paper explores the ways in which ELs compare to other students in the areas of graduation and dropout rates, and the meeting of college admissions standards. Using the LPP and situated learning theories as a framework, this study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: Does a school's ethnic diversity index impact the academic achievement of ELs at the secondary level?

H1: The ethnic diversity index of schools impacts the academic achievement of ELs at the secondary level.

It is predicted that the academic achievement of ELs will be impacted depending on the ethnic diversity index due to the availability of and access to educational resources. It is hypothesized that ELs will perform better academically at schools with less diversity in student enrollment because the quality of education provided at these schools will be enhanced.

Methodology

This quantitative study focuses on the correlations between schools' ethnic diversity, the educational outcomes of ELs at the secondary level and their level of preparedness for post-secondary admissions.

Data

The quantitative data collected for this study was gathered from the Ed-Data Education Data Partnership. According to the website,

Ed-Data is a partnership of the California Department of Education, EdSource, and the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team/California School Information Services (FCMAT/CSIS) designed to offer educators, policy makers, the legislature, parents, and the public quick access to timely and comprehensive data about K-12 education in California. (Ed-Data Education Data Partnership, 2020)

All of the data in this study was from the 2017-2018 school year as reported on the website. The schools selected for this study were the high schools in the San Diego Unified Schools District. The San Diego Unified Schools District was selected for this study because of their increased enrollment of ELs. This study provides disaggregated data on 20 high schools in this district. This study focuses on high schools because of the focus on post-school or postsecondary success. The high schools chosen for this study were those with data available for all of the variables examined. The first variable examined in this study was the ethnic diversity index for each school. According to the website, the Ethnic Diversity Index reflects how evenly distributed these students are among the race/ethnicity categories. The more evenly distributed the student body, the higher the number. A school where all of the students are the same ethnicity would have an index of 0. The second variable examined in this study was the percentage of enrolled ELs. The third variable examined in this study

was the percent of cohort graduates at each school for all students and for ELs. The fourth variable examined was the percentage of cohort dropouts at each high school for all students and for ELs. Lastly, the fifth variable examined was the percentage of all students and ELs meeting the University of California and California State University course requirement upon graduating from high school.

Procedures

The data was collected from the Ed-Data Education Data Partnership site. The county selected for this study was San Diego. The district selected was the San Diego Unified Schools District. The 20 schools selected for this study were those within the district that have complete data available for each of the variables examined for the 2017-2018 school year. For each school selected, the demographics section was expanded to gather the percentage of enrolled ELs and the schools' ethnic diversity index from the data provided. The data for the remaining three variables examined in this study, graduation rates, dropout rates, and rates of students meeting college admissions, was gathered from the expanded College and Career Readiness section. Within this section, data for all students is provided under each of the remaining three variables examined. Then, the criteria English Learners was selected from a drop-down menu for each variable.

The data collected for this study was compiled into a table (see Table 1) which will serve as the source of analysis. The table provides the name of each high school analyzed in this study. The ethnic diversity index and percentage of enrolled ELs is provided for each school. The table also provides data comparing the graduation rates, dropout rates, and rates of students meeting college admissions standards for all students and ELs during the 2017-2018 school year for each school included in this study.

Methods

The method of analysis used to fit the research question for this study is a descriptive analysis of the quantitative data gathered. Descriptive data analysis is used to describe the basic features of the data in the study. Through the use of this analysis method, the data is summarized in such a way that allows for the identification of patterns that might emerge. This method was chosen in order to provide a summary of the data collected to test the research question and the hypothesis provided for this study. The ethnic diversity index at each school will be analyzed to establish conclusions in each of the variables studied. In reference to the research question presented in this study, the ethnic diversity index at each school will be used to determine the impact diversity has on the academic achievement of ELs at each school. Through the use of descriptive analysis, the ethnic diversity index will be used to correlate whether ELs performed better in each of the variables examined at the schools with an increased diverse presence of student enrollment.

