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** Cover design by Jessica A. Heybach

** Our thanks to the cadre of scholars who serve as reviewers without whose services the journal could not exist.
Colleagues and Friends of the Academy:

Welcome to Volume 9, Issue 1 of CQIE! This issue marks the ninth year of the journal’s existence. If you would have asked us nine years ago where’d we be today, we certainly would have had our doubts about its success. Thanks to everyone who has supported this endeavor over the years. Not only does this issue mark our ninth anniversary, it comes with some exciting additional Academy publishing news: we have just signed an agreement with Chris Myers of the newly founded Myers Education Press for a new book series, the Academy Book Series in Education! As we iron out the details, please keep a look out for our official announcement about the series. The first book (already in “the can”) will be out sometime in April.

Before getting to this issue, just a reminder that our conferences and symposiums are still rolling along as well: we will be in Portland the first week of March and Kansas City in the fall. Again, for all things Academy, please visit our web site: academyforeducationalstudies.org.

We have in Volume 9, Issue 1, an interesting set of manuscripts as well as two book reviews. In the first article, Nancy Ares, Dawn Evans, and Alice Harnischfeger present a study with a twist on systemic reform: they examine student perceptions of such reforms. Their findings are interestingly ironic to say the least. Following Ares, Evans, and Harnischfeger, Noah Borrero, Asra Ziauddin, and Alexandra Ahn report their findings on how new teachers are “experiencing” the potential power of culturally relevant pedagogy. This qualitative project focuses on the voices of 13 practicing and pre-service teachers working to incorporate culturally relevant teaching frameworks into their day-to-day teaching. Following this article, Eric Dwyer continues the focus on culture in his comparative analysis of the Rwandan Genocide and the recent reaction to immigration into Arizona. The comparisons of pre-genocidal Rwanda and the legal moves by the Arizona legislature are chilling to say the least. Our final regular manuscript, penned by Kelly Guyotte, reflects on the work of Maxine Greene, one of the more important educational philosophers of the 20th and early 21st century. Finally, we have two book reviews for your reading pleasure. Kim Case’s edited collection, Intersectional Pedagogy: Complicating Identity and Social Justice, is reviewed by Amber Moore and Kip Kline’s book, Baudrillard, Youth, and American Film: Fatal Theory and Education is reviewed by Gabriel Keehn.

Happy reading…and thinking.

PAX,

Eric C. Sheffield, Managing Editor
Jessica A. Heybach, Associate Editor
Critical Questions in Education

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Contents

Manuscripts

Systemic Constraints on Students’ Appropriation of Reform Oriented Curriculum .................................................................................................................................1
Nancy Ares, Dawn M. Evans, & Alice M. Harnischfeger

Teaching for Change: New Teachers’ Experiences with and Visions for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy ..............................................................................................................22
Noah Borrego, Asra Ziauddin, & Alexandra Ahn

Kigali and Phoenix: Historical Similarities between Pre-genocide Rwanda and Arizona’s Anti-immigrant Wave ...........................................................................................................40
Eric Dwyer

Aesthetic Movements of a Social Imagination: Refusing Stasis and Educating Relationally/Critically/Responsibly ..............................................................................................................62
Kelly W. Guyotte

Reviews

Intersectional Pedagogy: Complicating Identity and Social Justice by Kim Case, Ed. ........................................................................................................................................74
Reviewed by Amber Moore

Baudrillard, Youth, and American Film: Fatal Theory and Education by Kip Kline .................................................................................................................................................79
Reviewed by Gabriel Keehn
Systemic Constraints on Students’ Appropriation of Reform Oriented Curriculum

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Abstract

We investigate 10th-grade Latinx and African American high school students’ engagement in a reform-oriented curriculum designed to foster their critical social analysis of urban schooling. Students’ designs of “ideal schools” based on their studies of their neighborhoods largely reproduced existing inequitable structures and practices of schooling. Our study was spurred by the failure of this curriculum and pedagogy to move students to challenge traditional structures of schooling. The grammar of urban schooling, endemic racism, and interest convergence guided our study of students’ roles in appropriation of progressive reform and our understanding of the larger constraints within which this effort operated and that limited their critical responses.

Keywords: urban school reform; youth appropriation of reform; endemic racism; interest convergence; grammar of schooling

Introduction

We examine the contradictions and tensions seen in students’ responses to a reform-oriented curriculum designed to foster their critical thinking about schooling for youth of color in western New York State. Our study site was a high school sophomore class in a progressive program intended to prepare future teachers, filled mostly with Black and Latinx students. Their teacher worked to help them envision democratic views of schooling and the ways that “urban” schools often reproduce inequity.1 Students conducted mini-ethnographies of their neighborhoods to design an “Ideal School” responsive to their communities’ strengths and challenges. We found, however, that the students’ Ideal School designs reproduced traditional instruction and structures of schooling they were used to and that they were trying to succeed in, rather than challenging urban schooling. This led us to ask: What influences shaped students’ designs of Ideal Schools?

We describe their preparation for critical social analysis of urban schooling and the numerous influences that shaped their designs. That they did little to take up opportunities to challenge existing structures of schooling is not a shock given schools’ roles in maintaining inequities (Wildman, 1996; Giroux, 2011). However, the failure of this class’ reform-oriented curriculum to move students to critical social analysis struck us as important to understand, as the literature

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1. The term “urban” is in quotes to trouble the many deficit-based assumptions that accompany it.
includes a lot of examples of successful efforts to move to more democratic curricula and liberatory pedagogies (e.g., the Dalton plan, Parkhurst, Bassett, & Eades, 1922; democratic citizenship education, Banks, 2007). Indeed, we found many “best practices” that have been identified in the literature in this particular classroom (discussion-focused pedagogy, students as citizens and community members, explicit critiques of schooling). The teacher had liberatory goals: critical social analyses of schooling in general and in their school and community more specifically; building students’ awareness of endemic, systemic racism and oppression in US schools; using critical ethnographic-style methods of gathering and analyzing data about their neighborhoods; and designing “Ideal Schools” based on those analyses. We were drawn to his class for these very reasons—students were engaging in social justice research aimed at fostering their becoming agents of change as future teachers. Still, these students’ responses were largely non-critical and reproductive. Thus, we sought to develop a deep understanding of an important phenomenon: why students largely recreated existing structures of schooling when involved in an innovative class and curriculum allegedly aimed at directly challenging those structures. We argue that this is important information for researchers and practitioners interested in transforming schools and engaging students in liberatory classroom practices.

Similar to research around teachers as appropriators of reform (Behrstock-Sherratt, Rizzolo, Laine, & Friedman, 2013; Cohen & Scheer, 2003; Rogers, 2007) we explore youth serving in that role. An important contribution of this study is showing the ways they negotiated an alternative approach to curriculum and learning that asked them to challenge conventional notions of schooling. Varied data sources (e.g., observations, interviews, class assignments, district policies, historical literature on District reforms) were analyzed to understand the opportunities and contradictions involved. Thus, an important contribution of the study reported here is our focus on youths’ appropriating reform-oriented curriculum centered on teacher-identified problems.2

**Grammar of Schooling**

We drew on the concept of the grammar of schooling (Jenkins & Keefe, 2002; Tyack & Tobin, 1994) to understand students’ appropriation of a curriculum aimed at disrupting such conventions:

By the “grammar of schooling” we mean the regular structures and rules that organize the work of instruction. Here we have in mind, for example, standardized organizational practices in dividing time and space, classifying students and allocating them to classrooms, and splintering knowledge into subjects. (Tyack & Tobin, 1994, p. 453)

Ruthven (2007) describes the way that standardized notions of classrooms and curriculum, along with a functionalist purpose of schooling-as-certification, have led to ossified practices fiercely resistant to change. When reformers work at changing instruction in pursuit of less technocratic and more learning- and student development-focused goals for schooling, their initiatives often fall short.

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2. There is a rich, related body of research in youth participatory action research that focuses on youth and teachers/adults conducting *youth-directed* studies of problems they *identify together* (Akom, 2003; Morrell, 2003; Torre, Fine, Alexander & Genao, 2005; Tuck, 2009).
The Grammar of “Urban” Schooling: Endemic Racism and Interest Convergence

That racism is endemic to US society and schooling is well established, particularly in work on Critical Legal Studies (Delgado, 1987) and Critical Race Theory in education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Generations of structural and institutional racism have resulted in uneven distributions of resources, educational opportunities, and outcomes across the US, so that students of color and those living in poverty are relegated to struggling communities and schools (Frankenburg & Orfield, 2003). Persistent under-achievement, overly prescribed curricula, and increasing re-segregation along racial and class lines illuminate how entrenched and intransigent these forces are, as reform upon reform is tried and largely fails to truly transform urban schooling. Concepts of endemic racism and interest convergence (explained in more depth below) also guided our work to understand students’ responses by placing their work in larger social, historical, and political contexts.

Endemic Racism

CRT scholars argue that racism is pervasive in US society and schooling. It is found in standardization of curriculum and pedagogy and is often magnified in schools serving students of color (Gordon, 2012; James, 2011; Lee, 2009; Tate, 2001). Gordon’s (2012) study of urban school reform highlights the persistent influence of deficit-based notions of African American (and other non-dominant) youth on the kinds of reforms schools pursue. Lee (2009) writes about African American youth “facing a widespread culture of low expectations, significant differences in per pupil spending, curricula that are basic-skills oriented, less access to technological resources, and more teachers who are not certified in their fields” (p. 377). Tate (2001) agrees:

…the role assessment has played in creating low-level curriculum opportunities for students in urban school settings who are African American, Hispanic or acquiring English [is often ignored].\(^3\) For example,…[their teachers] reported significantly more often that test scores were “very” or “extremely” important for evaluating student progress, placing students in special services, planning curriculum and instruction, and recommending textbooks (Madaus, West, Harmon, Lomax, & Viator, 1992; Strickland & Ascher, 1992). They also indicated they had greater incorporation of test-oriented pedagogical strategies and were pressured more often by their administrators to increase test scores. (p. 1020)

These assumptions and practices lead to students of color being taught to pass tests rather than to learn and grow. Rather than rich curricula that may spark interest and engaged learning, they are often taught to approach content as something to master instead of something to explore.

Further, students of color are also often identified as “at risk” based on White middle-class norms of “appropriate” behavior, language use, and “regular” family structures. Research shows the power of such discourse, including that, “The language of risk can serve as a euphemism for racism, sexism, and biases based on factors such as class, immigrant status, family makeup, neighborhood of residence, cultural assumptions, and other ‘risk-inducing’ constructs” (James, 2012, p. 465). Urban schooling is thus rife with elements of institutional racism: “systemic White domination of people of color, embedded and operating in corporations, legal systems, political bodies, cultural life, and other social collectives” (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2009, p. 345). Biddy Mason

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\(^3\) We use the term Latinx rather than Hispanic. The use of Hispanic is in a direct quote from Tate (2001).
Academy (BMA), the school at which this study was conducted, was in many ways an institution grounded in these oppressive power dynamics. In this institutional context, our work suggests that BMA’s innovative Preparation for Teaching Institute (PTI) program (described below) is an important research site given its challenges to the grammar of urban schools.

**Interest Convergence**

In situating this study in a larger critical literature, we found important insights in critical race theory’s concept of interest convergence (Bell, 1980; Delgado, 1987; Tushnet, 1991). According to Milner (2008), “Interest convergence stresses that racial equality and equity for people of color will be pursued and advanced when they converge with the interests, needs, expectations, and ideologies of Whites” (p. 333). Bell’s (1980) landmark article in the *Harvard Law Review* proposed that interest convergence was at the heart of the 1954 *Brown v. Board* decision that outlawed racial segregation in schools. He wrote:

...the legal issue in state-imposed segregation cases was not one of discrimination at all, but rather of associational rights: “the denial by the state of freedom to associate, a denial that impinges in the same way on any groups or races that may be involved.” Wechsler reasoned that “if the freedom of association is denied by segregation, integration forces an association upon those for whom it is unpleasant or repugnant.” (p. 521)

He further argued that, “The interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of whites. However, the fourteenth amendment [equal protection under the law], standing alone, will not authorize a judicial remedy providing effective racial equality for blacks where the remedy sought threatens the superior societal status of middle and upper class whites” (p. 523). Understanding racial policies in and since *Brown* is not possible without taking into consideration the impact on Whites and the ways that legislation and policy maintain Whites’ superior social status while also recognizing that for some, the moral basis for racial equality is indeed important.

Thus, in order for change to occur, dominant groups have to see that what they do give up will not cut deeply into their privilege and power to the point of discomfort or substantial loss. Change can happen but at a rate that is comfortable and with outcomes that are acceptably benign. The PTI program, when seen in this light, is an important example of the ways that endemic racism and interest convergence served to thwart the program’s liberatory goals.

**Setting**

BMA is in a mid-sized school district in Lakeview, a city in western New York. In 2016-2017, the 1714 BMA students were 29.9% Latinx, 8.9% White, 54.9% African American, 6% Asian, 0.2% Native American, and 0.05% two or more races. 66.9% of the students received free/reduced lunch, 10% were designated English Language Learners, and 25% were labeled as needing special education services. These demographics are virtually the same as the 2007-08 academic year in which our study was conducted.\(^4\)

At the time of our study, there were three specialized learning institutes—the Culinary Arts Institute, the Future Firemen Institute, and the Preparing for Teaching Institute (PTI), the

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\(^4\) The sources of these data are not included to maintain the anonymity of participants.
program that was the site of this study. Conventional compartmentalized curriculum and content-specific departments (e.g., mathematics, English, science, social studies) characterized the rest of the school. BMA shifted in 2011 from a large, comprehensive high school to one focused on smaller learning communities. Six Advanced Placement/Honors classes were being offered, along with an Advanced Placement preparation class, and an English-as-an-additional-language program. Through those shifts, the PTI has retained its identity as a cooperative, democratic learning environment focused on academics and civic engagement, specifically engagement in social justice in Lakeview City schools.

BMA’s official performance data show that only White students were reported as making “acceptable” progress (NYSED, 2013). Thus, despite efforts at innovation, the school continued to struggle to support the academic and other successes of non-dominant students. We discuss the implications of this larger school context in relation to our findings in the conclusion of this paper.

The Preparing for Teaching Institute (PTI)

Local high school teachers and university education professors started the PTI in 1995 to help make the school district’s teaching force more demographically diverse and to create local teacher-leaders. Graduates of the program who become certified teachers are guaranteed a position in the local school district. To enter, they undergo a rigorous application process requiring an essay, letters of reference, and a 2.5/4.0 grade point average; they must maintain high academic and good citizenship records throughout the four-year program. Each year of the Institute involves a one-credit seminar. During the tenth grade PTI seminar (the focus of this study), students learn about the social foundations of education in the US, critical ethnographic research, and conduct a mini-ethnographic study of their neighborhoods.

Methodology

Given that our research question—what influenced students’ designs of their Ideal Schools?—was broad and focused on students’ appropriation of a reform-oriented curriculum, our qualitative methodology included multiple data sources and analyses grounded in those data.

Participants were 30 tenth grade PTI students—21 girls and 9 boys. Twenty-five of the students were non-Latinx Black or Latinx, while 5 were non-Latinx White students. Mr. L, a White teacher, had been teaching in the PTI for 15 years. A 45-minute interview with him was conducted on June 9, 2008. Three researchers conducted focus group interviews with 28 of the 30 PTI students in October 2007. (See Appendix A for the focus group protocol.) Those interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. We gathered Mr. L’s Ethnography Project assignment handouts and six Ideal School brochures. We videotaped eight Ideal School classroom presentations. Table 1 presents a timeline of data collection:

<table>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data source</td>
<td>3 45-minute videotaped sessions on conducting critical</td>
<td>3 45-minute videotaped sessions on data analysis</td>
<td>6 Ideal School brochures (May 2008)</td>
<td>1 45-minute individual interview with Mr. L (June 9, 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnographies</td>
<td>(Feb. 6, 8, 11, 2008)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 30-minute focus groups with students (Oct. 19)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnography Project booklet as artifact</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

The PTI program serves as a telling case (Mitchell, 1984) to:

…show how general principles deriving from some theoretical orientation manifest themselves in some given set of particular circumstances…From this point of view, the search for a “typical” case for analytical exposition is likely to be less fruitful than a “telling” case in which the particular circumstances surrounding a case serve to make previously obscure theoretical relationships suddenly apparent. (p. 239)

Again, we sought to develop a deep understanding of students’ recreating existing structures of schooling even though the PTI program aimed at disrupting them.

**Researcher Positionality**

We are all White, middle class women, which required us to consider explicitly the influence of race, social class, and power relations among us and the participants. This was especially true for Ares and Evans, as they were involved in all aspects of the study (Harnischfeger contributed to data analysis only). Evans was conducting her dissertation study in this classroom, spending 80 days over the academic year immersed in the program. Ares had conducted prior studies in mathematics classrooms at BMA and was brought in to engage PTI students in ethnographic-style data gathering and analysis. Our familiarity with the school and our extended engagement with this group of students and their teacher helped us understand the racial, economic, and social context. Our discussions of what we could and could not understand as White, middle class women also helped. Finally, our abiding interest in anti-racist education and asset-based approaches to research guided our work throughout the study.

**Data Analysis**

We used a constructivist grounded approach in the initial phase of our analysis, following Charmaz (2006), with the goal of understanding and describing rather than explaining or predicting, and giving priority to illustrating patterns and processes. We conducted process coding (Saldana, 2012, p. 76) to capture the “ongoing action/interaction/emotion taken in response to situations, or problems, often with the purpose of reaching a goal or handing a problem” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 169, as cited in Saldana, 2012, p. 77). Two of us used this approach in our first cycle coding of the Ethnography Project packet, focus group interview data, student work products, and the Ideal Schools pamphlets. We came to consensus on categories through discussion.
For example, students’ discussions of where learning happens provided insights into the kinds of activities and structures they valued:

- “Broaden the curriculum and add more arts, careers, technologies, and hands-on courses so that students will be more prepared for life outside school;

- Tear down classroom structures, i.e., instead of giving teachers well-defined curriculum, trust the teachers to construct curriculum that connects to the ‘real world.’”