Results

Table 1 depicts data from 20 San Diego Unified High Schools on the ethnic diversity index, the percentage of enrolled ELs, cohort graduation rates, cohort dropout rates, and the percentage of ELs meeting college admissions standards during the 2017-2018 school year. Out of the 20 schools presented in this study, 12 of the schools reported having an ELs student population of 10% or higher. There are 8 of the 20 schools with a 10.0% or higher difference between the graduation rates of ELs and other students. A total of 4 schools showcased ELs graduation rates of less than 50% of the student body. Only one of the schools reported having ELs graduate at equal or greater rates as their peers. Similarly, only 5 of the 20 schools reported having ELs dropping out at equal or lesser rates as their peers. Therefore, 17 of the schools reported higher percentages of ELs dropping out as compared to the entire student body. Of the 20 schools analyzed in this study, 16 reported having a

10.0% or higher difference between the meeting of college admissions standards between ELs and their peers. There were 17 out of the 20 schools with 50% or less of ELs meeting college admissions standards. These findings contribute to the phenomenon that ELs are not being prepared at the same levels as their English-speaking peers for postsecondary success.

Table 1. *San Diego Unified High Schools Data 2017-2018*

School name	Ethnic diversity index	% English learners	% Cohort graduates	% Cohort dropouts	% Meeting UC/CSU
Audeo Charter	45	9.7	All: 39.1 ELs: 33.3	All: 9.9 ELs: 14.3	All: 15.3 ELs: 0
Charter School of San Diego	38	13.7	All: 30.5 ELs: 18.8	All: 7 ELs: 7.1	All: 27.5 ELs: 23.8
Clairemont High	45	7.3	All: 94.3 ELs: 83.9	All: 2.4 ELs: 9.7	All: 62 ELs: 34.6
Crawford High	54	35.3	All: 78.2 ELs: 66.7	All: 9 ELs: 15.8	All: 65.4 ELs: 48.7
Garfield High	11	26.4	All: 35.5 ELs: 33.8	All: 16.9 ELs: 18.5	All: 16.4 ELs: 18.2
Health Sciences High	36	18.7	All: 98.7 ELs: 95.7	All: 0.6 ELs: 2.2	All: 77.6 ELs: 63.6
Henry High	57	3.2	All: 95.7 ELs: 88.2	All: 1 ELs: 2.9	All: 76.3 ELs: 50
Hoover High	27	22.3	All: 86.9 ELs: 74	All: 3.5 ELs: 8	All: 58.9 ELs: 45
Kearny College Connections	51	15.9	All: 100 ELs: 100	All: 0 ELs: 0	All: 67 ELs: 37.5
King-Chavez Community High	2	34.5	All: 89.6 ELs: 83.7	All: 6.7 ELs: 10.2	All: 47.5 ELs: 34.1
La Jolla High	46	3.8	All: 98 ELs: 85.7	All: 0.6 ELs: 4.8	All: 87.1 ELs: 50
Learning Choice Academy	43	10.4	All: 90.4 ELs: 87.5	All: 0.9 ELs: 0	All: 32.7 ELs: 21.4
Lincoln High	32	32.1	All: 78.7 ELs: 65.8	All: 11.1 ELs: 15.4	All: 61.6 ELs: 51.9
Madison High	51	7.9	All: 93.3 ELs: 90.3	All: 0.9 ELs: 0	All: 71.2 ELs: 46.4
Mira Mesa High	71	9.1	All: 92.4 ELs: 79.7	All: 1.5 ELs: 3.8	All: 64.5 ELs: 34.9
Mission Bay High	43	8.3	All: 98 ELs: 97	All: 0 ELs: 0	All: 66.8 ELs: 31.3
Morse High	58	13.6	All: 93.2 ELs: 89.8	All: 2.8 ELs: 4.1	All: 46.7 ELs: 34.1
San Diego Business/Leadership	16	25.4	All: 74.1 ELs: 56.4	All: 12.6 ELs: 25.6	All: 44 ELs: 36.4
Serra High	57	4.6	All: 94.6 ELs: 89.7	All: 1.9 ELs: 0	All: 68.7 ELs: 68.6
Twain High	42	21.8	All: 15.8 ELs: 10.3	All: 12.8 ELs: 14.1	All: 25.5 ELs: 25

Note: From Ed-Data Education Data Partnership.

Discussion

RQ1: Does a school's ethnic diversity index impact the academic achievement of LLs at the secondary level? H1: The ethnic diversity index of schools impacts the academic achievement of ELs at the secondary level.

The findings of this study do not support H1. The data on the academic achievement on each of the variables examined in this study are inconsistent as they relate to the ethnic diversity index of each school. There are schools with high ethnic diversity indices that resulted in low academic achievement of ELs just as there were schools with low ethnic diversity indices that resulted in low academic achievement of ELs and vice versa. Overall, there were no consistencies in the data to depict whether or not the ethnic diversity index had an impact on the academic achievement of ELs.

Although the inconsistent nature of the data interferes with the ability to draw linear conclusions regarding the impact of schools' ethnic diversity index and the academic achievement of ELs, the data does depict an overwhelming majority of ELs at each of the schools examined are underperforming. Meanwhile, the findings from this study indicate that there are some fundamental flaws in the education of ELs at the high school level because their educational outcomes are far beneath those of their peers regardless of the school's ethnic diversity index. Although the findings of this study do not support the hypothesis about the impact of the ethnic diversity index on the academic achievement of ELs, they do correlate with the literature that states that the quality of education being provided to ELs at the high school level is not adequately preparing them for advanced educational outcomes. The overemphasizing of English proficiency through standardized tests is taking away from ELs' opportunities for post-school success.

Using LPP theory and situated learning theory as a theoretical framework, this study provides an overview that supports student-learning through practical application of knowledge and interaction with a community of learners. As a student subgroup, ELs are a vulnerable population due to the increased efforts to help them attain English proficiency at the expense of subjecting them to leveled and exclusionary tracking. As can be seen by the findings of this study and the broader literature on this topic, exclusionary teaching and learning practices are not beneficial towards the post-school success opportunities of students. On the contrary, students who are denied the opportunities to meaningfully apply knowledge and work within a community of learners doing the same, are receiving a lessened quality of education when compared to their English-speaking peers. Lave and Wenger's (1999) discussion of LPP and situated learning applies to the learning of ELs who are removed from meaningful learning opportunities due to their language limitations. Rather than being portrayed as an asset to a classroom learning community given their diverse linguistic abilities, the academic emphasis of ELs lies primarily in their ability to acquire the English language and demonstrate proficiency on mandated standardized tests. Although English proficiency is an important factor for the educational and social advancements of ELs, it should not become the primary focus that takes away from students' ability to practically apply their knowledge and interact with a community of learners. In turn, an in-depth understanding of LPP and situated learning proposes that ELs receive greater benefits from meaningful opportunities to collaborate with others and participate in learning experiences that are not permeated by the demands of English proficiency.

Limitations of Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze quantitative data in order to explore the factors that contribute to the low educational outcomes of ELs at the secondary level when compared to schools' ethnic diversity. The disaggregated data used throughout this study provided schools' ethnic diversity indices, the comparison of graduation and dropout rates between ELs and all students, and the percentage of ELs meeting college admissions standards at each school. A limitation of this study was the inability to look at the pedagogical instruction offered at each school. The conclusions drawn about the quality of education being provided to ELs resulted from data on graduation and dropout rates, as well as the rates of meeting college entrance requirements. The opportunity to look at the

pedagogical instruction at each school would have given insight towards practices of leveled or exclusionary tracking implemented in regard to ELs. Another limitation of this study was the lack of specific breakdown by student demographics for each of the variables explored throughout this study. The data provided for this study compared the academic achievement of ELs to all students. However, further conclusions could have been drawn if given additional data on the ways in which ELs performed as compared to other student subgroups based on ethnicity. Such data could have clarified whether the quality of education provided at these schools differed based on cultural and linguistic diversity of the students enrolled. The last limitation of this study was the fact that no time was allotted to talk to teachers and students regarding the school culture, the courses being offered, and the process of EL classification. This additional qualitative data would have contributed to the research question and the purpose of this study in that it would have provided more information on the potential reasons for the low graduation rates and high dropout rates of ELs at the high school level.

Recommendations for Future Research

Additional qualitative data would have improved this study. The qualitative data would include interviews and surveys from the students and teachers at these schools to gather their perspective on whether or not ELs are receiving the same quality of education as their English-speaking peers. Another improvement that would be made to this study would be the breakdown of the graduation and dropout rates by student demographics. This additional data would allow for further comparison of the differences between the educational outcomes of ELs and their peers. Lastly, this study could be improved by implementing other methodologies that further analyze the data and explore the research question posed.