And examples of direct connections to school via the PTI program:

- “High expectations are important for all children, especially for children coming from difficult circumstances—they should be supported to aim high;”

- Include the PTI principles (caring, respect, dependability, creativity, cooperation, responsibility) and create a welcoming and safe environment that is respectful, safe and loving so that parents will be interested and confident in sending their children to schools.” (Analytic memo, Learning versus Schooling, 07/18/2012)

The distinctions students made between where learning happens (everywhere) and what kinds of things are taught where (academics in schools, non-academics outside of school) were clear, helping us explore their values around learning in relation to the Ideal Schools they created.

To tie our research question to existing literature, we returned to research on school reform and structures of schooling. The grammar of schooling (Tyack & Cuban, 1994) provided us important explanatory power as a theoretical framework for subsequent analyses. The theory’s focus on tensions between structures of schooling and activities of students and educators in school reform efforts guided our attention to ways that historically developed practices acted as constraints on students’ uptake of reform.

The third researcher joined in the analyses, providing a source of researcher triangulation to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of our findings. She created content logs for the video data (Jordan & Henderson, 1995) that identified naturally occurring events (e.g., beginnings and endings of tasks, discussions). She then analyzed specific segments that were important for our analysis of ideal schools (Charmaz, 2006; Erickson 2006; Jordan & Henderson, 1995), e.g., segments involving challenges to and maintenance of structures and routines; situating schooling in social and local contexts; and opportunities to imagine alternatives to the status quo.

Our analytic processes ended with collaborative model building involving all three researchers (Miles & Huberman, 1983; Saldana, 2013; see Figure 1, below). We returned to the data to look for confirming and disconfirming evidence to refine our categories and model. We explored our model and claims in relation to elements of the grammar of urban schooling and interest convergence, using shared analytic memoing (Jenkins & Keefe, 2002). Built into our study were four forms of triangulation: Data triangulation (collection over time and by two researchers), investigator triangulation, theory triangulation (grammar of urban schooling, interest convergence), and methodological triangulation (multiple data sources) (Denzin, 2006).

Limitations include gathering data in one class that was unique in the school and district, restricting the claims we can make. Also, our interviews centered on broad questions about participants’ views of teaching and learning rather than critiques of schooling. However,
generalizability was not our goal; we sought to understand the potential and limitations to increasing students’ critical thinking about learning and schooling. We hoped to glean principles that can inform youth and educators who aim to think more critically about schools in society and move successfully toward substantive reform.

Findings

Again, our focus was on providing in depth descriptions of students’ negotiation of this reform-oriented curriculum. Our findings are reported in two sections: 1) Analyses of the PTI program, and 2) analyses of students’ work products. We start the first section with the ways that students were prepared to conduct critical social analyses of schools and schooling. Mixed messages in the curriculum are then explored, followed by evidence of both disruption and maintenance of the grammar of schooling. The section ends with contradictions found in the Ethnography Project directions and tasks.

The PTI Curriculum and Activities

Preparation for Critical Analysis

Table 2, next page, summarizes goals and activities supporting students’ preparation for critical analysis. The sophomore seminar took a social foundations approach to understanding the history, politics, economics, and sociology of education. Mr. L. is certified in history, and, based on observations and an interview, grounded his teaching in “the belief that future citizens should be endowed with the capacity to solve contemporary social problems based on the wisdom of the ages, the realities of present-day circumstances, and the tools of critical analysis” (Jacobs, 2015, p. 249). For example, in describing the purpose for the major assignment for the first term, the Ethnography Project, Mr. L. said,

So, we use those skills of the ethnographer to make the familiar sound strange, to get them to be more observant and detailed and learn about their own neighborhood and give them some perception on economics, on sociology in the network of families, churches, the different races, ethnicities, and we give them some perception of the political situation, too… All of this, of course, leading to [the Ideal School] project the second half of the year. (Interview, 06/09/08)

Thus, inequities based on race and class were a central focus of the seminar, and the local Lakeview context served as material for the class’ curriculum.
Table 2. Preparation for Critical Social Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mr. L’s sophomore curriculum</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Develop critical social awareness of urban schooling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o History of education – disparities across groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Comparisons of local urban/suburban contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Teacher assistant practicum in urban elementary schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Critical ethnography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Local study of school/community reform as context for learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Developing an ethnographer’s persona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Gathering neighborhood interview and observation data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Analyzing data for challenges/strengths of neighborhoods for children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mr. L. brought Ares in as an expert in critical ethnographic inquiry. She taught four lessons in the Fall term to support students’ critical analysis of conditions in their neighborhoods. For example, she described a community-based participatory ethnography she was conducting of an initiative operating in an area of Lakeview that several students lived in, describing the asset-based stance that challenged deficit depictions of that part of town. She worked with the students and their teacher to learn about ethnographic methods (observation, interviews); and engaged students in constructing interview questions/protocols and practicing through role play. She and students conducted qualitative data analysis over four sessions in February 2008. The teacher’s invitation to Ares to add a critical ethnographic lens to the assignment positioned the students as critical analysts who could question the status quo.

**Mixed Messages in the PTI Curriculum**

Of course, reforms are rarely consistent in their challenges to conventional practice, and Mr. L.’s sophomore class’ curriculum was no exception. Situating his curriculum in the larger context of BMA, Mr. L. attributed a loss of accountability for students and teachers’ behavior and performance to BMA’s large size:

> it’s just too much to have so many students in the school and expect that sense of identity, accountability, cohesiveness…It’s a factory model, it’s not a model that promotes community well, though everyone would say that’s what it’s supposed to do… (Interview, June 9, 2008)

He and the other PTI teacher worked hard to establish a sense of community among the students as a counter to the invisibility they experienced as students in the larger school. Our analyses
illuminate the messiness of their efforts to carve out a space for their program. See Table 3, below, for examples.

Table 3. Disruption and Maintenance of Grammar of Urban Schooling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disruptions</th>
<th>Maintenance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Promoting a sense of community, inter-generational connections, family</td>
<td>• Standard schedule of classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Preparation for critical social analysis</td>
<td>• Rigidity in assignment requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Varied seating arrangements</td>
<td>• Limitations to critical social analysis (Eth-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Democratic classroom practices</td>
<td>nography Project, see analysis below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Serving as teacher aides, debriefing experiences</td>
<td>• Constraints on debate, possible problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conducting Ethnography Project, developing an Ideal School</td>
<td>solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Unexamined assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Us versus them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Disrupting the Grammar of Urban Schooling

Analyses of field notes show that there was an ongoing, deliberate effort to establish a healthy community of learners across generations of program participants. The year started with an intensive effort to establish such a community: for the first two-three weeks of school, the sophomore PTI students were engaged in team-building activities and were expected to research and write up team building activities for future use. Significant time was spent in activities with past and present PTI members, and sharing time together and with the teachers’ family on various holidays and observances. The teachers are married and have three children; they hosted holiday and other meals at their home and involved the PTI students and their children in each other’s lives as well. The culminating luncheon featured former PTI students’ sharing their college experiences and current PTI students and teachers reflecting on the past year. A slide show of all the activities conducted by each grade cohort was prepared for viewing. These types of activities served to perpetuate the sense of family and community that the teachers strove to build at the start of that year, and were long-standing traditions in the PTI program.

Actual class meetings and curriculum differed from the typical grammar of urban schooling in that teacher and student roles as well as seating arrangements varied depending on the activity for the day. For instance, one role-play had homeowners facing tenants across the classroom in a potentially confrontational setup around the topic of drug houses in a fictitious neighborhood. Other days, students would be grouped in varying ways to work on activities such as mapping neighborhoods, bus routes to school, and creating youth friendly multiple choice tests—the object of which was to make the teacher fail. In many of their seminar activities, the PTI students were invited to act as discussion leaders or moderators. These roles, interactions, and the seminar’s content were very unusual in the broader BMA context.

Academically, Mr. L’s purpose for the sophomore seminar was to help students develop a critical social awareness of the contexts of urban schooling and to engage students in democratic classroom practices. The sophomore class learned about the history of education in America, particularly the disparities in education for African Americans and European Americans. At all times, students were encouraged to question and reflect upon what they were doing, saying, reading, and writing.
Six weeks into the school year, the sophomore PTI students were assigned to teachers in two nearby elementary schools. One day every second or third week, the students served as teacher assistants for the morning. On the day following each visit, class time was spent debriefing and discussing their experiences in the context of urban schooling.

The Ethnography Project and the Ideal Schools assignment broadened the official curriculum by using the students’ own neighborhoods and Lakeview as content and fodder for critical social analysis. This disrupted the more common practice in BMA of relying on textbook and other materials with little connection to students’ everyday lives.

In sum, the PTI disrupted the grammar of urban schooling with: 1) its focus on creating a sense of healthy, family-like community among its students; 2) inclusion of democratic classroom practices; 3) a service learning element involving sophomore students acting as teacher assistants; and 4) the use of students’ communities as curriculum and the focus of learning. Important to remember is that this program existed within a conventional comprehensive high school that operated more as a factory model of schooling, with less attention to relationships, more teacher-driven curriculum and teaching, and a focus on standardization rather than personalization.

**Maintenance of the Grammar of Urban Schooling**

Despite the moves to disrupt, the sophomore PTI class also remained “business as usual.” The class met for a standard 45-minute block of time every morning. Even though students were expected to conduct an ethnographic study of their neighborhoods and to design their own Ideal School, there was little leeway offered them in terms of focus; the Ethnography Project handbook was largely a series of worksheets not open to change. Another example of conventional pedagogy was seen in the Drug House scenario assigned to them in the Fall term (described briefly above). Students were given roles as either landlords or residents in a neighborhood that had a known drug house operating. They were given 4 possible resolutions to the identified problem rather than being able to propose their own, and grades were assigned based on stringent teacher-determined criteria that restricted democratic participation. In these ways (little leeway offered the students in terms of focus of study, lack of exploring alternative solutions), the PTI enacted the conventional grammar of schooling (Tyack & Tobin, 1994). Of course, the binary between maintenance and disruption is somewhat simplistic, so below our analysis of the Ethnography Project assignment shows the complex mix of messages also seen in the PTI sophomore seminar.

**Contradictory Messages in the Ethnography Project**

The main task of this assignment was for students to examine the historical development and current state of their neighborhoods and community in order to create ideal schools tailored to those spaces. This was communicated to students on the first page of the packet of handouts:

The purpose of our ethnography project is to study our neighborhoods so that we understand what the dangers and benefits are to the children who live there. Then, we will be able to determine if our schools are teaching children what they need to survive and succeed. (Ethnography Project booklet)

However, there was a lack of recognition or exploration of assumptions about such things as what constitute dangerous and safe places, why worries about safety were so prominent, and what roles
larger forces, e.g., disinvestment and institutional racism, played in shaping their communities. While there was potential for students to address these larger issues, without explicit scaffolding they were left to conduct those examinations on their own. Given their youth and their schooling up to that point, this was not something they did readily or easily, if at all.

The Ethnography Project included “Lakeview History,” through which students explored significant events in the past 85 years in the City, the effects on a formerly bustling business area following white flight in the late 1960s to surrounding suburbs, and statistics on transportation over several decades. Students also mapped their routes to and from school, identifying areas considered “dangerous” and those thought to be “good for children.” This activity also had them compare the shapes, sizes and numbers of streets in the City with those in three surrounding suburbs. Interviews with neighbors, as well as comparisons of schools from the past with today’s schools were also included. Each of these activities was complex enough to invite deep reflection on the characteristics of surrounding neighborhoods.

One of the first exercises in the Ethnography Project was to “make the familiar strange,” or to adopt an anthropological point of view in considering how familiar rituals (driving to and from work, etc.) could be seen as objects of study. Similar positioning of familiar objects/scenes (home, neighborhood) was part of two other activities/tasks (“Home Description,” “Lens Assignment”), where students were to choose a persona or role through which to describe their home. The students could choose from being an astronaut on an alien planet, an explorer in a “primitive” culture, an uneducated traveler in a technologically advanced society, a poor person in the rich world, a rich person in the poor world. Being an outsider meant being uneducated, rich or poor, from another planet, or from a privileged versus non-dominant culture. That they were invited to make the familiar strange is interesting as a way to foster a critical analytic position and encourage them to question assumptions about things such as housing, neighborhoods, and schools. Their required uses of descriptive language, visualization and imagination, and their attention to details of their neighborhoods and communities were all important to develop as informed citizens and as critical analysts of social phenomena. Connections from a) “Choosing a perspective other than your own” to describe to one’s neighborhood 2) to “making the familiar strange” to analyze one’s room to 3) taking on a “critical lens” to describe structural features of one’s neighborhood all challenged taken-for-granted perspectives. However, the power dynamics involved and the judgments being made about the “Other” were presented in troubling ways. Most of the relations of power were not expressed explicitly; instead, unexamined assumptions were left to operate. The explorer was not simply exploring, but judging what primitive means (reifying notions of primitive versus developed or civilized). The focus on rich versus poor, no matter which persona the students took on, reified a binary of “us versus them.”

We found contradictions in the Ideal Schools designs the students presented as well. It was in these products that the strength of the grammar of urban schooling became most apparent, as seen next.

**Students’ Appropriations of the Reform-Oriented Curriculum**

Our analyses of the ideal school projects yielded a model that represents the features of and relations among elements of students’ designs (see Figure 1, below). The complex mix of conformity and resistance to normative grammars of urban schooling is illuminated.

The majority of students’ designs closely followed what these students had known and experienced in their many years in school. This lack in innovative thinking was initially a surprise
to us and has larger significance for understanding students’ appropriation of this reform-oriented assignment (addressed later in the paper).

Structures of schooling, regulation of bodies and behavior, and compartmentalized curriculum were primary features. The physical layouts of the schools represent, most obviously, examples of traditional planning. A majority of designs consisted of rectangular buildings that were divided into square classrooms, with a main office towards the front of the building and lockers organized by grade level. One drawing included a trophy case and a room that was labeled as the “teachers’ lounge,” mirroring physical features of BMA.

The organizational plans were likewise traditional. Most plans included a ninth through twelfth grade structure. The one innovative organization did not begin until the eleventh grade. Daily schedules were also traditional: School days extended from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm, and the school week ran from Monday through Friday. Likewise, the school year was from September to May. One-hour classes and ten minutes for students to pass from one class to the next reflected a traditional time frame. One dramatic exception was a suggestion for a “college-like” and “open” campus, which students would attend only when they had scheduled classes.

There were some notable exceptions. The School of Elective Activities (SEA) and the Institute of Technology, Environment and Arts (ITEA) both situated themselves in the poorest part of the city, a region that was also the focus of the community transformation initiative addressed with Ares. SEA’s student teacher ratio was 7:1 with a maximum school size of 300 students. For these designers, quality teacher contact time meant fewer students per teacher and a smaller, more intimate setting, allowing teachers to become more acquainted with student needs, lives, etc. Similarly, ITEA specified the number of students on their campus to be 900—a good deal smaller than most urban high schools.

Elitism and selectivity were prominent. One student noted, “It’s not free.” Although an attempt was made to extend school eligibility to some students from high poverty families, all prospective students had to undergo an interview process and admission was based on past academic progress. Any scholarships were also closely linked prior achievement. One brochure emphatically stated, “Only the motivated are welcome.” Finally, one proposed entrance criterion included having a 3.0 (out of 4.0) grade point average on a mandatory state exam. In the same vein, once admitted to the school, grading criteria would be quantitative. These ideas are well within the traditional grammar of schooling, but also suggest recognition of the stakes involved as well as the criteria seemed important in this era of standardization and normalization.

**Discipline = Behavior Management**

Management of behaviors and bodies also followed normative schooling practices. There was significant surveillance of both physical and behavioral actions. First, our participants proposed to regulate students’ dress. One design suggested brown/orange or yellow uniforms, but made some concessions in allowing students to design these uniforms themselves, but “only in these colors.” Likewise, clothing choices were to be limited: “no sagging,” “no spaghetti straps.” Regulations for behavior were also strict, with firm (and familiar) repercussions for infractions. Students who repetitively broke minor behavioral rules would be “sent to their house administrator and they will be in charge of disciplinary action.” Suggestions for repeated rule violations once again reflected common school practices: “First you get like a warning in class, then you get a detention.” “If you don’t go to your detention, you get an in-school suspension for a week.” One student emphasized control: “Follow the rules and we’ll all have fun.”
Teachers were also to be closely monitored: “If teachers don’t have most of their class passing, they will lose their pay.” Close surveillance of these teachers’ honesty as they adapted to these standards were also proposed: “Once a week an administrator, the principal, will come in to check on this.”

Finally, participants made plans to keep their worlds inside and outside of school separate. One student noted, “No cell phones will be allowed” and another specified, “First, you are warned, then they [cell phones] will be confiscated.” A third student added the stipulation, “electronic devices can only be used in study halls.” Most ideal schools involved enclosed, protected buildings, with one participant mentioning an outside wall, a gate to each door, and a top over the building—“If a bomb hits, we can close the top.” This reflected the BMA building itself, as there were yellow radiation signs on the outside of the building, marking it as a designated safe zone for the neighborhood. These features of Ideal Schools suggest the need for a sense of impenetrability.

**Curriculum: Innovative Programs**

Students seemed more innovative around curriculum, as most of the schools took a “magnet school” approach with specialized curricula. For instance, the ITEA ideal school offered curriculum based on: 1) “Click,” a computer program where students learn how to use, protect, and make computers; 2) “Theme Park,” where students have fun and are creative while learning math and physics; 3) “Go Wild,” an environmental safety program which encompassed earth science; and finally, 4) “Think Out Loud,” in which art (e.g., music, band, or painting) was studied. For another school, animals were very important; its program sought to broaden human connections through first developing young peoples’ connections to animals. According to their brochure, “Students will also have opportunities to communicate and spend time with school animals because a lot of students have trouble communicating with their friends and family and like sharing with animals.”

Three schools’ curricula seemed closely tied to aspects of BMA and the PTI program: one was patterned on the BMA model with a Café and NASCAR program taught, in part, by professional chefs and NASCAR drivers. This is strongly reminiscent of BMA’s Firefighters program and its Culinary Program’s café. Promising connections to PTI’s ties with local elementary schools and service were seen in the ITEA school, as their concern was with the community around them. They proposed a Giving Back to the Community Club (GBCC) as one of their extracurricular activities. Another school, the Leadership Academy, had an extracurricular activity called the Holiday Helping Club, which seemed to be of the same mold.

All but one group proposed specialized fields within their curricula, e.g., engineering, interior and fashion design, business management, medicine, foreign languages/foods, video game design, computer technology, environmental programs, culinary programs, NASCAR-type automotive studies, weapons, spying, and self-defense, to name just a few. These were to be studied in addition to the core subjects (Math, English).

Importantly, the larger school district and school context provided ideas for students to take up. Open enrollment was a major school reform approach in Lakeview starting in 1964; that policy still exists today (Brazwell, 2010). Students and families can choose to enroll in schools outside their neighborhoods and communities based on their desires to attend particular schools with specific programs, for example, drama and performance arts, democratic and social justice, or an International Baccalaureate school. The PTI and the other institutes at BMA were obvious models for students’ proposed specialized programs. This history of providing specialized programs and
schools likely influenced the options the PTI students considered. Next, we present another layer of analysis that ties our themes and model to the larger literature in urban schooling.

**Discussion: Connections to Grammar of Schooling and Critical Race Theories**

The instances of innovation and conformity in the Ideal School designs can be seen as a mix of students’ resisting the traditional treatment of high school students and, at the same time, conforming to measures of school success. Yosso (2000) labels this “Resilient resistance…the intersection between conformist and transformational resistance where the strategies students use ‘leave the structures of domination intact, yet help the students survive and/or succeed’” (p. 181, as cited in Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 320). These students were challenging the deficit notions that shaped the education their school and District offered, succeeding in spite of the structures and practices that formed barriers to their successful trajectories out of school and into the world of higher education or work. In the context of Lakeview City School District, their success in finding and participating in the PTI was an act of resistance in and of itself.

**The Grammar of Urban Schooling**

For the most part, we found that the grammar of urban schooling was so strong that students did not challenge it when given the opportunity and support to do so. Indeed, Mr. L. recognized limitations in the ways students responded to the Ideal Schools assignment:

> While he is pleased with the work that students do on their Ideal Schools because it teaches them the multitude of elements that comprise a school, there is an element of disappointment because “I don’t think we’re thinking outside the box enough. I think there are schools there that are replicating Biddy Mason Academy but they’re just changing the mascot.” (Analytic memo, June, 2008)

In practical terms, PTI involved only one-credit year-long seminars among the many other courses they took, which likely limited its impact. Beyond that, we theorize that “real” school had become naturalized to the extent that students’ imaginations were bounded by their own experiences in 10 years or more of schooling. Immersion and internalization were very likely operating similarly in students’ notions of schooling, as school structures and practices became taken for granted. This situation is somewhat like the story that fish do not know what water is because they are immersed in it (Sivers, 2012, http://sivers.org/fish). The strength of the imprinting, perhaps simply due to the large number of hours spent in school, may be such that the PTI teacher’s intentions of encouraging critique were swamped or hardly influential.

However, PTI students were cognizant of the exclusive nature of their program and the power of conforming to the grammar of urban schooling as a way to gain access to opportunities and dominant forms of social capital. Given that PTI is a selective program with a college-going culture, expecting students to work against the grain may seem unreasonable. The program rewarded “appropriate” behavior, and although enacting a more progressive pedagogy and curriculum than the larger school, operated on a limited notion of social critique. Thus, the ideal schools they created bore an uncanny resemblance to the schools to which they have been socialized. Students tended to maintain and even intensify familiar physical and control-oriented structures (security systems, selective admittance criteria, disciplinary sanctions). Being successful in school
meant compliance, conformity, and obedience. Given the students’ expectations of going to college and benefiting from the hierarchical power relations that result, perhaps challenging the grammar of schooling seemed unwise to them.

Similar findings were reported by Nygreen (2013), whose Participatory Action Research Team for Youth (PARTY) program involved him and his students from “an alternative high school to which students were involuntarily transferred if they fell significantly behind in credits toward graduating” (p. 2). The group designed and taught a full-term social justice class at their school, designed around “learning goals [that] emphasize orientations and habits of mind that are consistent with Freire’s notion of critical consciousness” (p. 97). Even though the goals and curriculum were liberatory, the ways the PARTY students orchestrated classroom activities and relationships with their students undermined them through such things as assigning grades and letting behavior go that distracted the class from engaging in the content of their social justice course. They were there to teach a social justice curriculum, but had not and did not consider how to orchestrate classroom activity in productive ways. Nygreen (2013) concluded that the

*grammar of schooling...serve[d] to regulate teacher agency and prevent alternative educational approaches so that...Although PARTY enjoyed substantial freedom over how to organize and teach the social justice class,...members mimicked dominant practices of schooling, not because we had to, but because it seemed to “make sense.”* (p. 128)

The idea that there were limited “available identities” for PARTY students and their teacher is helpful in considering why the PTI students reproduced conventional schooling—it made sense in the context of what kinds of schools they could even consider being possible.

**Two Tenets of Critical Race Theory**

Critical race theory’s focus on interest convergence and endemic racism helped us tie our findings from the PTI sophomore class to larger structures of schooling in Lakeview and the US. It also helped us tie those findings to the development of schools in the history of racialized and racist approaches to schooling.

**Endemic Racism**

The grammar of urban schooling is powerfully constraining with its strong potential for internalized racism and self-policing that militates against the kind of critical analysis that may have moved students beyond deficit notions to resource-rich stances toward their neighborhoods. Indeed, the District’s 1964 open enrollment policy was such that “…Black students could attend predominantly White schools outside the attendance zone of their neighborhood schools. White students would be allowed (but not forced) to do the same in reverse” (Brazwell, 2010, p. 7). The message to urban Lakeview students (and their families) was that their neighborhoods and neighborhood schools were inferior, and that predominantly White neighborhoods and schools were desirable places to live and learn. This deficit-based view was reinforced in some ways in the PTI Ethnography and Ideal School projects.

However, while students’ self-interested pursuit of goals make sense, the limitations on their upward mobility set by the larger social and political context are ignored if the focus stays on the individual. In his study of working class boys’ resistance to schooling, Willis (1977/1981b)
wrote, “the difficult thing to explain about how working class kids get working class jobs is why they let themselves. It is much too facile simply to say that they have no choice” (p. 2, as cited in McGrew, 2001, p. 28). This seems applicable to this study if it is reworded: the difficult thing to explain about why students of color end up conforming to white middle class norms and narrow definitions of success is why they let themselves. It is much too simple to say that they have no choice. Critical examinations of social and cultural capital can help to make sense of PTI students’ push to conform. The Ethnography Project did aim to some extent to enhance students’ awareness of the social capital evident in their neighborhoods as a way to help them analyze how their school was responding to the community’s social and economic contexts. Rios Aguilar, Kiyama, Gravitt, and Moll (2011), in challenging some approaches to using students’ funds of knowledge⁵, note that:

Existing research on social capital places the burdens of social change on the individual or on communities of color, continuing to perpetuate White privilege (Akom, 2006). In sum, Akom (2006) argues that traditional definitions of social capital fail to incorporate the ways in which under-represented students’ identities influence the accumulation of social capital and potential for mobility. (p. 173)

As minoritized people in the US, the potential for PTI students being able to ascend the economic ladder to financial stability is almost inevitably constrained. This finding is supported in the literature that notes that, “having access to social capital (and we argue to cultural capital) does not automatically translate into activation or mobilization” (Rios Aguilar, Kiyama, Gravit, & Moll, 2011, p. 70). Rather than seeing the ways that conforming and complying with institutional norms could result in conflicting notions of how to be successful, our analyses indicate that students were not supported in examining their racialized and marginalized status as students of color. Thus, social reproductive functions of schooling worked through such mechanisms as limited recognition of non-dominant forms of social capital, as well as the grammar of ‘urban’ schooling that naturalizes students of color being positioned as sources of their own marginalization (Giroux, 2011).

**Interest Convergence**

The PTI program is more than 20 years old. It has not been expanded, even though it shows evidence of success: 200 students have graduated since its inception in 1995. Thirteen PTI graduates were teachers in the Lakeview District the year of our study. The limitation on the size and reach of the program can be seen as the slow pace of change Milner (2008) writes about:

Inherent in the interest-convergence principle are matters of loss and gain; typically, someone or some group, often the dominant group, has to negotiate and give something up in order for interests to converge or align…Lopez (2003) asserted, "Racism always remains firmly in place but that social progress advances at the pace that White people determine is reasonable and judicious” (p. 84). Change is often purposefully and skillfully slow and at the will and design of those in power. (p. 333, 334)

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⁵ Funds of knowledge are “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992, p. 133).
We conjecture that the school district allowed PTI to form and to continue because of the goal of producing teachers of color in a District that is predominantly Black/Brown with a predominantly White teaching force. Leaders can point to the program as evidence of their efforts to diversify the ranks of teachers. However, requiring that state-mandated standardized assessments of students remain unchanged, that the PTI program be squeezed into BMA’s standardized curriculum, and that the program be exclusive in who can be admitted and stay limited the amount of change possible. Keeping a program meant to diversify teaching ranks can be a salve for White guilt. Slowing or preventing the growth of a program focused on preparing progressive educators aware of social inequities in systems of schooling and in the District itself serves the interests of the largely white, middle-class centered status quo.

Implications

We aimed to show how the pedagogy of reform at PTI was insufficient to challenge students’ views of schooling. If we wish urban educational reform to utilize the promise and agency of students, approaches to engaging them must go beyond invitations to “think outside the box.” Simplistic examination of educational and socioeconomic inequities only confirms what they already know – their neighborhoods and opportunities are poorer than those in the suburbs. While there was potential to move beyond deficit-based explanations and toward designing truly change-oriented schools, even this more innovative approach fell short of its goals.

Still, there are contradictions in our findings that provide glimpses of possible alternatives. Some of these are seen woven into students’ designs and their emphasis on security, discipline, and exclusivity: They point to larger issues of concern in education. Taines (2011) conducted a related study of youth who were involved in a community-based reform focused on school activism. Students’ concerns about school lunches, bathrooms, and teacher quality seemed trivial in relation to their school’s underachievement and low graduation rates. However, when they discussed their concerns, it was clear that for the students these seemingly small issues were connected to deeper ones, including feeling that they were not safe, were not valued, and that too many of their teachers didn’t care about them. What may have seemed trivial were actually substantive concerns. In this view, students in our study were addressing similarly large issues with their attention to security, classroom management (if teachers do not manage their classrooms well, they are allowing students to fail by default), and high standards that invite/require students to work hard and teachers to teach well, all of which are of high interest to policy makers and educators as well. The implication is that moving with youth beyond innovation within existing school practices and structures requires that adults take on sustained, active roles as mentors in examining the structural, political, and policy implications of the innovations they envision. Noguera and Cannella (2007) stress the importance of “veteran activists who serve as formal and informal mentors, counselors, and supporters” (p. 335) of youth in their work to identify and address inequities. They were referring to youth engaging in civic action and policy reform. In PTI, the mentorship would need to go beyond examining the nature of urban neighborhoods as contexts for schooling to examining institutional racism, economic marginalization, and other oppressive forces that limit many urban schools’ abilities to be truly responsive and effective places for non-dominant youth to develop as socio-politically aware, academically successful, and critically engaged community members.

Future research that follows up with these students to explore the lasting impacts (or not) of their work in the PTI Ethnography Project in their lives would be highly informative along those
lines. Some of them may have finished their teacher preparation and pursued teaching as a profession—their experiences and perspectives would add a longitudinal dimension that could inform further efforts in the PTI and other such programs about near- and long-term influences.

Finally, perhaps reformers would be well advised to consider Cook-Sather’s (2009) advice that students’ dialoguing with not only teachers, but also school administrators, policy makers, etc. might lead to truly innovative and imaginative ways to restructure schooling. It is possible that if the PTI sophomores had a wider audience for their Ideal Schools, their work may have had some influence. If we want reforms to transform rather than simply improve schooling and we want youth to be involved as stakeholders, the findings here shed light on just how deliberate and inquisitive we must be in partnering with youth in considering truly substantive change.

References


Appendix A

Focus Group Interview Protocol

You might remember that [Ares is] studying the ways that youth make their way in everyday life in the community to see what kinds of resources you/they draw on. A couple of things that you can help me with to get this part started are about teaching and learning. I’m interested in where and when teaching and learning happens. When you think about teaching and learning, where do you think about those things happening?

How do you think teaching and learning take place?

In all of these places (home, workplace, etc.), who does the teaching and the learning?

What’s a way you have learned about something…

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Teaching for Change: New Teachers’ Experiences with and Visions for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

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Abstract

This paper presents the voices of thirteen pre- and in-service teachers to showcase their perspectives of culturally relevant pedagogy as a teaching framework. Positionality, critical consciousness, and cultural assets are used as foundations to explore social justice pedagogy. These new teachers discuss the challenges they face in making the transition from the university to the K-12 classroom. Specifically, they identify generalized assumptions about ethnicity by practicing teachers to underscore the existing models for cultural relevance at their school sites. They speak to confronting these generalizations by trying to authentically center their students’ lived experiences in their pedagogy and building curriculum that focuses on students’ strengths. Findings are discussed in terms of the need for us as teacher educators to learn from and with new teachers to model equitable practices and develop programs that push traditional understandings of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Keywords: culturally relevant pedagogy; new teachers; teaching for social justice; urban education

Introduction

While attacks on public education in the United States continue to focus on monolithic conceptions of academic achievement and the differences of test scores between students of Color and White students, the voices of actual classroom teachers remain silenced (Kincheloe, 2008). This is in part because teachers have historically been removed from national policy and debate about education reform, and because current trends towards standardization and testing are stripping teachers of their agency and ingenuity (e.g. Kumashiro, 2012). The blaming of teachers is not necessarily new, nor is the reductionistic portrayal of student achievement and success (Ayers & Ayers, 2014). However, as teacher educators and scholars committed to equity and access for all students, we must find new and effective ways to amplify the voices of classroom teachers in educational research.

One possibility is to focus on what is new in our schools and in our university programs. We can envision a movement of new teachers who hold the potential to bring change that not only resists the pressure to make our schools laboratories for test makers, but in the process re-ignites
the learning power and potential of our diverse and talented students. The fact is that the number of new teachers entering our urban schools continues to grow (Kaiser, 2011) and there is a contingent of these teachers who are entering the profession not just to bring more equitable educational experiences back to their own communities, but to radically change the very education they received in their community schools (Kohli, 2012). These teachers hold the potential to impact students’ lives for the better daily, and to help us, as educational researchers and teacher educators, counter the contemporary narrative that youth of Color—their schools, their teachers, and their communities—are not successful.

As a step in the process of countering this deficit narrative (Yosso, 2005), this article attempts to present the voices of a group of new teachers in a teacher education program committed to preparing urban teachers with a commitment to social justice (Borrero, 2016). As a part of their acceptance into this teacher education program, all of the participants expressed a focus on working to provide more equitable educational opportunities for urban youth. In this way, these new teachers are part of a wave of new educators who see their career choice as one of being a change agent (Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Kohli, 2012; Picower, 2012). They are not on a fast track to earn their teaching credential, and they do not envision teaching as something they will do for a year or two before moving on to another career. These are folks who have embarked on a journey towards earning their master’s degree as urban educators and who express a critical social analysis as a part of their vision for teaching (Makaiau & Freese, 2013). Listening to a group of new teachers like this is paramount for us as teacher educators to develop and expand our understandings of preparing candidates to teach in urban contexts, and it is also part of a generative process towards envisioning sustainable change in our schools (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Latta & Olafson, 2006).

Theoretical Framework: The Importance of Teachers and Teaching for Justice

The contemporary attack on public education creates both explicit and implicit implications for teachers and teaching. A continued focus on standardization and testing is proliferating data, research, and a national discourse fixated on very narrow views of achievement (Bartolome, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2014). A single metric—an Academic Performance Index (API) score that supposedly measures an individual school’s progress as determined by standardized testing—is being used to define academic success. Further, an individual student’s score on these very same state-mandated tests is being viewed as the sole identifier of academic achievement (Kumashiro, 2012). And, for students of Color, the comparison of this metric to that of Caucasian students defines their supposed school failure (e.g. Ayers & Ayers, 2014). While this comparison is not new (Rist, 1970), and the production of such discrepancies between students from different racial backgrounds has long been documented in our schools (Duncan-Andrade, 2009), the insidious effects of this often-referred-to achievement gap reach far beyond statistical analyses. For example, many teachers—and especially new teachers—exist in a rigidly scrutinized pedagogical reality in which their success is also determined by these tests. They often enter schools where the pressure to “pass” standardized tests is expected to be the sole focus of their teaching (Kincheloe, 2008; Kumashiro, 2012).