Future research is needed to uncover the pedagogical practices that contribute to the low academic achievement of ELs. Incorporating a qualitative component where teachers and students are able to share their perspective on the quality of education provided to ELs will allow for a more in-depth analysis of the pedagogical instruction ELs receive at the secondary level. Furthermore, a quantitative study with more data on the specific ethnic makeup of each school can help determine if there are any underlying correlations between ethnic diversity and the academic achievement of ELs at the secondary level. This additional data can serve as a reference when determining whether certain groups of students have access to certain courses or instructional practices that are being denied to ELs.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to examine the impact of schools' ethnic diversity index on the academic achievement of ELs at the secondary level. The research question posed was *RQ1: Does a school's ethnic diversity index impact the academic achievement of ELs at the secondary level?* The corresponding hypothesis was *H1: The ethnic diversity index of schools impacts the academic achievement of ELs at the secondary level.* It was predicted that schools with higher ethnic diversity index would negatively impact the academic achievement of ELs and schools with lower ethnic diversity index would positively impact the academic achievement of ELs. This study used disaggregated quantitative data from the Ed-Data Education Data Partnership which included graduation rates, dropout rates, and rates meeting college admissions standards of ELs at the high school level as compared to all students. The results from this study determined that ethnic diversity index does not have a significant impact on the academic achievement of ELs at the secondary level. The findings from this study highlight the need for providing quality instruction to ELs despite the ethnic makeup of the school. Given the widespread underperformance of ELs as

compared to all students at the schools analyzed in this study, adjustments need to be made in order to increase the opportunities for post-school success of ELs at the secondary level.

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Letter to My Daughter

Kristian Contreras
Syracuse University

My body is the first language I learned to speak. Eyes crinkling, stomach a flutter, the ache in my throat. Hunger, of course, for love, the pain of knobby-kneed bruises, and the satisfaction of saffron on my tongue. You can forget it, the way the body talks to you. Its ways of knowing. I've forgotten how to translate its messages, overflowing like voicemails on a dust-covered machine. I hope you stay fluent.

Like my high school French, the conjugations are blurry. My memory too scarred from years of yearning and exclusion. Eyelids laden with defeat, I'd lost sight long ago of the woman I wanted to be. My neck, heavy with gratitude, kept me focused—head down—on the scoreboard. *Tek wuh ah telling yuh*, your grandmother would chide, there is no room for complaining in this house; *dem wan tek er'ting but dem cy-ant tek yuh* education. The stiffness of my neck trickled down to my fingertips and authored the image of perfection, the allegory of the outlier.

I would make it, for her and for you, to the finish line. Flat-footed legs would carry me to the end, arms outstretched to the embrace of Otherness. A sea of white men and women welcomed me to the proverbial table and I did not hear my body screaming. With earned credentials, I breathed in triumph and opened my lips to sing my freedom song. I thought I made it. Yet the stiffness of my neck tightened its hold across my throat and left me voiceless. I tried to sing, but silence engulfed me. I did not remember how to listen to this body, these limbs that knew the truth. That embrace of Otherness meant trading in my “sighted eyes” and “feeling heart”¹ not for a seat at the table, but for a place on the menu.

Ignoring these harbingers of fate, I contorted my body into palatable morsels for consumption, a symbol of perfection—spine curved in subordination, grateful to be tokenized, a smile affixed to a numbed and unthreatening Brownness, and eyes perpetually focused on the floor and away from an authoritative gaze. This shrinking game of silence did not sound like freedom at all.

I did not know how to honor my body, one borne of immigrants and lullabies of Guyanese *patois* and Spanglish. I did not know the steeliness of my chest or how to refrain from bending my backbone rendered from the fingertips of our ancestors. I wish I remembered, was able to redo this path so you may never be led astray. I wish for you to listen to these warning signs and never fill your lungs with the weight of acquiescence.

¹ Schultz, C., MacLowry, R. (Producers) & Heather Strain, T. (Producer, Director). (2017). *Lorraine Hansberry: Sighted eyes* [Feeling heart [Motion Picture]. California Newsreel.