When students, and particularly students of Color, do not “pass” these standardized tests, there are again both explicit and implicit consequences. In the classroom, the result is often more tests—or certainly more preparation for tests (Spring, 2004). Additionally, there is an inherent blaming that occurs—a blame focused on students (and their families) and teachers (Kumashiro, 2012; Latta & Olafson, 2006) that fails to acknowledge the structural inequities that lie at the base of our educational system (e.g. Duncan-Andrade, 2007). This deficit-orientation refuses to see the
academic strengths and successes that many students do exhibit (e.g. Camangian, 2010), and frames academic achievement as a one-dimensional and static construct (Nieto, 2002). Combined, these results leave our urban public schools stripped of many things that encourage students’ critical thinking and creativity (e.g. art, science, social studies, music, physical education, etc.), and create expectations for teachers that prioritize pre-determined outcomes over relational, dialogic, and investigative learning. For many new teachers, this means enacting a pedagogy based on worksheets from scripted curricula—something that neither drew them to the profession nor brings them a sense of worth as professionals (Borrero, Flores, & de la Cruz, 2016).

Teacher Education and Teaching for Social Justice

Given these attacks, the importance of teachers—and teaching—for social justice is heightened. It is in the resistance against these oppressive reforms that we as teacher educators committed to equitable schooling must come together (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Yosso, 2005). Particularly, we must be part of a movement of teachers who are committed to positively impacting students’ lives daily. We contend that new teachers must play a vital role in this and, thus, teacher education programs need to rise to the calling and create educational spaces for new teachers to continue a learning process as pedagogues that will lead to transformative, liberatory education (Freire, 1970) in local public schools—an education that sees students, families, and communities as the holders and creators of the knowledges and cultural assets needed to foster meaningful change (Camangian, 2013; White, 2009).

In this study, we highlight three tenets of a teacher education program working towards social justice in education via this type of experience for new teachers: positionality, critical consciousness, and harnessing cultural assets. We present positionality as not only a deeply personal reflection of one’s own biases and perspectives, but the purposeful interrogation of power, oppression, and privilege in given contexts (Kohli, 2012). The goal of this interrogation cannot rest here. As teachers, we need to push the purpose of continually addressing our own positionality as a key aspect of our relationship-building with youth (Lenski, Crumpler, Stallworth, & Crawford, 2005; Nieto, 2002). More specifically, positionality becomes a mechanism to disrupt cycles of racism and oppression through the examination of power in school contexts and the desire to create change (Camangian, 2010). The development of a critical consciousness is built upon this foundation and works towards a social analysis grounded in theoretical and pedagogical frameworks that position youth and their communities as knowledge-holders with the power to bring about transformation and liberation (Freire, 1970; Makaiau & Freese, 2013). Pedagogically, this critical consciousness is imperative for teachers and students alike, as the journey towards true learning in the classroom is shared (Makaiau & Freese, 2013). It also builds towards classroom practices rooted in the belief that all students exhibit cultural assets that are essential to their academic success and community connectedness. In these ways, cultural assets are not static, individualistic possessions, but rather they are fluid, shared experiences that must be harnessed as a part of collective classroom learning.

Together, these three attributes—positionality, critical consciousness, and harnessing cultural assets—are foundations and goals of the teacher education program that interviewees in this study participated in. They are certainly complex and contested issues in teaching (Ayers & Ayers, 2014), but they are tenets that we feel help us to confront the current attacks on teacher education and work towards a vision for teaching as an act of social justice.
Envisioning Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995a) describes culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) as “a theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate” (p. 469). CRP plays a role in countering the deficit narratives tied to historically marginalized students of Color, as teachers enacting CRP utilize student culture as a valuable tool for learning instead of positioning culture as an explanation for student failure (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). CRP also counters simplistic versions of multicultural education in which students are limited to learning about people of Color through heroes and holidays (Lee, Menkart, & Okazawa-Rey, 2006). Multicultural education via heroes and holidays marginalizes legacies of people of Color to a few themed lessons or celebrations throughout the school year. In contrast, CRP works to position students’ cultural identities at the center of their learning every day.

As educational researchers continue to investigate examples of CRP enacted in classrooms, findings indicate that many teachers continue to engage with simplistic and static notions of culture (Irizarry, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris, 2012). While teachers may use cultural examples within their curriculum, without considering how authentically relevant their examples may be for students, they often fall back into the trap of simplistic multicultural education that essentializes students’ cultural identities and perspectives (Irizarry, 2007). Consequently, the perceived notions that teachers hold about their students’ cultures become subjects to study rather than students’ true lived experiences. Therefore, students of Color remain marginalized and they do not gain critical perspectives in their learning and in their classrooms.

Researchers have also studied ways that teachers enact CRP and avoid cultural essentialism, reflecting the three tenets of teaching for social justice mentioned previously: addressing positionality, fostering critical consciousness, and harnessing cultural assets (Kohli, 2012; Martinez, 2010). Teachers enacting aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy attempt to engage in continual critical self-reflection regarding their practice and how their positionality plays a role in their teaching, as Duncan-Andrade (2007) found through studying successful urban educators committed to social justice (Latta & Olafson, 2006). Research also suggests that teachers can work towards impactful CRP by actively seeking to learn more about their students’ and schools’ surrounding communities in order to understand their students more deeply and effectively utilize cultural assets in their classrooms (Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Irizzary, 2007; Phuntsog, 1999). As teachers strive to understand and utilize their students’ cultural assets in their classrooms, they can develop students’ critical consciousness to become agents of change in their own communities (Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Picower, 2012). Teachers consistently pushing themselves to authentically understand their students can result in evolving practices that continually reflects their students’ lived experiences (Camangian, 2010; Makaiau & Freese, 2013).

Methods

Participants and Data Collection

Data collection for this study included focus group interviews with a group of 13 pre- and in-service teachers who were either completing their final semester in a dual master’s/credential program or completing their first year of teaching in a public school. Interviewees were part of a
larger study of new teachers transitioning from the university to the K-12 classroom, and all were completing or recently completed a teacher education program at a private university in California with a stated focus on social justice (Borrero et al., 2016). Interviewees were teaching at 10 different public schools in a range of grade levels (from K-12) and content areas. Of those interviewed, one self-identified as queer, nine were female, and three were male (average age was 26). Further, two identified as mixed race, four as Latino/a, three as Filipino/a, three as White, and one as Chinese-American.

In a deliberate attempt to work as a research team and promote our foundational approach to new teachers as scholars (e.g. Kincheloe, 2008), each aspect of this project was developed collaboratively. Regarding data collection, four different focus group sessions were conducted by a research team consisting of one faculty member and two research assistants enrolled in the previously described teacher education program—one research assistant was completing student teaching and the other was completing her first year of teaching. Methodologically, our goal was to facilitate discussions among new teachers as a way to gain insight into their perspectives of CRP and larger issues of educational equity in our public school system (Luker, 2010). Focus groups were conducted at the university and lasted for approximately ninety minutes. As a research team, we developed the focus group questions through a literature review of pertinent research on CRP (e.g. Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Gay, 2000; Hererra, 2010; Irizarry, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995a, 2014; Martinez, 2010; Nieto, 2013; Paris, 2012; Picower, 2012), discussions as a group about our own experiences as students and teachers, and a pilot conversation with colleagues who were beginning their student teaching. Through this process, the focus group protocol centered on the following questions:

- What does culturally relevant pedagogy mean to you?
- What does culturally irrelevant pedagogy mean to you?
- What are the consequences of culturally relevant pedagogy?
- What has helped you develop culturally relevant pedagogy?
- What are challenges to culturally relevant pedagogy?
- What is working for you as a new teacher?

Focus group discussions were audio taped and transcribed.

Data Analysis

Using foundations of case study research, focus group transcripts were analyzed by the three authors. Each of us read the transcripts independently before coding began (Merriam, 1988). Following this initial reading, we each re-read the transcripts independently and began to underline recurring units (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Based on these underlined words and phrases, each of us started to generate categories within which these units fit (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). We used this approach to generate as many codes as possible.

As a group, we then met to discuss the codes that we had identified. We shared codes and began to discuss possible themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) that spoke to the experiences of these new teachers in local schools. Following this meeting, we independently re-read transcripts and wrote down possible themes. For each theme, we identified key quotes from participants. We then met again, shared our themes and quotes, and discussed possible overlap and consolidation of themes. As a group we reached consensus on the themes presented below. As per this coding
procedure (Glesne, 1999), quotes are presented to display the nature of a given theme, not to necessarily represent sentiments of the entire sample.

Positionality

As a team, we are committed to research that showcases the voices of classroom teachers (e.g. Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Kohli, 2009). With extensive experience working among youth, we—one teacher educator (as well as former middle and high school teacher) and two graduate students (former after school program instructors and current master’s/credential candidates)—acknowledge our goals and associated biases towards cultural relevance and the need to disrupt the socially reproductive foundations of schooling that silence marginalized students. This study is grounded in our belief that teachers’ voices must be central to the empirical inquiry of meaningful teaching in urban schools, with our collective experiences and varied perspectives providing strengths and weaknesses to our approach and analysis. The deliberacy with which we pursue teachers’ perspectives on CRP is central to this work and impacts the findings presented below. As scholars of Color, we feel it is imperative to address issues of power, race, class, and gender in teaching and in research. Therefore, we feel that our positionality is an important facet of this work—not just because we are actively seeking to portray the voices of new teachers who are part of a movement for institutional changes in our educational system, but because we recognize our own complicity in the system and the need for us as teachers and scholars to stand in opposition to the narrative that blames students, families, and teachers for academic failure.

Findings

The themes below highlight participants’ perceptions of cultural relevance, and more specifically, the ways that these new teachers worked to enact CRP at their school sites. Through reflection and dialogue, this group of new teachers identified multiple dimensions of CRP and discussed necessary prerequisites for stimulating critical consciousness with their students. These educators also addressed teacher positionality and the challenges they often faced when attempting to enact CRP in the classroom. The themes—challenging monolithic views of cultural relevance; authentically centering students’ lived experiences; cultivating an environment for CRP; reflexive teaching mentalities and practices; and addressing barriers when enacting CRP—are explored below with representative quotes.

Challenging Monolithic Views of Cultural Relevance

Interviewees problematized hegemonic ideas that lead people to misinterpret the three tenets of Ladson-Billings’ (1995b) original definition of CRP: academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. They challenged static notions of culture, academic success, and critical thinking skills, as discussed in the following subthemes: multiple perspectives and identities, CRP as a tool for social justice, and counter and dominant narratives.

Multiple Perspectives and Identities

Interviewees expressed that “culture” is often thought of as essentialized notions of race and ethnicity. For example, Conlan stated: “A lot of folks within teaching, when they hear
culturally relevant pedagogy, they think it means, ‘Oh, you have to teach Toni Morrison to African American students or Sandra Cisneros to Latino students.’” Turning to more critical perspectives on culture, interviewees shared their consideration of multiple perspectives and intersectionalities in order to avoid essentializing students’ racial and ethnic backgrounds. Kirsten stated that she discusses multiple perspectives of what it means to be black with her black students:

Students see me representing intersecting identities as opposed to just blanket identities… We don’t just spend a lot of time reading the same black stories… We learn about different perspectives, like different ways of being within the black community that kind of break up what it means to be black in the first place.

Participants also said that people tend to think of one’s culture only as one’s race or ethnic background. Casey said, “Initially I got so stuck in the idea of culture and culturally relevant as being…ethnicity and family history or race.” She continued with sharing how limiting culture to blanket racial or ethnic experiences discounts “the kind of culture that [students] have created in their own [lives].” Interviewees felt that teachers need to recognize the fluid, active nature of culture so they can reach students who inhabit a multitude of identities, rather than essentializing students and their cultures (e.g. heroes and holidays curriculum).

**CRP as a Tool for Social Justice**

This group of new teachers countered hegemonic notions of academic success that often equate to assimilation into the dominant culture. Conlan stated, “I think that most folks think that justice is working class and/or young people of Color assimilating into the dominant culture and getting to go to college.” He continued by sharing the goals that he has for students to achieve in his class, which counter notions of assimilation:

[Identify] systems that are literally set up to ensure that there are groups of people who have to do the work that nobody wants to do, or set up to become incarcerated and enslaved in the prison industrial complex, or you’re literally targeted for destruction in different forms of what I think are continued forms of genocide.

Kirsten shared that she enacts CRP in order for her students to achieve academic success in the sense of critical thinking skills that are useful beyond the classroom: “We actually want to train them to be intellectual for themselves and their community as opposed to being intellectual to serve white supremacist capitalism.” In a time when students’ critical thinking skills are supposedly quantified by standardized testing, these new teachers felt that their fellow educators should intentionally identify for what and whose purposes they foster students’ critical thinking skills.

**Counter and Dominant Narratives**

Participants discussed learning both counter and dominant narratives as an important dimension of effective CRP. Madison stated: “most of the textbooks and things being used in the classroom have that dominant narrative—white man’s story—and they leave out all other histories that were involved in an incident.” Although participants expressed that CRP indeed includes
counter narratives, they expressed including dominant narratives as well. Madison continued: “We want to also teach our students to critically analyze, and how can they critically analyze if they are not given all parts of the story?” Casey built upon Madison’s sentiment about counter and dominant narratives, stating that CRP isn’t solely teaching counter narratives, but teaching all narratives in a way that becomes relevant to their students:

I’ve come to realize that there really isn’t an irrelevant curriculum; I don’t think that binary exists. I believe in…making something connected or contextualizing in a way that students can connect to, but I feel like even the dominant narrative is part of a wider story, and it’s something that students need to hear.

Authentically Centering Students’ Lived Experiences

As interviewees problematized hegemonic notions of cultural relevance, they discussed cultural relevancy via authentically centering students and their experiences in the classroom. Interviewees discussed several ways that they ensure their curriculum reflects their students’ lived experiences as authentically as possible. The three sub themes that emerged are student assets, culture as a lived and changing experience, and truly knowing students.

Student Assets

Participants expressed that a major step towards authentically centering students in classrooms and curriculum is to view their backgrounds as assets. Abbey said:

It means…grounding your teaching in what [students] bring to the table and the assets and experiences that they bring, so that [curriculum] is relevant to their lives and they have some relationship with the knowledge and it is meaningful to them. I think it’s also respecting them and who they are and not imposing your own thinking.

Participants felt that teachers must believe that what students carry with them into the classroom are assets in order to have respect for their students. If teachers do not respect their students and the positions they occupy, they cannot develop content that truly connects with students, and as Abbey said, teachers will inevitably end up simply “imposing [their] own thinking.”

Culture as a Lived and Changing Experience

As discussed above, interviewees challenged essentialized ideas about race and ethnicity as well as the notion of culture as static. In order for teachers to authentically reflect students in their curriculum, they must acknowledge the ways that they actively shape and modify their cultures, as stated by Mariel:

We have the agency to change the culture, to transform it into our own. The culture that was learned in history’s past is still relevant to [us] now because it forms our identity, but it’s not the only culture we are allowed to take part in. We have the right to transform that culture.
With immigration and racial mixing in major cities and metropolitans across the US, students are constantly renegotiating their cultural identities and creating hybrid identities (Irizarry, 2007). These new teachers noted that when teachers become stuck in essentialized notions of race and ethnicity, they do not see the ways that students experience and shape their own cultures.

**Truly Knowing Students**

Interviewees expressed that when teachers do not truly know their students and their interests, they risk making assumptions about what will engage their students. Casey said:

I think it’s a lot about assumptions… Because students look a certain way, [teachers assume] that they will have a certain experience, or interest in certain things. Like, “that’s a black student, he must love hip hop. Let’s talk about hip hop.”

When teachers assume who their students are based on essentialized notions of their perceived identities, their curriculum may not be authentic to their students’ experiences and therefore disengaging. Mariel said:

If what you’re teaching is not useful or applicable, or students can't connect to that experience [because] it’s not their own experience, it’s not relevant…They are not going to engage in something they don’t see themselves a part of.

Instead, Casey suggested that teachers should get to know their students personally so they can understand and bring in students’ true experiences and interests into the classroom: e.g. relationships, friendships, family dynamics, music, and TV.

**Cultivating an Environment for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

Many of the educators who were interviewed understood the significance of cultivating an environment conducive to critical consciousness. Interviewees expressed that CRP is not a type of pedagogy that could be turned on and off, but rather a discourse which required careful classroom planning and an open-minded mentality. Four subthemes describe the type of environment that the interviewees intentionally crafted to support authentic CRP: **community building**, **openness to student challenges**, **flexibility**, and **risk of not knowing the answer**.

**Building Community**

Trust and mutual respect were recognized as central components of a classroom practicing authentic CRP. Interviewees hoped that early community building would allow students to humanize each other and grow together, instead of harboring feelings of distrust, inferiority, or superiority when engaged in critical discussion. Erin recognized this need for student cohesiveness and understanding, investing energy at the start of the school year to ensure that “everyone has a voice and everyone feels valued.” She achieved these objectives by “[creating] classroom norms together” where students understood that “everyone has their own opinions and everyone is valued.”
Openness to Student Challenges

In addition to motivating students to trust each other, our participants conducted themselves in a manner that would amplify trust between the students and the teacher. Although teachers hold virtually all authority within traditional classroom dynamics, these educators discussed attempts to move away from teacher-centered pedagogy and had unique interactions with their students. For instance, Conlan allowed his students to challenge him directly. He remarked that “more often than not, it develops a sense of trust with my students.” He stated that he tries to give students a substantial voice in his classroom, demonstrating that student opinion resonates not only among classmates, but with the teacher as well.

Allowing students to challenge a teacher’s authority may allow for greater success when transitioning to new concepts or practices, like those of CRP, in the classroom. Students may be completely unfamiliar with CRP if they have been going through traditional schooling for years, and with this unfamiliarity may come confusion, disengagement or refusal to participate. Conlan noted that allowing students to challenge him the classroom made them “more willing to be engaged and give things a try if they might not initially.” Having this type of mindset may be unsettling to many educators, but Conlan’s account illustrates how it could benefit those striving to engage students in critical consciousness.