For me, these lessons came later, *wrapped in rainbows*² and sandalwood. Loneliness drew me away from the table for a *room of one's own*³, and bell taught me how to build my own table and how to sit at the head. Black women, our sisters, met me with hands outstretched at the precipice of defeat. They are your aunts, your cousins, your mother, our family. I learned to listen, exhale, and memorize the glides and fricatives of forgiveness. In worn pages found in old bookstores, I found Alice and Beverly, and stretched myself in the warmth of our people and of Blackness long ignored. With your Aunts, I cradled your future in my hands and learned to confront the wells of my fear. These muscles strengthened with the stillness of my breath as it escaped a once-mangled throat. These bones cracked with the discomfort of accountability and kept your mother upright in the face of anti-Blackness, once disguised as the safety of Otherness, now rejected as a tool of White Supremacy.

I want you to wrap your cinnamon arms around the fullness of your body, to forgive the times your silence, like my own, sound safer than your own voice. I hope you see that you bring more to the table than an appetite, and to be hungry to know, to learn is a gift and not a punishment. With patience, I hope you find your way back to yourself, to listen to the map of your own heartbeat. I want so much for you, to traverse this journey in tune with your body—never wavering in the allure of Otherness; to never feel the stifle of gratitude because I know that being visible is not the same as being seen. Remember your softness, readied by aloe vera and cocoa butter, when external definitions want you to be hard. Remember that this Ph.D. did not save your mother.

I hum now, the melodies of my freedom song. Its simple notes so familiar, they sound like the syllables of your name. I hope you listen to your body; I hope this life lets you sing.

Your Mother

Author's Note

I first read Ta-Nehisi Coates' *Letter to My Son* (2015) on July 4th, soon after it was published. I was living in Atlanta, GA and working as the founding director of a diversity and inclusion center for a mere four days. Nine days later, Sandra Bland was murdered by police on her way to begin a new job at Prairie View A&M University—her alma mater. After her highly publicized death, I scrambled to find the resources to design a discussion program to help my campus community members name, unpack, and move through yet another death at the hands of police brutality. I found *Letter to My Son* and voraciously read through each line; I finally had the words to name and express what I was feeling. I carried this discomfort, fear, regret, and panic in my body for weeks. In the days leading up to the start of the academic year, I traced the phrase "And yet, I am still afraid" (para. 8) with my fingertips so much that the ink smudged on my printed copy. I felt Coates' words wrapped

² Boyd, V. (2003). *Wrapped in rainbows: The life of Zora Neale Hurston*. Scribner.

³ Woolf, V. (1981). *A room of one's own*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

around my throat. On some days, I still do. Sandra Bland's education and burgeoning career in higher education did not protect her. It will not protect me. As I continue to navigate my own doctoral journey and reimagine what the possibilities of education look like, I still return to *Letter to My Son* and his book, *Between the World and Me* (2015). Both are among the most important pieces of literature I've read and connected with. I offer this letter to my future daughter in a similar fashion. I offer her hope, support, love, and translate my own body to be in tune with hers.

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| **STUDIO** |

**On Resisting Rape Culture with Teachers-to-be:
A Research Poem**

Amber Moore
University of British Columbia

This project is sputtering and splintering from fullness,
all swollen in the middle and
ripening through rot, pressing on.
If I am interpreting this correctly,
my participants have scarred ideas about privilege and violences. Permissions too.
Stretch marks snake under our waistbands, these sacred faded hieroglyphs full of strained
stories that thicken reciprocity as we
reckon with rape culture
anew.

They come to voice with lasik languages,
subversive and sobering,
sustaining above-ground discourses.
They can teach soft spots
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y,

pushing into anchored conversations with the young and
flying grateful ribbons half mast,
acknowledging losses.
Such gestures keep precious words that inch ahead
on tongues thick with jittering lacquers
warm and slick.

There are woo's and whoa's and woes
as we search for lightness between
blades of organic awful,
apologies run amuck,
and valid subgenres blooming roadside.
Our bodies are chatty too—buzzing with
readiness to wrangle with the real,
curtail conceptual critters who hug the walls here, staring.
But there's no need for fancy footwork in this lab
so sit on leather poufs
and broach hot precarity.

I note one's infectious posture as we dig into
the raw slips.
Another plays with frizzed curls that are calm at the center
and offers nuances that
can only be coaxed forward in November.
Such anxieties and appreciations break ground,
tenderized already, prepared to deliver
this
stormy pedagogy that drains the canon so that
the stopper burps,
awash in unlearning.