Flexibility

Interviewees agreed that engaging students with culturally relevant material must put the student at the center of the discussion, not the expectations or assumptions of the teacher. Because it is difficult to map out factors like discussion outcomes or student opinion beforehand, student-centered lesson plans may not follow the direction teachers initially intended. The class may veer off toward something entirely different from what was expected. In these scenarios, Casey commented on how important it is for an educator to be flexible: “If something is not going in the direction that you necessarily wanted it to go but there’s meaningful, engaged discussion with students…be flexible enough to go with that and learn from that.”

Casey emphasized the importance of engagement and meaning, instead of intended outcomes, to a classroom practicing authentic CRP. She also highlighted how this type of situation can be turned into a valuable learning opportunity for the teacher, who can continue to hone their practice by following the students’ lead.

Risk of not Knowing the Answer

CRP requires teachers to move away from absolute certainty, as student-centered pedagogy depends heavily on current student input rather than a teacher’s prior knowledge. Though educators traditionally plan lessons for which they have the right answers, our participants noted how teachers enacting CRP may not hold all the answers when engaging in critical dialogue with their students. They must accept this risk as an educator. Mariel stated how “it’s about asking questions and never assuming you know the answer that the students are going to answer [with].” Although teachers usually seek and provide correct responses, educators would benefit by posing questions that may not have an “answer.”
Reflexive Teaching Mentalities and Practices

Though CRP is student-centered pedagogy, these new educators talked about the fact that it is critical for teachers to continually reflect on themselves and their practice. Interviewees discussed what it means to be an educator enacting CRP in the following subthemes: self-reflection, teacher positionality, and teaching as a process.

Self-reflection

Our participants recognized self-reflection as one of the most essential practices for an educator, especially for those attempting to enact CRP. Constant awareness and contemplation of oneself, one’s classroom, and one’s objectives were attributes which many felt were indispensable. Abbey explained that “the process of self-reflection and trying to figure out where you want to be and how you’re going to get there...was really important, necessary, and hard.” She also understood the importance of identifying “what sort of prejudices or ideas you hold” in the capacity of an educator. Abbey’s comments highlight the role of self-reflection as a tool for professional development, providing a mechanism to regularly assess short-term and long-term objectives as a teacher. It also lends itself as a useful tool to analyze oneself as an individual, recognizing personal convictions and areas for improvement.

Teacher Positionality

Many aspects of an educator’s background characterize strengths that every classroom should have: professional training, expertise, compassion, and so on. But with these strengths come potentially damaging expectations, assumptions, and biases that should be identified and addressed through self-reflection. Interviewees, like Vivien, recognized the significance of “knowing your own position in the classroom.” She expanded on that sentiment, describing how any educator must reflect on “who you are, where you’re coming from, and what you’re bringing into the classroom.” Her comments highlight the importance of teacher positionality; if we as educators want students to undertake journeys of self-discovery and reflection, we must understand our own unique characteristics and undergo a similar journey ourselves.

Examining teacher positionality in a classroom necessitates an examination of teachers within the American education system. Broadly speaking, educators exist within an institution that reproduces inequality (Duncan-Andrade, 2007). This is reflected in the disparity between the types of schools serving high-income, predominantly White communities and those serving low-income communities—predominantly comprised of people of Color (e.g. Kincheloe, 2008; Kumashiro, 2012). Interviewees noted how acknowledging one’s role in such an institution can be helpful. One educator, Conlan, remarked: “I unfortunately have to be the face that’s connected to this historically oppressive institution that has generally been used to create and reproduce a stratified society.” As Conlan stated, teachers work as employees for a hegemonic establishment, directly connecting educators to a force of oppression in the lives of many students. This is an essential aspect of teacher positionality that cannot be ignored, as one of the central tenets of CRP is to identify and name the systems of oppression operating around us.
**Teaching as a Process**

Although self-reflection is a tool allowing teachers to reflect upon their practice, positionality, and role in the classroom, interviewees understood that this reflection is never complete. Self-reflection is a way of being. Participants also conveyed a similar notion when discussing teaching as a whole—there is no point of completion or complete mastery. Conlan summarized this notion as one of “always becoming.” An educator always seeks to improve their practice without an end in sight, pledging to enact culturally relevant pedagogy through continuous commitment and action.

**Addressing Barriers when Enacting Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

Teaching is challenging for everyone, and those teaching with the hope of employing authentic CRP encounter additional difficulties. The educators who were interviewed spoke about scenarios which were especially frustrating. Though these barriers may have been broad, interviewees also suggested ways to support the implementation of CRP in the classroom. The discussion encompassed two subthemes: *space to collaborate in light of administrative demands* and *mentors and models to observe in spite of lacking resources*.

**Space to Collaborate in Light of Administrative Demands**

Because school districts require certain amounts of testing and adherence to specific standards, many teachers find that their time is consumed by the demands of the administration. Our teachers talked about the fact that they have less time at their discretion to practice pedagogies like CRP. Erin related how she felt frustrated at the fact that she had “all these benchmarks and assessments and all these things that you gotta do aside from all the things you want to put in.” As is the case with many educators, administrative requirements must be balanced with the desire to stimulate critical consciousness among students.

Participants identified collaboration as a means to counteract the pressures from school administration. Lacking a peer network or support system would make it additionally challenging to balance school requirements and CRP ideals. Madison remarked on how she felt many teachers felt alone, stating that “teaching in general can be a very isolating job.” In Madison’s opinion, “having the space to speak with colleagues or peers about different ideas has been really helpful.” This sentiment was echoed by several interviewees, highlighting the positive effect that collaboration can have among teachers struggling to enact CRP under constant administrative pressure.

**Mentors and Models to Observe in Spite of Lacking Resources**

Since many school districts follow standardized curricula, they do not provide material that would directly support teachers attempting authentic CRP instead of approaches like *heroes and holidays* multiculturalism. Often times, educators find that very little to no curriculum exists as a reference. Casey discussed this challenge in the classroom, stating that “it’s really hard unless you have a model or you have curriculum that has been done.” Because she does not have viable models, Casey disclosed how “[she has] to create everything.” In an environment that demands for teachers to divert their time and energy towards administrative requirements, teachers wanting to utilize CRP may be discouraged by the lack of resources.
Several participants struggling with this challenge identified mentors as a means to overcome the scarcity of resources and references. Though mentors may not have ready-made curriculum, they could serve as models for educators to observe and emulate. One teacher, Kirsten, commented on how fortunate she felt with her mentor-teachers. She said, “I feel like I’ve had a lot of good examples that have helped me have relatively good judgment around CRP and how to enact it.” Because authentic CRP must be specific to the students in a certain classroom and cannot rely on the characteristics of another classroom, mentors who model examples of CRP may be one of the most accessible avenues of inspiration.

**Discussion**

Our participants lend insight to the mentalities, practices, and challenges enacted and encountered among new teachers working to implement what they saw to be authentic CRP in the classroom. Most of these new teachers agreed that interpretations of “cultural relevance” at their school sites were static, as culture was often considered solely a racial or ethnic descriptor. These general notions did not critically analyze the oppressive structures operating in society and failed to account for the multi-dimensionality of culture (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Camangian, 2012).

These educators worked to incorporate critical conversations into their practice by utilizing pedagogy highlighting the unique student assets already present in the classroom (Kohli, 2012, Lenski et al., 2005). They worked to consciously develop classroom environments that provided spaces for all student voices to be valued, moving away from traditional teaching methods. Participants emphasized how authentic CRP required frequent self-reflection as an educator and described the potential of collaboration and mentorship in overcoming various barriers.

These teachers’ voices reveal the complexities and challenges of teaching in today’s classrooms in contexts that are hyper-focused on testing. Not only are these new teachers feeling the pressure to deliver content so students can pass tests (Ayers & Ayers, 2014; Bartolome, 1994), but they are navigating the spaces in between theory and practice (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Kincheloe, 2008). It is key that they occupy these spaces as new teachers entering public schools because they are often the most connected to pedagogical theory in relation to their faculty colleagues. Further, they are often the teachers most closely aligned with youth and their cultural contexts, so their ability to bring a critical social analysis into classrooms heightens their potential to disrupt the cultural irrelevance associated with standardized testing and scripted curriculum (Kohli, 2012; Spring, 2004). In these ways, the voices of this group of new teachers represent possibilities for countering the blame and rhetorical attack on teachers and teaching in the current system (e.g. Kumashiro, 2012).

Through exploring their own and their students’ identities as central aspects of their teaching, these teachers reveal the importance of positionality in their pedagogy (Phuntsog, 1999; Yoosso, 2005). Their quotes not only show that these teachers are willing to interrogate their own biases and assumptions, but they are attempting to do so in a way that models authenticity for their students (Camangian, 2013). Their ability to “be real” with their students comes from a true desire to build meaningful relationships with them, and this comes from a continual and purposeful self-exploration (Lenski et al., 2005). Again, these interviewees’ positionality as new teachers is crucial here, as they reflect on the process of teacher education and becoming a teacher as central to their abilities to connect with students (Kohli, 2012). It is from this foundation of positionality and the
fluid process of becoming a teacher that this group discusses possibilities for enacting effective CRP.

These teachers also envision possibilities for effective and authentic CRP where teachers understand their students on a deeply nuanced level by moving away from static notions of culture. As these new teachers examine intersectional, hybrid, and multiple identities with their students, they endeavor to allow students to define themselves rather than imposing their assumptions onto students (e.g. Nieto, 2013). Teachers from this study also suggest that academic success and critical thinking skills/consciousness—tenets of Ladson-Billings’ (1995a) conceptualizations of CRP—means gaining skills to move through this world as intellectuals who transform society and work towards justice (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). They have observed teachers defining academic success and critical thinking synonymously with assimilation and test-taking skills. Justice-oriented teachers must enact liberatory definitions of “academic success” and “critical thinking” with their students in order to avoid furthering educational inequity.

Implications

This study has limitations that are important to note. First, this study has a small sample of teachers who were all in the same teacher education program. This means that these teachers worked closely together and developed a common—and therefore possibly narrow—understanding of CRP. Thus, these findings are certainly not generalizable to all pre-service teachers and even other new teachers committed to issues of social justice. Second, these teachers have limited experience in classrooms. Several of these new teachers revealed in their interviews that they are still seeking/finding their voices in their classrooms, practicing their liberatory education despite administrative pressure to focus on improving test scores, and figuring out how they can bring their theory and pedagogy alive in their practice. As these new teachers navigate complex education systems, their visions for CRP are still very much in the preliminary stages. We know that teaching is highly contextual, and thus, we acknowledge that these findings may be unique to this group. Further, these findings are in no way intended to portray these participants or this teacher education program as having definitive solutions to the current attack on teachers or the deficit narrative facing urban students. Rather, we present these new teachers’ voices to showcase a context in which new members of the profession are engaging in conceptual and pedagogical inquiry into the challenges of CRP and its implementation in the classroom. We also acknowledge that this research is exploratory and incipient. Further studies in this area should investigate K-12 students’ and families’ perspectives of CRP and its potential impact on learning.

We also feel that the contextual factors this study highlights—the relationships among this group of teachers and their newness to the profession—offer unique strengths. As stated at the outset, the new and fresh ideas of these folks make the possibility for change in our educational system exciting. Further, their commitment to developing pedagogies that address issues of equity is central to the investigation of cultural relevance as a foundation of teaching (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Kohli, 2009, 2012). In many ways, it is the fact that these new teachers acknowledge these preliminary stages of CRP as a part of their growth—or certainly as a part of their process towards becoming the teachers they want to be—that makes this research important for the larger pursuit of educational equity in our public schooling system (Luker, 2010). It is the candor of their self-reflection and their willingness to implicate themselves in a larger movement towards cultural relevance that makes their voices powerful.
This study started with the premise that teachers’ voices are missing in the national discourse about educational success. As educational researchers, we are complicit in this silencing of teachers if we do not actively seek opportunities for them to speak to the strengths and challenges of their contexts and their visions for change (Kincheloe, 2008). The voices of these new teachers reveal some of the intricacies of what it can be like to embark on a career with a desire to teach for justice. Their quotes show that concepts like diversity and multiculturalism represent contested spaces in many of our public schools and that some teachers, perhaps with the best of intentions, are further replicating inequities between students through simplified and monolithic understandings of what it means to teach for equity (Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Linsky et al., 2005; Picower, 2012). These teachers’ desire to build CRP in new and different ways from what they see happening is a key finding of this study and one that calls for future research. As an inquiry into the importance of teacher education, these teachers’ voices represent a starting point—a place for us as educators to think about what CRP means in today’s schools and what we want it to look like moving forward.

The perspective of these new teachers also encourages us to consider the significance of solidarity and mentorship within teacher education. Among the myriad of challenges educators face in schools today, the teachers from our study emphasized the challenge of coping with administrative pressure and functioning without appropriate resources. However, they suggested that working with other individuals through collaboration or mentorship would be feasible ways of addressing their issues. The answer to their most pressing needs was a call to solidarity, embodied in the interpersonal relationships derived from a supportive network of peers and mentors. This is something that we must model and build into our practice and programming as teacher educators. The reflective responses of these teachers not only provide us with insight to their experiences, but also convey a powerful message of how camaraderie among teachers is a cornerstone of implementing critical analysis and critique into one’s classroom.

These new teachers showcase a passion and vision for teaching that is inspiring. They offer hope in an educational arena that continues to focus on what students can’t do and why teachers are to blame (Ayers & Ayers, 2014; Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Kumashiro, 2012). This hope comes from the fact that these teachers (and others like them) are entering public school classrooms in greater numbers and are spending significant amounts of time with our youth daily. It is these new, and critically conscious, teachers who must determine what CRP is and what it needs to become. The very nature of culture is one of fluidity and change—it is something that we learn and therefore can teach (Nieto, 2002). For these reasons, as teacher educators, we must work alongside our new teachers and have them teach us ways to envision programs and produce scholarship that can show the changes that CRP can undergo and the impact it can have on teaching and learning.

References


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Kigali and Phoenix: Historical Similarities between Pre-genocide Rwanda and Arizona’s Anti-immigrant Wave

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Abstract

Historical events in Arizona, including very recent ones, are eerily similar to those of Rwanda. In this article, stories of Arizona’s political history are relayed while recalling those leading to Rwanda’s genocide. The stories include references to key roles education policy has played in the oppression of students labeled Tutsi and students labeled Mexican. These stories are then mapped with respect to Barbara Harff and Ted Gurr’s checklist evaluating conditions that may portend impending oppression. Conclusions derived from the stories and the mapping suggest that Arizona’s phenomena extend beyond its borders and into a Trump presidency, necessitating our obligation to be leaders by extending current technical conversations supporting multiculturalism to boisterous multilingual advocacy regarding any dehumanization of oppressed communities.

Keywords: oppression, policy, bystanders, advocacy, documentation, repatriation

These are the seeds of hate that we cannot let take root in our heart.
Barack Obama, April 23, 2012

Introduction

In April 2010, Arizona governor Jan Brewer signed Senate Bill (SB) 1070, the Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act. Critics like Colorado congressman Jared Polis linked the policy to attitudes resonating from pre-World War II Germany, exclaiming that laws requiring police to examine papers of suspected undocumented immigrants were reminiscent of the 1930s treatment of Jews (Hunt, 2010).

Such condemnation of the legislation, quickly nicknamed the “Papers please” law, referred to the bill’s language:

The legislature finds that there is a compelling interest in the cooperative enforcement of federal immigration laws throughout all of Arizona. For any lawful contact made by a law enforcement official…where reasonable suspicion exists that the person is an alien who is

1. Seth Meyers (2010) is quoted as saying, “I know there’s some people in Arizona worried that Obama is acting like Hitler, but could we all agree that there’s nothing more Nazi than saying ‘Show me your papers?’ There’s never been a World War II movie that didn’t include the line ‘show me your papers.’ It’s their catchphrase.”
unlawfully present in the United States, a reasonable attempt shall be made, when practicable, to determine the immigration statutes of the person. (Arizona State Senate, 2010)

During its implementation, numerous non-government organizations were similarly working to stem immigration from Mexico (Tacopino, 2010; Price, 2010), thus sparking labeling such organizations as “Nazis,”2 and referring to the term genocide (Cintli Rodríguez, 2011; Al-Qaraz Ochoa, 2011). Such activity unleashed international condemnation, including protest from Mexico’s president Félix Calderón. In counter-response, Governor Brewer echoed her supporters: “We’re out here on the battlefield, getting the impact of all this illegal immigration, all the crime that comes with it” (Van Susteren, 2010).

A Facebook Chat

Such sniping among political leaders prompted a Facebook conversation with a fellow teacher. I, serving as a lecturer at the National University of Rwanda, sat at my laptop, chatting with Beth Witt, an elementary school teacher on the Navajo Nation in Arizona. I commented on the troublesome history of Rwanda and how the 1994 genocide affected my students, who were, at the time of the genocide, the age of Beth’s current students. In Beth’s case, she relayed the effects of Arizona legislation upon her job, her colleagues, her students, and their families.

Our discussion prompted a casual comparison of Arizona legislation, namely that of SB 1070, with Rwanda’s own pre-genocide history. At first, the comparison seemed unlikely. But quickly one Arizona phenomenon seemingly corresponded with another Rwandan one, and then another, and then another, ultimately converting the ironic into the frightening.

Our chat prompted me to examine how Arizona’s public attitude toward immigration was, as Jared Polis suggested, similar to a pre-genocidal condition. By comparing events leading to any genocide to those of modern Arizona, perhaps we might approach understanding the extent to which any genocide reference is merited.

Bystanding

In 2012, President Barack Obama visited the Holocaust Memorial in Washington. Referring to ongoing horrors in Syria, the president asserted, “The Syrian people are facing unspeakable violence, and we have to do everything we can,” suggesting that responsibility lay not only with adults: “We must tell our children,” decried the president; “[f]or awareness without action changes nothing. In this sense, ‘never again’ is a challenge to us all—to pause and to look within” (White House, 2012).