We have trench foot but
we laugh,
creating respite from needling
a flushed curriculum in need of
rewriting.
We retweet the tough bits to
followers immune to
critical chemistries.
Ours is another wagging cautionary tale
that educates.

Author

Amber Moore is a SSHRC-funded Ph.D. candidate and Killam Laureate at the University of British Columbia studying language and literacy education with the Faculty of Education. Her research interests include adolescent literacy, feminist pedagogies, teacher education, and trauma literature, particularly Young Adult sexual assault narratives. She also enjoys writing poetry and creative nonfiction.

| BOOK REVIEW |

The Critical Turn in Education: From Marxist Critique to Poststructuralist Feminism to Critical Theories of Race

by Isaac Gottesman (2016)
Routledge: New York, NY. 176 pp.
ISBN: 9781138781351

Aaron A. Baker
University of Toledo

According to Stephen Bronner, “ideas build upon ideas, thinkers upon thinkers, books upon books... tradition defines the terms, or mediates the contexts in which the conversation between thinkers occur” (Bronner, 1999, p.11). Isaac Gottesman, Assistant Professor of Education at Iowa State University, embraced Bronner’s notion and masterfully penned, *The Critical Turn in Education: From Marxist Critique to Poststructuralist Feminism to Critical Theories of Race* to “illuminate the historical context” (p. 4) in which critical educational theory evolved: ideas, thinkers, and books building upon one another over time. His overarching goal is to “enrich dialogue in the critical educational community...by offering historically informed criticism” (p. 3). Fortunately, while some of the scholarly traditions may seem hard to grasp, Gottesman expertly conveys even the most complex theories in an accessible fashion.

Because Paulo Freire is often considered the originator of critical scholarship in education (a notion that, ultimately, Gottesman disputes), Gottesman launches *Critical Turn* by examining both Freire’s reception by American education scholars and his contribution to education, in Chapter 1 “Revolutionary Movements.” Often, scholars point to Freire’s widely taught *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) as the impetus of critical scholarship; however, Gottesman posits that for at least 15 years following the publication of *Pedagogy*, scholars did not look to it for “primary theoretical guidance” (p. 24). Although Freire articulates “how and why schooling and education should be harnessed to push against an... unjust social order” (p. 26), Freire doesn’t necessarily encourage critiquing education.

Chapter 2, “Political Economy and the Academic Left” and Chapter 3 “Ideology and Hegemony” highlight the influence of Bowles and Gintis’s book *Schooling in Capitalist America* (1976) and Michael Apple’s *Ideology and Curriculum* (1979), respectively. Through thoughtful analyses of each book and its authors intellectual influences, Gottesman artfully catalogs emerging Marxist theories in education and how they “helped initiate a broad turn in the field of education in the United States to critical Marxist thought as a lens through which to analyze the relationship between school and society” (p. 52). Central to these chapters is Gottesman’s intellectual history of academics and philosophers, which achieves two purposes: It helps reveal how Bowles, Gintis, and Apple formed their views on Marxism, and it provides readers with a deeper and nuanced understanding of Marxist criticism.

As in Chapter 1, Gottesman disrupts common narratives regarding Freire’s contributions to critical education scholarship in Chapter 4, “Critical Pedagogy.” Here, he evaluates Henry Giroux’s extensive work during the 1970s and 1980s as Giroux developed his concept of critical pedagogy (which is commonly believed to be initiated Freire). According to Gottesman, because Giroux endeavored to “theorize the relationship

between schools and society and the possibilities of schools as sites of radical democratic social reform..." (p. 75), he is its actual architect. Additionally, because Giroux theorized critical pedagogy, it is a post-Marxist concept.

The final two chapters focus on the emergence of "Situated Knowledge and Feminist Standpoint Epistemology," and "Critical Theories of Race" in the 1990s. Chapter 5 considers the role that feminist thought played in developing critical education scholarship through a nuanced analysis of Elizabeth Ellsworth's, Kathleen Weiler's, and Patti Lather's critiques of Giroux's critical pedagogy from the perspective of postmodernist and poststructuralist feminist. Ellsworth, in particular, argued that critical pedagogy is inherently flawed and cannot succeed because it theorizes teachers as radical, emancipatory leaders without "theoriz[ing] a self-reflective teacher as intellectual, one that unpacks his or her own assumptions and recognizes their own subjectivity" (p. 101). In other words, critical pedagogy did not consider the impact of a teacher's social position on the teaching and learning process. Similarly, Chapter 6 shows how critical race theories developed over time. With roots in the multiculturalism of the 1970s, these theories embraced a line of thinking analogous to Ellsworth's. Specifically, Gottesman demonstrates that critical race theories (CRT) came to the fore when "race became a central focus of scholarship" (p. 117) in the mid 1990's; previous critical theories did not consider how the social construction of race was entrenched in every aspect of education and impacted teaching and learning.