We may easily recognize recently missed opportunities for doing “everything we can.” In terms of Rwanda’s 1994 genocide, former president Bill Clinton found himself, along with Belgian and United Nations officials (Organisation de L’Unité Africaine, 2000; British Broadcasting Corporation, 2000), apologizing for not having done enough when Rwanda was on the precipice of calamity (Bradshaw & Loeterman, 1999).

Scholars such as Power (2002), as well as Grünfeld and Huijboom (2007), posit that genocide is preventable so long as citizens don’t fall into a trap of bystanding. They argue Rwanda’s accrual of weapons in 1993 was adequate warning of an impending genocide, one meriting action

2. The Anti-Defamation League (2010) condemned use of the term Nazi within this argument.
from international troops. Such did not occur, and, as a result, the US government and allies found themselves labeled “complicit in the genocide” (Grünfeld & Huijboom, 2007, p. 18-19).

To understand academic inquiry into genocide, we might begin with the UN Genocide Convention (1948). Article II stipulates genocide as,

intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, or religious group as such:

(a) killing members of the group;
(b) causing serious bodily or mental harm,
(c) deliberately inflicting…conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction,
(d) imposing measures to prevent births, and
(e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. (p. 280)

Stanton (1998) clarifies a description of genocide as a process rather than an event, arguing that escalating threats where activity described as classification, symbolization, dehumanization, organization, polarization, and preparation—are as much a part of genocide as the extermination and denial of it that ultimately transpires. Harff and Gurr (1998) similarly offer a checklist of evaluating conditions that may portend impending genocide called “Systematic Early Warning of Humanitarian Emergencies,” as seen in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Harff and Gurr’s (1998) Systematic Early Warning of Humanitarian Emergencies

1. Life integrity violations by government or government-supported groups against targeted groups
2. Physical or verbal clashes between regime (or regime supporters) and targeted groups
3. Aggressive posturing or actions by opposition groups
4. Increase in size of or degree of cohesion in opposition groups
5. Threats of external involvement against governing elites
6. Increase in external support for politically active groups
7. Occurrence of violent opposition by kindred groups in neighboring countries. (p. 571)

Harff and Gurr point their research directly to Rwanda as an exemplar of how these warning signs, which brew for decades, might beget actual genocide. The question here is how these factors are observable in Arizona, particularly those resembling any from pre-genocide Rwanda. And if we observe such similarity, then we may prepare ourselves to become advocates rather than bystanders.

**A Comparison**

In subsequent sections, I compare events of pre-genocidal Rwanda to those connected to Arizona’s political landscape. I relay two timelines applicable (or not) to the Harff and Gurr lens. First, I offer an account of Rwanda’s history leading to its 1994 genocide. Then I try to tell an Arizona story while recalling Rwandan phenomena the Arizona experiences may evoke, including
key roles policy has played in the oppression of people labeled *Tutsi* and *Mexican*. Finally, I chart how both Rwanda and Arizona narratives are seemingly juxtaposed within Harff and Gurr’s scope.

Naturally, we should wonder if we can compare two sites separated by 9000 miles and differing cultural environments. One could suggest that Rwanda’s majority took action against its own people, much as Germany did, whereas Arizona’s problem is often described as an “immigrant problem.” However, as Szkupinski Quiroga’s (2014) findings have shown that US-born citizens of Mexican heritage are as likely to experience the stress of SB 1070 type policies as undocumented citizens are, I submit that the treatment of Arizona’s Latino communities is similarly an attack by US citizens upon its own compatriots.

By making these comparisons, I suggest the threat of death seen in previous genocides, more particularly that of Rwanda, approximates threats of what gives life meaning—education, shelter, health, wages, dignity, and family. If we see stripping away of humanity and political rights, as both Rwanda and Arizona have demonstrated, the obvious next step is to strip away life. Since the resemblances described here link modern day Arizona to events occurring *prior* to Rwanda’s genocide, I argue that we must be concerned that numerous Arizonans are participating in *pre*-genocide behavior. In the case of Rwanda, the behavior festered for decades before it exploded. With respect to Arizona, we might ponder that the state’s hatred is still festering.

**Pre-genocide Rwanda**

Rwanda’s 1994 genocide is infamous: a story of two communities—the Hutus and the Tutsis—who occupy the environs of Lake Kivu. Unlike most African countries, Rwanda is united by one language: Kinyarwanda. And both Hutus and Tutsis, at least those in Rwanda, speak this language.

Rwanda’s history (Gourevich, 1998) reaches to the earliest known days of mankind. Before colonization, Rwanda had a cooperative system supervised by a *mwami*. European colonialism touched Rwanda at the close of the 19th century with the arrival of the Germans and British soldier John Henning Speke. Speke is known for his proclamation that Tutsis were descendants of Christian Ethiopians and therefore superior to the Hutus. As a result, the Rwandan *mwami* was declared a Tutsi. However, genetics experts have traced the intermixing of the tribes well before 1850, suggesting racial distinctions between the tribes are mostly unintelligible—not really relating to the notions that Hutus came from the Bantus of the southwest, most likely agri-cultivators, and Tutsis came from the Nile north, most likely herdsmen.

World War I resulted in Germans losing control of the area to the Belgians, who perpetuated tribal distinctions. In the 1930s, the Belgians established an identity card system where citizens were designated Hutu or Tutsi as a calculation of height and nose width. Depending upon which Belgian measured whose nose, members of the same family could be divvied into either tribe. Approximately 85 percent of the population was designated Hutu.

Over the next three decades, Hutus remained at the mercy of minority Tutsi control. In the 1950s, independence swept across Africa, and Rwanda similarly considered such. Belgian colonel Guy Logiest argued however, in the name of a democratic “majority rule,” that Hutus should have control. Leading the way for the Hutus was Grégoire Kayibanda, founder of the *Parmehutu* political party and one of nine authors of *The Hutu Manifesto* (Magnarella, 2002). As Rwanda shifted toward independence and a Hutu-led nation, deadly Hutu-Tutsi violence occasionally erupted. Many families with Tutsi IDs fled to neighboring countries, establishing a Rwandan Diaspora.
One particular three-year-old, a boy named Paul Kagame, belonged to one such family escaping to Uganda, a notably English-using nation (Waugh, 2004).

Rwanda declared independence in 1961, yielding Kayibanda the presidency. Cultural clashes persisted, so the president sent his major general, Juvenal Habyarimana, to assist in Tutsis understanding of their place in society. In 1972, this same general became president in a miniature coup. Upon achieving his seat, Habyarimana issued a moratorium on violence against the Tutsis, but not against control over them. He established a single party system and established restrictive rules on Tutsis, including the prohibition of Tutsis moving from one residence to another without permission. Another secondary school selection policy known as *Iringaniza* seemingly favored selection of Hutu youth over Tutsi into more advanced schools (Mills & Wiesemes, 2012).

Meanwhile, in Uganda, a grown Paul Kagame joined the government-defying National Resistance Army (NRA), led by current president Yoweri Museveni. The NRA successfully overthrew President Apolo Milton Obote in 1985, and Kagame became Museveni’s military intelligence head (Mason, 2010).

In the 1980s, Rwanda gained notoriety for coffee. Indeed, coffee had become the most direct source of tax income for the Habyarimana government (Verwimp, 2003) and Habyarimana’s wife, Agathe Kanziga, affectionately known as “Madame Agathe.” However, in 1986, the world’s coffee prices plummeted, extinguishing 82 percent of Rwanda’s income (Kamola, 2008). The government lost its ability to satisfy its field workers or fund Madame Agathe’s shopping sprees in Paris. Rwandan Coffee Club (2010) reported that many Hutus blamed Tutsis for the coffee crisis.

Meanwhile in Uganda, Kagame moonlighted as designer of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a new militia composed of members of Rwanda’s Diaspora wishing to invade Rwanda. A faction of the RPF attacked a northern village in 1990, thus accelerating tension between Hutus and Tutsis. As a result, in 1991, the US Ambassador to Rwanda, Robert Flaten, suggested to Mr. Habyarimana that eliminating those omnipresent identity cards might be worthwhile. However, his French counterpart, M Georges Martres, refuted the idea, suggesting that doing so could sacrifice Francophonie support (Gourevich, 1998).

The Rwandan government advanced widespread denouncement of Tutsis, including a 1992 rally where public official Léon Mugesera pronounced, “I tell you that the Gospel has already changed in our movement. If someone gives you a slap, give them two in return, two fatal ones” (Article19.org, 1996). In response, a Tutsi periodical called *Kanguka* emerged, critiquing Hutu leadership with political cartoons. Madame Agathe counterpunched by hiring Hassan Ngeze to publish *Kangura*. Not only the name but also the magazine’s look was so strikingly similar to *Kanguka* that readers often made incorrect purchases. In an initial *Kangura* issue, Ngeze offered the Hutu Ten Commandments, admonishing fellow Hutus that cavorting with Tutsis would yield them a label of “traitor” (Berry & Berry, 1999).

The success of *Kangura* generated the Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) network. Two RTLM directors were Ferdinand Nahimana, who campaigned to keep Tutsis out of Rwanda’s universities, and Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza, who relayed his goal to “Crush the Tutsis.” RTLM was unapologetic in its vociferous pursuit of Tutsis:

> RTLM is a private radio! The reason why our radio surprises you is because you were not used to this type of talk on Radio Rwanda. We can understand, that is why you hear people complaining, “RTLM is talking about me!” It will say even more. Now we are just making you familiar. We will keep on increasing, increasing. (Article19.org, 1996, p. 53)
In 1993, Burundi’s president Melchior Ndayaye was murdered, leading RTLM’s Habimana Kantano to accuse Tutsis of the crime, evoking this proverb: “Even where the dog-eaters are few in number, they discredit the whole family” (Article19.org, 1996, p. 51). While the term *dog-eaters* is brutal enough, the most common epithet against Tutsis was *inyenzi*, meaning “cockroaches.” Paul Rusesabagina, the Mille Collines hotelier of *Hotel Rwanda* notoriety, recalls his encounter with Father Wenceslas, a Hutu priest, reportedly saying, "I bring you my cockroach," referring to his Tutsi mother (Gourevich, 1998). The movie *Hotel Rwanda* regularly portrays use of *cockroach* (George & Pearson, 2004), and the document *Broadcasting Genocide*, detailing the RTLM emissions, mentions *inyenzi* 22 times (Article19.org, 1996).

As coffee prices decreased, young people found themselves unemployed. The government recruited boys for soccer clubs and militias, namely one called the *Interahamwe* (Gourevich, 1998). Recruitment enticements included flashy clothes, hip-hop style army drills, alcohol, drugs, firearms, and power. Homework given to *Interahamwe* included analyzing identity card records and establishing lists of Tutsis. Rwanda’s police also teamed with Habyarimana’s political party to establish its own sports club known as the *Impuzamugambi*, meaning “those with the same goal.”

Over time, the RPF gained momentum with its invasion. Ultimately, under pressure from the United Nations, President Habyarimana began peace talks with the RPF in Tanzania, ultimately leading to a peace agreement allowing UN Peacekeepers to establish a transition government, an outcome not warmly welcomed by others in the Rwandan government.

During this time, a number of resisting community leaders stepped haphazardly into notoriety. The story of Paul Rusesabagina in the *Hotel Rwanda* has been documented and debated for years (Garrison, 2010). Another hotelier named Landoald “Lando” Ndasingwa became the minister of social affairs following the peace agreement signing. UN mission general Roméo Dallaire (2003) found Lando a man steadfast in his devotion to right over wrong. On one occasion, General Dallaire needed a voice to proclaim neutrality among all parties of the interim government. Only Lando accepted this role, an act likely leading to his murder. General Dallaire also reported a surprising but brief interaction with Rwandan army liaison, Ephrem Rwabalinda. Approximately six weeks into the genocide, Rwabalinda in a meeting with General Dallaire, suggested a message from the general could reduce vitriol spewing from RTLM, potentially assisting negotiations between the Rwandan government and the RPF. Rwabalinda was ambushed and killed while commuting to a subsequent meeting.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of resistance, though, came from students. A Belgian nun and 16 teenagers were murdered in a boarding school in Gisenyi (Gourevich, 1998). At least one man confessed to the crime, indicating in a television interview that he and *Interahamwe* cohorts had invaded the school one night, shocking the students out of their sleep in an effort to fold them into Hutu and Tutsi sides. This time, though, these students refused to split up. For this, all lost their lives.

On April 6, 1994, an airplane transporting both President Habyarimana and Burundi’s president Cyprien Ntaryamira to Rwanda from the peace talks was shot down, killing both presidents. A culprit has never been established, though the timing and placement of possible perpetrators on each side—the Rwandan government and the RPF—raise plausible suspicions. RTLM immediately blamed the RPF. The next day, Rwanda’s prime minister, Agathe Uwilingiyimana (a Hutu), her family, and 10 Belgian guards were killed. Madame Agathe, however, was airlifted out of Rwanda this same day, and the genocide began in earnest.
Road blocks were set up. The *Interahamwe* patrolled the streets. Identity cards were checked. Tutsi card holders faced immediate execution. RTLM announced Tutsi whereabouts and killing instructions. Rhetoric on RTLM decried such tactics as peace promotion, a message not lost on Hutu students at The National University of Rwanda, who, while burning students in their dorms and hacking university staff, chanted "Peace at NUR!"

Evidence of cold-bloodedness has never been more on display than at Murambi (Burnet, 2012), a technological school outside the city of Gikongoro. When the genocide headed south to this region, numerous Tutsis went to a local church to hide. The church’s bishop recommended that they move to Murambi, claiming French troops would protect them. After their arrival to the school, electricity and water were shut off. For some reason, the French soldiers disappeared, and the *Interahamwe* attacked the school. Hundreds of people died, most swept into mass graves on the compound. One particular burial site is known to have served as a volleyball court for the French soldiers upon their return.

As the Rwandan government spent resources on eliminating Tutsis, the RPF circled the country, issuing its own ruthlessness. Ultimately, the RPF moved into Kigali on July 4, effectively ending the genocide after 100 days and the death of perhaps 800,000 people (SURF Survivors Fund, 2008).³ Kagame would ultimately assume Rwanda’s presidency in 2000, mandate English-only schooling in 2009, and establish Rwanda as an English-speaking member of the British Commonwealth.

**Arizona’s Ola Anti-Immigrante⁴**

Arizona is rooted historically in the 1848 Treaty of Hidalgo-Guadalupe, which ended the Mexican-American War and led to the US acquisition of approximately half of Mexico’s territory. In an instant, Mexican citizens became illegal immigrants in their own birth homes. Thus, the story of Mexicans in Arizona and their levels of legalness have dominated sociopolitical terrains since the signing of this treaty.

As a region rich with resources, notably copper, many White US citizens moved to the 1863-formed Arizona Territory and requested statehood (Englekirk & Marín, n.d.). Statehood, however, was delayed as East Coast legislators argued against it because Arizona didn’t resemble their own constituent Dutch or German population (Acosta, 2008).

Arizona gained statehood in 1913, coinciding with Mexico’s own decade-long civil war. The US’s own participation in World War I facilitated many Mexicans’ movement into the US border states, including Arizona, where new residents could assist on farms. In the 1920s, policies described as barrioization emerged in cities and mining towns, forcing Mexican families to particular neighborhoods, thereby segregating schools by culture and language (Lucero, 2004). In 1924, the US Government established the Border Patrol, its work starting in earnest during the Great Depression as a large proportion of Arizona’s estimated 60,000 undocumented foreigners

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³ It should be noted that Rwanda’s history of conflict didn’t end with the end of the genocide. Instead, the exodus of Hutu communities west to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tutsi/Hutu conflict developed into two Congo Wars, leading to the death of 4 million people over two decades (Prunier, 2011).
⁴ Translated into English as “Anti-immigrant Wave.” The term has never caught on in English media; however, it is a regular term in Spanish media, used even in captions supporting newscasts as in http://img9.catalog.video.msn.com/image.aspx?uuid=edc7a383a-faa4-4606-8e24-838482e9d72c&w=136&h=102.
(Bresette, 1929) were expelled in the 1930s during a process known as Mexican Repatriation (Johnson, 2005).

As World War II unfolded, US president Franklin Roosevelt found revitalized need for Mexican workers and, in an accord with Mexican president Manuel Ávila Camacho known as the Bracero Program, invited immigrants to assist in farm and railroad work (Espinosa, 1999). However, just as Mexican Repatriation followed the World War I influx of Mexicans, so too did Operation Wetback of 1954 deport more undocumented Mexicans, this time by transporting people deep into Mexico rather than dropping them off at the border (Hernández, 2010). These drop-off points reportedly became targets for criminals, later known as bajadores (Fulginiti, 2008), who subjected returnees to violence.

In the 1960s, many Mexicans applied for US visas; however, a 1965 amendment to the Immigration and National Act (P.L. 89-236) capped the number of immigrants and bureaucratically stopped temporary visas for seasonal workers (US Government & Printing Office, 1965). Within a decade, waiting periods for visas increased to over two years (Rosenblum et al, 2012).

Meanwhile, Mexican-American students reported higher instances of corporal punishment, sometimes simply for speaking Spanish. Mexican-American Studies instructor Eduardo Olivas recalled his own high school experience: “Many Chicanos and Chicanas were being relegated to vocational classes, secretarial classes; in fact, I took four years of Air Conditioning at Tucson High, and not enough was done to get us into college” (on-camera interview, McGinnis, 2011). The students’ experiences were only part of a greater marginalization of the Latino communities in Arizona during this era. Nearly half of Tucson’s historic Barrio Libre was razed to make room for a convention center, and Phoenix’s Golden Gate community was flattened to create an airport. As a response, communities demonstrated against their local governments, and students staged walkouts (Fimbres, 2013; Golden Gate Center, 2014).