In addition to defining critical race theory, Chapter 6 provides "a narrative arc...into the core debates and conversation flows that remain central to critical race scholars" (p.117). By outlining key debates, Gottesman showcases differences of thought between two pairings of CRT scholars: Daniel Solórzano and Tara Yosso, and Gloria Ladson Billings and William Tate. Recognizing where their philosophies converge and diverge is critical not only because it helps clarify how CRT emerged as a theory, but it also helps reveal potential impacts for assessment and social justice advocacy within the field of education. For both groups, the question was no longer *if* race affects education, but instead *how* race affects education. Nevertheless, without one unified theory, Gottesman believes that CRT will not have the full impact possible.

Gottesman concludes *Critical Turn* by encouraging scholars to be vigilant and engage in four practices: read broadly, read closely, publish broadly, and focus on teaching and learning. By implementing these practices in his book, Gottesman's forges a relationship between the history of critical educational theory and society's reliance on education as the key to social justice. Bearing this in mind, *Critical Turn's* contribution to education is readily apparent: it elucidates various significant "turns" in critical education theory, while challenging each of us to consider how these shifts continue to inform contemporary educational scholarship. And, perhaps more importantly, it entreats us to make our own contributions:

If we are to prepare scholars, practitioners, and activists who are working in solidarity towards the goal of radical social change, we must do so with all the analytical and conceptual care that we hope a more just society might offer. (p. 146)

If there is one weakness in this text, it is that Gottesman doesn't seem to embrace Ellsworth's or CRT's call for self-reflection. Nowhere in the text does he reveal how his social position might influence the narrative. Nevertheless, *Critical Turn*, is a truly unique historical account and a call for social justice. Barring Tyack's *One Best System* (1974), which demonstrated how urban schools developed and how they can be mechanisms for social justice, I have never encountered a historiography that also served as a call to action. For that reason, along with those stated above, *Critical Turn* is essential reading for scholars interested in critical educational theory.

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| **BOOK REVIEW** |

How to Be an Antiracist

by Ibram X. Kendi (2019).
One World: New York, NY. 305 pp.
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In *How to be an Antiracist* (2019), historian and race expert, Ibram X. Kendi, explores race relations from both historical and personal perspectives in order to illustrate not only how racist policies nurture racist ideas in the U.S., but how racist ideas and policies become internalized by individuals of all races. Racist policies (also known as “systemic racism,” “institutional racism,” etc.) create and maintain racial inequities among human beings, which produces written and unwritten rules that govern racial groups (p.18). Racist policies safeguard ideas that racial groups are inferior or superior to other racial groups (p. 20). Kendi compellingly argues that to dismantle racist ideas and racist policies, these ideas and policies must be identified, accurately described, and then nullified (p. 9) using antiracist perspectives. *How to be an Antiracist* is relevant for all persons seeking to engage in dialogues on race and racism and serves as a handbook on antiracist frameworks for organizations and educators aiming to disrupt racial inequities by closing opportunity gaps at all levels of the institution.

Antiracist consists of 18 chapters dedicated to identifying the historical roots of racist ideas, while introducing antiracist concepts that serve to disrupt racist policies. The first chapter provides basic definitions that guide this text, including racist, antiracist, racist ideas, and racist policies (p.18). A racist supports “a racist policy through their actions or inaction or expressing a racist idea” while an antiracist supports “antiracist policy through their actions or expressing an antiracist idea” (p.13). Careful attention should be given to the word “support” as Kendi identifies support (of actions, policies, and individuals) as another form of anti/racist action. In chapter 2, Kendi distinguishes between the dueling consciousness of people of color (POC) and white dueling consciousness. He grounds his argument in Du Bois’ *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) in stating Blacks develop a “double consciousness” through the twoness of seeing oneself as both Black and American. Kendi asserts it is actually a duel because Blacks battle with the mental war between assimilation (looking at oneself through white eyes) and antiracist (the racial relativity of looking at one’s race through their own eyes) (p.29). Conversely, white dueling consciousness promotes racist ideas of cultural assimilation for “civilizing” POCs or segregation (p.32).

In chapter 3, Kendi explores racist power while defining race as a construct aimed to produce different outcomes for different racial groups (p. 37). As he repeats throughout the book, those who build the racial system will position themselves at the top. A broader understanding of race history in the U.S. informs readers how certain racial groups have historically gained more social and economic resources than others, thus extending their power and privilege. This highlights the importance of race history extending beyond slavery to encompass the science and psychologies used to rationalize beliefs of inferiority and superiority of racial groups. These teachings help debunk biological racist ideas that “races are meaningfully different in their biology and that these differences create a hierarchy of value” (p. 45). Later, in chapter five, Kendi discusses the antiracist ideology of national and transnational ethnic groups, which views all race groups as equals and identifies problems of social outcomes in policy rather than race (p. 64).

Chapters 6 through 8 focus on racial fallacies—namely in the Black and Latinx communities. A systemically racist idea is that Black and Brown folx are prone to violence and crime. In actuality, violence and crime have greater statistical linkages to unemployment that is consistent across racial categories (p.79). How these bodies are represented by politicians, the media, etc. play a critical role in the production of racial policies and ideas. This is how communities of color become stigmatized and racialized, which are racist acts (p.90). A notable quote here is that “individual behaviors can shape the success of individuals. But policies determine the success of groups” (p. 94). These are important ideas for educators to consider when structuring social spaces, classrooms and being critical of the ways we engage students of color. Written and unwritten racialized policies matter to the success of groups—specifically groups of color.

Chapters 9 through 11 (entitled “Color,” “White,” and “Black,” respectively) observe racial inequities through color lines and address how race becomes internalized. Those who have been victimized by race continue to be victimized by owners of racial policies. Whites blame Blacks for racial inequities with little regard for the deep history of racist policies. Blacks, at times, have also betrayed their community when seated in positions of social authority. These chapters highlight both the relevance of racial power and the limitations of power. Specifically, power is not always reflective of resources, but reflective of what one is able to accomplish. Contrary to the belief that Black people do not have power, Kendi makes the argument that Black people have exerted power and influence over time that has created significant social changes, even if limited. In chapter 13, “Space,” Kendi argues against perceptions of what Black and Indigenous people of color (BIPOCs) value less in comparison to their white counterparts (for example, education, health, etc.). He attributes those disparities to the lack of equitable access to resources—the result of exclusionary racial policies.

Kendi openly addresses his personal journey in learning about the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality in graduate school. While racism continues to be experienced by individuals in communities of color, BIPOC women and those who are members of the LGBTQ+ community are often most vulnerable. Kendi acknowledges that his own journey is ongoing and ever-developing (as it should be for all of us). However, he makes it clear that in order to be a true antiracist, one must strive to resolve all of the areas in which racial inequities exist—and the health and safety of Black women and Black LGBTQ+ members are areas of utmost concern.

The final chapters (16-18), entitled “Failure,” “Success,” and “Survival” explore the difficult challenges of being an antiracist. Kendi states:

The antiracist power within is the ability to view my own racism in the mirror of my past and present, view my own antiracism in the mirror of my future, view my own racial groups as equal to other racial groups, view the world of racial inequity as abnormal, view my own power to resist and overtake racist power and policy. (p. 215)

Kendi uses “powerful” as a descriptor throughout his various definitions of racist and antiracist concepts. His repeated usage of the word makes it clear that racist actions and ideas which are ignored or dismissed serve to reinforce and bolster institutional racist policies. When such concepts and behaviors persist, institutions fail to bridge opportunity gaps among racial groups. Kendi’s grounding of racist policies and ideas within relevant historical narratives can serve to guide organizations and educators in tracing back just how internalized and normative racist policies have become. These historical narratives build critical connections that other social perspectives may not always convey. In order to move forward, antiracists must be unrelenting in their pursuit of racial equity through the deconstruction of racist policies and implicit beliefs. Only then can racial equity be achieved in all social and educational spheres.

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