Still, since the 1970s, the number of Mexicans in the US has doubled each decade, with undocumented immigrants accounting for much of the growth (Rosenblum et al, 2012). In 1990, another amendment to the Immigration and National Act facilitated the unification of many separated families, thus advancing even further immigration. From 1990 to 2002, the budget for the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS)—now known as Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)—more than quintupled, whereupon funds could be allocated toward building a fence along the Mexico/US border, increased Border Patrol presence, and technology for monitoring immigrant status (Meissner and Kerwin, 2009). Funds could also be applied to the construction of private for-profit detention centers like those of the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), whose first contract was with INS in 1983 (CCA, 2013). With the bolstering of obstacles along the US/Mexico border, many would-be border crossers were then driven to inhospitable areas in the Arizona desert (DeLeón, 2013).

Arizona’s intercultural politics has been notorious. Symptomatic of such was when Evan Mecham, newly elected governor in 1988, immediately rescinded the state’s celebration of Martin Luther King’s birthday, an act leading to boycotts and his impeachment (Sullivan, 2008).


6. Under INA §201(a), family-sponsored immigrants are subject to numerical limits, including adult sons and daughters of US citizens; spouses, children, and adult sons and daughters of lawful permanent residents; and siblings of US citizens. Under INA §201(b), spouses and children of US citizens are not subject to numerical limits. https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R42560.pdf.
After, English as a second language (ESL) teachers became involved in state politics when non-English speaking families in the border city of Nogales took Arizona’s Board of Education to court, suggesting that the school district had failed to teach their children English. The case lasted 17 years, first with the district court siding with the families by saying that funding was not allocated such that students could succeed, but later with the US Supreme Court overturning the decision, suggesting the state and district could focus on student outcomes rather than spending (Horne v. Flores, 2009).

Issues surrounding ESL students became even more pronounced when software developer Ron Unz brought Proposition 203, effectively outlawing bilingual education. Arizona voters passed the proposition in 2000. Subsequent education department rules led to a process known as Structured English Immersion (SEI), a program with a goal of teaching “children English so they can succeed in the 21st century world” (Center for Equal Opportunity, 2009) and purportedly aligned with the Lau vs Nichols (1974) ruling ensuring English learners full access to content.

Clark (2009) touted the program with having effective results, but the ESL child’s day entails 170 minutes for ESL and 80 minutes for content:

- Pronunciation and listening skills, 20 minutes.
- Vocabulary, 30 minutes.
- Verb tense instruction, 20 minutes.
- Sentence structure, 20 minutes.
- Integrated grammar skills application, 20 minutes.
- English reading and writing, 60 minutes.
- Math (specially designed academic instruction in English), 40 minutes.
- Science, social science, P.E., 40 minutes. (p. 5)

In other words, English learners (Els) spend only 32% of the day on content and the remainder on linguistics; meanwhile, their native English-speaking peers have all day to connect their lives to the academic content. Such flies in the face of substantial research indicating that school programs are more efficient when providing fulltime access to content (Goldenberg, 2008), either with effective dual language models, as established in the Casteñada vs Pickard (1981) ruling asserting sound bilingual practices, or appropriately applied ESL techniques.

Just as notable though is Gándara and Orfield’s (2010) observation that SEI segregates and marginalizes ELs from native speakers, “putting these students at high risk for school failure and drop out” (p. 20). In other words, SEI seemingly a revived school-based barrioization, evoking Rwanda’s Iringaniza policy. In the case of SEI, students are separated from native English speaking peers. Similarly with Iringaniza, Rwandan officials chose Hutu students over Tutsis to attend secondary schools. In both cases, majority students receive access to content at rates far outweighing those of the minority. Graduation rates reflect such differentiating as Education Week (Mitchell, 2016) reports Arizona as having the lowest EL graduation rate in the US.

In the meantime, in both Arizona and Rwanda, minority communities were blamed for economic woe. While such finger pointing is nothing new, both pre-genocide Rwanda and pre-SB1070 Arizona showcase notable moments whereupon blame placed on Tutsis or Mexicans was amplified. When coffee prices nosedived in 1986, Hutus blamed Tutsis for the resulting economic crash; similarly, when Arizona endured housing defaults in 2008 and a billion-dollar shortfall in its $11 billion budget (Fletcher, 2008), columnists, including Michelle Malkin (2008), blamed undocumented immigrants for the mortgage crisis (McDonnell, 2011).
As Kangura and RTLM accused Tutsis for bringing about the country’s financial struggles, Arizona also witnessed the rise of websites, videos, and publications charging undocumented immigrants with overtaking locals. Among such organizations was Against Amnesty, which issued this statement:

Illegal Immigration is being used to force Americans down and force Americans into economic and trade agreements we would never accept voluntarily. Since illegal immigration is being used to subjugate American citizens, one could easily say that illegal immigration is being used to enslave Americans. (Americans for Legal Immigration, 2010)

Much as RTLM equated Kagame’s invasion to that of locally residing Tutsis, blogger and radio personality Dave Levine referred to illegal immigration as "the invasion from Mexico" (Levine, 2014). At one time, his website linked to an 8-minute video (US Border Patrol Yuma Sector, 2009) reporting crackdowns on illegal immigration by Yuma Border Patrol agents who made use of advances in technology, finances, and human resources to capture people crossing the Arizona/Sonora border (Levine, 2010).

Similarly, vigilante groups such as the Minutemen Civil Defense Corps had emerged in the mid 2000s, broadcasting their goal to “secure the American border” with a “national citizens neighborhood watch” (Anti-Defamation League, 2005). Relaying RTLM-like messages that “immigrants are coming to get us,” such groups posted ICE’s “Report Suspicious Activity” hotline phone number and that of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) on their websites. Phone lists also included the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Federal Employment Immigration Case Workers, the Social Security Administration, and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

The Southern Poverty Law Center at one time showed as many as 28 such groups on its website as prospective hate organizations (Keller, 2010). However, aside from State Representative Kyrsten Sinema’s failed attempts to stop vigilante groups (e.g., HB 2286 introduced in the 2007 Arizona State Legislature), few efforts have been exerted by the Arizona government with respect to these groups’ actions. One must wonder if the lack of comment regarding such paramilitary organizations is a silent endorsement of them, made—or really unmade—much in the same way Rwanda’s main political party and police force maintained silence regarding the Interahamwe and Impuzamugambi, the paramilitary clubs who wielded so much genocide brutality.

Like Kangura publisher Hassan Ngeze, public figures and authors of anti-immigrant rhetoric have gained notoriety in Arizona and beyond. Perhaps the most polarizing figure is Maricopa County’s sheriff, Joe Arpaio. In Arizona and on national television, Arpaio has reached star status, promoting himself as “America’s toughest sheriff.” Arpaio actually shares with Rwanda a current point of controversy regarding the garb that local prisoners wear: In both places—Rwanda and Maricopa County (which includes Phoenix)—the color is pink. Sheriff Arpaio was regularly re-elected to his office but was eventually accused of targeting Latinos for arrest (Lacey, 2011) and cited for contempt of court for doing so (Moore & Flaherty, 2017).

Similarly, Russell Pearce served as an Arizona state senator in 2010. Working previously as a deputy police officer for Maricopa County, as senator he looked to Kansas law professor Kris Kobach to pen SB 1070. However, they were not alone. Mr. Pearce generated the drafting of SB 1070 in a Washington hotel room in December 2009 along with members of the American

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7. Both Joe Arpaio and Kris Kobach have been named as possible contributors to President Donald Trump’s administration (Tashman, 2016; Viebeck, 2016).
Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) (Sullivan, 2010). Present at the meeting were members of the aforementioned CCA. 8 When Mr. Pearce presented the bill at the Arizona legislature, it had 36 co-sponsors, 24 of whom were ALEC members, and 30 of whom garnered donations from prison companies.

As Mr. Pearce promoted this legislation, he became additionally known for his labeling of undocumented immigrants as “invaders on the American sovereignty.” Pearce is also renowned for his association with Minutemen Civil Defense Corps leadership (Gilman, 2011; Lemons, 2012) and the Ku Klux Klan (Arrocha, 2012).

Ultimately SB 1070 was signed in 2010, and we came to understand that the determining factor regarding whether one is considered "legal" or "illegal" is documentation; thus, police are now required to check should they suspect. The comparison between Rwanda and Arizona is compelling. In both instances, the agency is the police officer. The art of identification occurs in a traffic stop, and the onus is on the person stopped to provide appropriate government-issued ID to prove citizenship status upon request. In Rwanda, it was the Ubwoko identification card; in Arizona, it is now a passport or similar document. The failure to produce desired credentials can yield dire consequences. The fact that identification was required in the first place entails the notion that any officials, Rwandan or Arizonan, must guess their suspect’s identity.

The national response to SB 1070 was immediate, including the emergence of a campaign and corresponding web site known as “Do I look illegal?” On this website, one could doctor his own photo with a Mexican lucha libre mask, pointing out, "If anyone can look illegal, we all can." A Facebook page called "Cuéntame" was even developed to sell "Do I look illegal?" teeshirts, soliciting funds to fight the legislation.

While fringe organizations have denounced immigrants, many mainstream newspapers and YouTube videos have also exhibited extreme hatred in the form of comments accompanying their online presentations. Just as Hutus referred to Tutsis as cockroaches, dissenting comments have included the word leech to describe immigrants as taking away Americans’ resources. This prototypical comment was posted May 10, 2010 by TNT93535 under a YouTube video (WeSupportJoe, 2010), supporting Governor Brewer’s condemnation of President Obama’s description of what happens to Arizonans who don’t carry ID:

First off, the US didn't TAKE shit from mexico. We BOUGHT IT!! Look up the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo!
Second, the vast majority of ILLEGALS are hispanic. Comes from the fact that they can walk here much easier than people from Asia or Europe.
Also, it isn't thousands of Australians marching in the streets DEMANDING "rights" that they actually have no right to!! It's the hispanics!
So no shit we're sick of you LEECHES!! (WeSupportJoe, 2010)

Still, a great deal of drama encapsulated in Arizona’s anti-immigrant wave occurred in schools. Concurrently with the SB 1070 signing came state provisions and bills to eliminate a program called Mexican American Studies (MAS), a prominent cross-cultural class offered in the Tucson Unified School District. Such began an aggressive campaign on Arizona’s schools to levy rules regarding dominant cultural lenses through which social studies curricula might be offered. Emily Gersema (2010) wrote the following description of a Tucson High School MAS classroom:

8. National Public Radio notes that CCA was not necessarily involved in the authorship of SB 1070 nor did it take a stand regarding its support or non-support of the legislation.
The classroom walls are covered with posters of revolution and civil-rights icons—the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., César Chávez and Emiliano Zapata Salazar, leader of the Mexican Revolution. Other posters feature Aztec symbols associated with Mexican history, such as the circular calendar, and messages from past movements, such as the United Farm Workers strikes and the 2006 immigration marches, including the still-repeated Chávez cry: "¡Sí, se puede!" (Yes, we can!). (The Arizona Republic)

In fact, the Tucson Unified School District (2010) offered the following description of its Mexican-American Studies courses:

- Advocating for and providing culturally relevant curriculum for grades K-12.
- Advocating for and providing curriculum that is centered within the pursuit of social justice.
- Advocating for and providing curriculum that is centered within the Mexican American/Chicano cultural and historical experience.
- Working towards the invoking of a critical consciousness within each and every student. (American Renaissance, 2010)

Campbell (2010) admonished us that a “lack of history of self does not commit students to democratic participation in the society.” The MAS approach seems a powerful attempt to rectify ages of marginalization, offering a means, as he later suggests, of providing “an accurate history [that] can provide a sense of self, of direction, of purpose, and make schooling more relevant, realistic, and worth pursuing” (Campbell, 2016).

Classes were principally taught in English, and students labeled at risk for not graduating were attracted to them. Cabrera, Milam, and Marx’s analysis (see McGinnis, 2011) of MAS student test scores found that students taking MAS classes were between 64 and 118 percent more likely than non-MAS attending peers to pass Arizona’s high stakes exams. Furthermore, they were between 46 and 150 percent more likely to graduate than non-takers of MAS classes. In addition, Tucson’s school district reported that one year 93% of enrolled MAS students graduated and 85% continued on to college.

Still, Arizona’s education superintendent Tom Horne complained: “These kids should be taking an American history course and getting American history in depth...Instead, they’re getting propaganda and an ideology that teaches them to resent the United States” (Gersema, 2010). As a result, House Bill 2281 was composed and passed into law. The bill declares that schools may not include instruction that “promotes the overthrow of the United States Government, promotes resentment toward a race or class of people, is designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group, or advocates ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals” (Arizona House of Representatives, 2010). The following year, the new education superintendent John Huppenthal found MAS in violation of the law, forcing the Tucson school district to shut down the program temporarily (Modern Language Association, 2012).

A number of MAS students resisted, much in the spirit of the Gisenyi teenagers standing up to their *Interahamwe* executioner. At one school district meeting, students handcuffed

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9. Mexican-American Studies students were hardly alone in their protests. Extensive protests throughout Arizona have persisted, particularly each year on April 23, the anniversary of Governor Brewer’s signing of these laws (Puente Movement, 2015; Tomaiko, 2015).
themselves to chairs (KGUN, 2012) to protest the elimination of MAS courses and non-renewal of their teachers’ contract. On another occasion, students walked from Tucson to Phoenix, a distance of over 100 miles, to protest the bill (McGinnis, 2011). Following Tucson’s closing of MAS, numerous students staged walk-outs from the schools (Biggers, 2012). Referring to one protest, Tom Horne described the demonstrators: “That’s the students protesting the bill, and teachers as well, dressed up as revolutionaries in masks, sunglasses, berets, brown shirts. I think this demonstrates the militant aspect of the course that we’re dealing with” (Brown, 2010). Such comment suggests that Horne believes the protesters are as revolutionary as he says the class teaches them to be, and that the protest validates program closure. Such evokes RTLM announcer Valérie Bemeriki’s comment regarding the plight of the Tutsis: “All the people who were killed in the country are the victims of the RPF. It is the Inyenzi-Inkotanyi who killed them and nobody else” (RTLM, 1994).

A clear concern of Rwandan officials, and indeed its Francophonie supporters, was that an RPF invasion would likely extend a shift in the governing colonial language from French to English. Similarly, Arizona officials have expressed concern regarding the degree to which the current language of power is implemented in its schools. In Spring 2010, Arizona’s education department stated that, in compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act, it would start auditing pronunciation schemes of ESL teachers. Those deemed to have heavily accented or ungrammatical speech would have to find other positions in their school or a different job (Jordan, 2010).

Letters of protest were sent to the Arizona Department of Education by the University of Arizona Linguistics department, as well as the English language teacher professional association TESOL:

For decades the field of English language teaching has suffered from the myth that one only needs to be a native English speaker in order to teach the English language. The myth further implicates that native English speakers make better English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers than nonnative English speakers because native English speakers are perceived to speak “unaccented” English and understand and use idiomatic expressions fluently. The distinction between native and nonnative speakers of English presents an oversimplified, either/or classification system that is not only misleading, but also ignores the formal education, linguistic expertise, teaching experience, and professional preparation of educators in the field of English language teaching. (TESOL International Association, 2010)

The Writing on the Wall

Are there seeds of hate or even genocide planted in Arizona? If we apply Harf and Gurr’s schema (as summarized in Table 2), comparing Arizona’s anti-immigrant wave to that of pre-genocide Rwanda, we have plenty to worry about. We can understand that the policies levied by the state leadership mirror that of pre-1994 Rwanda in far too many ways, particularly when summarizing both histories within a scope of Harff and Gurr’s early warnings of humanitarian emergencies. Of the seven criteria Harff and Gurr note regarding Rwanda, five seemingly apply to Arizona. In other words, there may indeed be enough for us to call current Arizona conditions a humanitarian emergency.
**Table 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warnings</th>
<th>Resemblance</th>
<th>1986 Coffee crash blamed on Tutsis</th>
<th>2008 Housing crisis blamed on undocumented immigrants</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life integrity violations by government or government-supported groups against targeted groups</td>
<td>Economic downturn</td>
<td></td>
<td>SB 1070</td>
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<td>Segregation laws</td>
<td>Ubwoko identification cards</td>
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<td>Inability to detect genetic differences between the OKs and the not-OKs</td>
<td>Measurements of noses and height lead officials to judge differing tribes within families</td>
<td>“Do I look illegal?” controversy</td>
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<td>Abject disrespect for the education of all children</td>
<td>Iringaniza policy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Proposition 203</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Prohibition of Mexican-American Studies program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical or verbal clashes between regime (or regime supporters) and targeted groups</td>
<td>Media-based vitriol</td>
<td>Kangura</td>
<td>Against Amnesty</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Peace narratives</td>
<td>RTLM</td>
<td>David Levine Show</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allusions to parasites</td>
<td>Inyenzi or cockroaches</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rise to fame via racism</td>
<td>Hassan Ngeze</td>
<td>Joseph Arpaio</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza</td>
<td>Russell Pearce</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bull Connor: “I’ve never seen anyone look for trouble who wasn’t able to find it.”</td>
<td>Valerie Bemeriki: “All the people who were killed in the country are the victims of the RPF. It is the Inyenzi-Inkotanyi who killed them and nobody else.”</td>
<td>Kris Kolbach</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tom Horne: “And as you can see, they’re dressed up as revolutionaries with berets, sunglasses, masks, brown shirts.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive posturing or actions by opposition groups</td>
<td>English language as one end of a linguistic tug-of-war</td>
<td>François Mitterand: The RPF invasion is an Anglophone plot to create Tutsiland.</td>
<td>Margaret Dugan: “Our job is to make sure the teachers are highly qualified in fluency of the English language. We know districts that have a fluency problem.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase in size of or degree of cohesion in opposition groups</td>
<td>Neglect on the part of government to issue criticism of splinter militant groups</td>
<td>Interahamwe</td>
<td>Cochise County militia</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Impuzamugambi</td>
<td>American Patrol</td>
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<tr>
<td>Threats of external support from</td>
<td>Paul Rusesabagina</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mexican-American</td>
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<td>involvement against governing elites</td>
<td>sympathetic individuals</td>
<td>Fautsins Rocogoza Vianney Higiro Joseph Matata</td>
<td>Studies students TESOL community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Troops sent</td>
<td>United Nations send in blue caps to monitor situation and establish new government in 1993</td>
<td>President Obama sends 1200 National Guard troops Was accomplished at the request of Arizona leadership.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

6. Increase in external support for politically active groups

| Outside exertion | United Nations established peace talks in Arusha, Tanzania | Perhaps not yet applicable, in spite of Mexican president Félix Calderón comments against SB 1070. |

7. Occurrence of violent opposition by kindred groups in neighboring countries.

| Invasions from neighboring countries | RPF invades from Uganda | Not applicable; however, several suggest that an invasion from Mexico is possible and in many respects already occurring. |

As one examines how a state may achieve genocide, one sees that it must strip away a community’s humanity and political rights. If left unchecked, it may then strip away actual lives. In many countries, a democratic tendency may diffuse power to several political entities rather than just one, thereby preventing a national genocide policy. Furthermore, the more diverse the communities, the harder it is to demonize a single group. Such may be Arizona’s systematic saving grace that has prevented bloodshed in light of such abundant hatred. Pre-genocide Rwanda, with its single political party and its focus on one community, had no such preventative structure.

There seems, however, to be enough hatred initiated through Arizona leadership to suggest that Grunfield and Huijboom’s notion of early action would not actually be too early. In other words, not to act now could be construed as bystanding.

Therefore, we actually have an immediate role to play. We may take our motivation from youthful sources and their mentors: the massacred girls at the Gisenyi boarding school and the Tucson High students who zip-tied themselves to school district chairs. As established by the letters offered to Arizona’s Department of Education by linguistics professionals, many teachers in Arizona support their students, documented or undocumented, standing resolutely upon the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which reserves Article 26 exclusively for education as a human right. They too advocate in an ongoing committed fashion, much as successful colleagues have before (Díaz-Rico et al, 2009), by advancing ethnic studies curricula and materials, marching, petitioning, blogging, connecting with political organizations, collaborating with community officers, donating, and working with numerous members of the media—and doing so multilingually.

Still, our advocacy may be thin. My Education community offers mostly technical arguments for maintaining bilingualism, multiculturalism, and immigration: long-term benefits to the brain, critical thinking, academic prowess, and participation in the global economy (Agirdag, 2014; Bialystok, 2001; Goldenberg & Wagner, 2015; Xu et al, 2015). By doing so, as Bartolomé (2006) scoldingly reminds us, we

Forget that our work with linguistic minority students—most of whom are poor and nonwhite—is political work and not purely a pedagogical undertaking. We [forget] this
fact when we [advocate] for bilingual education as a technical issue and [defend] it using arguments based on research findings and statistics designed to disarticulate politics from education. Fundamentally, our arguments in defense of linguistic minority students should point to (1) the ideological nature of education that produces (2) the psychological violence that (3) fractures cultural and linguistic identities. (p. 31)

Are we doing “everything we can?” Idling leaves us only as bystanders, leaving Beth’s students and my Rwandan colleagues vulnerable as they address their own challenges. After all, the experiences relayed here have less to do with pedagogical and economic development than with ripping apart families and demeaning them should they refuse to be, as Bartolomé suggests, domesticated. Indeed, we must wonder if our lack of direct comment, cloaked in academic rhetoric, ends up being an inadvertent silent endorsement of cockroaching students. Instead, we are obliged to cry out that pre-genocidal behavior is expanding, well beyond Arizona’s border. With the election of Donald Trump, who touts participants in the Arizona story as contributors (Tashman, 2016; Viebeck, 2016), these resemblances are palpable, as Bill Maher (2016) observes:

You’ve gotten to this point where like Rwanda was in the ‘90s, where the other is such vermin, like Hitler called the Jews and the Slavs, that when you take power, you’re doing God’s work by eliminating your enemies. That’s where we are.

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Aesthetic Movements of a Social Imagination: Refusing Stasis and Educating Relationally/Critically/Responsibly

Kelly W. Guyotte, University of Alabama

Abstract

Maxine Greene centered the arts as important sites for cultivating a more relational and ethical means of educating students. Advocating for an aesthetic pedagogy, Greene conceived of aesthetics as a philosophy that studies artistic making, perception, and affect as a means of understanding experiences, and the meaning of those experiences as connecting (and awakening) individuals to/with the world. In this philosophical work, I posit Greene’s concept of the social imagination as both a call for action in education and as an artful and aesthetic movement—a doing. Grounded in Greene’s aesthetic pedagogy and the social imagination, this article explores how encounters with and through the arts can nurture more relational, critical, and socially responsible education. Within and inspired by questions of relationality, criticality, and responsibility, examples from the visual arts are discussed. I argue that the arts create openings for encountering contemporary socio-political complexities that oppress and persist. The arts also provoke us to move—a type of aesthetic activism is borne.

Keywords: social imagination; aesthetics; social justice; visual arts; Maxine Greene

In Releasing the Imagination, Maxine Greene (1995) centered the arts as important sites for cultivating a more relational and ethical means of educating students. Advocating for an aesthetic pedagogy, Greene (2007) conceived of aesthetics as a philosophy that studies artistic making, perception, and affect as a means of understanding experiences and the meaning of those experiences as connecting (and awakening) individuals to/with the world. Through an aesthetic pedagogy, Greene described the social imagination as a re-envisioning of social realities, considering what might be different and how individuals might become different through encounters with various “Others.” It is not enough for individuals to critically engage with the deficiencies in their social world; instead, they must use imaginative capacities to move toward action by bringing ethical

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 2016 Southeastern Philosophy of Education Society Annual Meeting.

2. In this article, I use the term arts in the plural designating all the fine arts. While many of my examples focus on the visual arts due to my background in this area, it is important to note the plurality of the arts and the potential in music, dance, performance, and any combination thereof to inspire aesthetic movement. It is my hope that others will consider and respond to the questions of relationality, criticality, and responsibility with other examples of educative encounters from diverse artistic genres.
concerns to the forefront, by resisting what she called “social paralysis” (p. 35). Thus, adopting a heightened state of consciousness, or wide-awakeness (and cultivating this in students), allows individuals to become aware of themselves as social-ethical beings who live in relation to others. The social imagination is more than imagination and more than intent, as Greene pointed out it “requires a wide-awakeness into action” (2010, p. 1). From an educational perspective, this active wide-awakeness requires a refusal of passivity or stasis and, instead, requires that teachers and learners actively disrupt centralizing structures that are often undetected (invisible through hegemony) yet perpetuate problematic ways of thinking, being, and becoming in the classroom and in the world. The social imagination requires teachers and students to move.

Since Maxine Greene’s passing, I have been moved to revisit her writings on education, aesthetic education, and the role of the social imagination. As a former high school visual arts educator turned qualitative researcher/professor, my first encounters with Greene’s work came in my doctoral studies when I engaged with her book, Releasing the Imagination. It was the blurring of her social justice orientation with a valuing of the role the arts in education that stirred my pedagogical imagination, giving me a renewed hope that juxtaposed apathetic feelings that drove me out of the public school classroom as a teacher and back into the postsecondary classroom as a learner. More recently, Greene’s words continue resonate through a post-election climate of hate-filled rhetoric and racial division, and I continue to wonder how educators have and will respond. I incessantly (re)turn to Greene. Each engagement with her work stirs the artist, the social justice advocate, the optimist within, and I find myself thinking that there is so much Greene (and the arts) offer when it comes to nurturing a more postmodern, relational, critical, and responsible approach to education, made possible through an imperfect world.

In this philosophical work, I posit Greene’s concept of the social imagination as both a call for action in education and as an artful and aesthetic movement—a doing. Grounded in Greene’s notion of aesthetic pedagogy and her conception of the social imagination, I explore how encounters with and through the arts can nurture more relational, critical, and socially responsible education, working through three interrelated inquiries. First, a question of relationality: How might arts and the social imagination inspire wide-awakeness to Others? Second, a question of criticality: How can we extend the imagination’s purpose as Greene stated “not to resolve” but “to awaken, to disclose the ordinarily unseen, unheard, and unexperienced” (1995, p. 28)? And finally, a broader question of responsibility: How might we artfully rethink education to break the habits of stasis?

Within and inspired by each of these questions of relationality, criticality, and responsibility, I bring forth and analyze different visual artists and their work that create pedagogical possibilities for social aesthetic movements. Working through these questions and examples, I argue that the arts create openings for encountering the challenges and complexities within social and political issues that oppress and persist. They also provoke us to move—a type of aesthetic activism is borne.

Before engaging with these questions, I begin with an unpacking of the social imagination.

The Social Imagination

My interest in coping with diversity and striving toward significant inclusion derives to a large degree from an awareness of the savagery, the brutal marginalizations, the structured silences, the imposed invisibility so present all around. -Maxine Greene (1993, p. 211)
As an educational philosopher and advocate for the arts, Greene ardently wrote about freedom (1988), social justice (1995; 1993), and the role of the imagination in aesthetic education (2001; 1995). Greene defined the social imagination as “the capacity to invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficient society, on the streets where we live, in our schools” (1995, p. 5). To begin with the social imagination is to acknowledge the shortcomings, the dead-ends, the limitations in both the educational system and the societal structures that organize our daily lives. These limitations are not intended to cause paralysis by critique; however, they operate to help individuals envision what might become and why such a becoming is desirable, even necessary. In seeing the social world as a space of possibility for movement, rather than as a static entity, the social imagination is always already at work.

Connected to the social imagination, Greene advocated for the arts as a catalyst for nudging learners toward a more relationally imaginative way of being—a being that is part of, not simply in, the world. This notion of of-ness is a helpful way to understand the social imagination as it speaks to both a process of becoming social beings as well as an emphasis on relationality. Greene envisioned that “one’s ‘reality,’ rather than being fixed and predefined, is a perpetual emergent, becoming increasingly multiplex, as more perspectives are taken, more texts are opened, more friendships are made” (Greene 1988, p. 23). While Greene often referenced the “subjective in-between” (1995, p. 70) that connects humans, she also wrote often of the arts (as process and product) as connective spaces through which individuals might pursue new possibilities and alternatives toward a more ardently just world. The arts, then, create different ways of engaging with our social reality, fostering an interconnectedness between humans through art.

With the potential power the arts yield, it is important to consider the ethics of a social imagination, particularly in education. Greene (2011; 2005) was a staunch believer in the need to educate and equip young minds to question, critique, and become open to new possibilities. Through an aesthetic education, she believed teachers can expose learners to various languages and artistic texts (visual and verbal) from diverse perspectives that demonstrate our social world as more than hierarchical and more than one-dimensional—both of which are detrimental in the perpetuation of injustices. Instead, the social imagination operates in a world that embraces and values multiplicity and plurality. Through this lens, Greene addressed the challenges in attending to the diverse groups of students who may or may not feel empowered to speak up, much less willing to envision a different way of being in the world. There is certainly a danger that resides in this opening, an opening that has no definite form but that is always being realized. What will it mean for students who have never imagined alternative possibilities to suddenly believe in other realities that might be pursued/attained? What does opening possibilities do? What might the repercussions for social action be across various racial/ethnic/class lines? Questions like these point to the potential ethical considerations that resonate with a social imagination, both with the potential for positive and/or negative consequences. Thus, a certain responsibility emerges for the socially imaginative educator.

On the more optimistic side of the ethics dialogue, Greene’s focus on empowerment is certainly consistent with a critical pedagogy and social justice agenda. The social imagination should bring forth a heightened social consciousness, or wide-awareness, that helps students “find their own voices…find their eyes and ears” (Greene 2001, p. 11). Similar to Freire’s notion of conscientization, wide-awareness is not just an awakening but it takes on a critical consciousness through actively inquiring into and interrogating various realities and truths (Moon et al., 2013). Even as Greene explained wide-awareness as finding one’s voice, eyes, and ears, this type of consciousness does not lie dormant in individuals waiting to be discovered. Instead, it is through
an aesthetic pedagogy that educators might cultivate a different way of engaging in and with the world, as well as to create opportunities for voice, seeing, and hearing to resound on new frequencies. Such frequencies are inherently relational and connective to Others, and to the world. The social imagination, then, is an affective means of engaging in and with the world where “self-reflection and critical consideration can be as liberating as they are educative” (Greene 2002, p. 22). Is through connecting—with Others, with art, with possibilities—that aesthetic education becomes a productive and emancipatory search. For Greene, the arts have the potential to provoke, inspire, and, most of all, to move.

With this basis of Greene’s social imagination in place, I now turn to the three questions. To begin…

**A Question of Relationality**

In considering the implications of the social imagination, the first question takes up the notion of the other and how we might use the arts to inspire a wide-awakeness to the Others in our social world. The process of othering (Spivak 1985) is often perceived as a negative action, one that emphasizes difference often leading to racialized stigma, denigration, silencing, and inequities. Through Greene’s conception of the social imagination, however, coming to know the Other should be understood otherwise: not as one focused on difference as separation but one of difference as visibility. She proclaimed a need for educators to resist “the blurring over of differences” (1993, p. 219) and a concomitant need to address the silencing that occurs in many educational spaces. A current example can be seen in the pervasive comments of “I don’t see color” or proclamations of “All lives matter” (rather than the recent social justice movement focused on valuing minoritized Black lives). These assertions point to the problems in collapsing bodily boundaries, where such collapsing actually reinforces oppressive normative and hegemonic structures. In other words, the unwillingness to see color or to acknowledge the systemic issues of racial violence and oppression, fold such underrepresented groups into the majority, rendering them, once again, invisible. A certain unproductive refusal emerges in this movement of blurring or collapsing. When one refuses to acknowledge difference, the majority subsumes the minority and voices that need to be heard are silenced.

Another perspective addresses the need to move toward a different idea of community, not community in the singular, but as encompassing plurality and difference (Todd 2004). How, then, do we conceptualize community differently yet still relationally? Here emerges a radical rethinking of self not simply in terms of “who am I?” but “who am I in relation to Others?” (Todd 2004) and, even more importantly, “who am I becoming as I encounter difference?” Certainly, the society, streets, and schools of which Greene (1995) spoke in terms of the social imagination become critical spaces for encountering other bodies and where possibilities for difference must be realized, named, and brought forth in dialogue.

Greene (1995) often emphasized the importance of dialogue as critical for the social imagination. Dialogue, she asserted, creates spaces for individuals to come together and also creates the potential for collective action. Not only should individuals come to know themselves, to take responsibility for our place in the world, but they should “feel themselves part of the dance of life” (p. 72). Here, she recalls Henri Matisse’s famous image of circling-connecting-moving figures immersed in an intimate yet collective dance. The dance of life, then, refers to the plurality of the human condition (Arendt, 1958) where difference is necessary for community, even as one questions what community means and the ideals it may perpetuate. In this sense, the dance also requires
a perspective of multiplicity in our conceptions of community—where communities, just as identities, are many, nebulous, and evolving. The imagination, then, becomes an inherently social process of envisioning how relationality and community might come together in difference, and the possibilities therein.

In considering the social imagination as relational, I turn to what Nicolas Bourriaud (2002) termed relational aesthetics. Traditionally, the creation of art is often regarded as an insular process—the artist works in the studio, the art is exhibited, individuals view the art in public or private spaces then (often) leave with their respective experience of aesthetic interaction. Relational aesthetics, on the other hand, re/envisions the purpose of art as participatory, a social practice, an incitement of dialogue between artist and audience, and as Bourriaud concisely asserted it is “a state of encounter” (p. 18). In other words, relational aesthetics explores art as a complex and multilayered practice entangled in interconnected social-political-ethical-economic spheres. Thus, art as a relational practice is never as straightforward as concept and creation and is never as insular as initially conceived. Through a relational aesthetics, art is more than mere product, but it moves to fulfill the potential of creating social interstices, a term Bourriaud borrowed from Marx. These interstices or in-between spaces where differences meet are the relational webs (Arendt 1958) that connect individuals to other bodies and, to be sure, the openings that nudge individuals toward possibilities of different realities—toward a social imagination.

Moving into the social interstices is critically important in shifting the act of othering from erasing and silencing to making visible, dialoguing, and imagining. This is where encounters happen, and this is where encounters of difference might stimulate and provoke the social imagination. As consistent with Bourriaud’s notion of relational aesthetics, Greene viewed the arts as more than passive creations or performances but as connective, ever-performing, and even vibrant bodies (Bennett 2010) that engage and pulse with their own aesthetic agency and energy. Greene (1993) explained, “I believe that encounters with the arts awaken us to alternative possibilities of existing, of being human, of relating to others, of being other…” (p. 214). Artful encounters run rampant in Greene’s work as she often spoke of how text, music, and image cultivated aesthetic experiences (Dewey 1934) that affected her and caused her to engage differently with the Others of the world. To be sure, the social interstices that Bourriaud discussed facilitate the very encounters that Greene values in aesthetic education, creating possibilities for encounters in and out of the classroom.

Shifting possibilities for aesthetic encounters out of the classroom, bring forth an important aspect of Bourriaud’s work. Relational aesthetics does not happen in the bounded spaces of the gallery or museums, but happens in and of the word. What might happen if students from any discipline are asked to engage aesthetically in their worlds, becoming of the world? Examples of Bourriaud’s relational aesthetics might be embodied most effectively in the work of contemporary artist, JR. JR claims to use the largest gallery in the world (JR) as he moves his work outside of gallery walls and often to the walls that comprise the skylines of cities throughout the globe. According to his website:

JR creates "Pervasive Art" that spreads uninvited on the buildings of the slums around Paris, on the walls in the Middle-East, on the broken bridges in Africa or the favelas in Brazil. People who often live with the bare minimum discover something absolutely unnecessary. And they don't just see it, they make it. Some elderly women become models for a day; some kids turn artists for a week. In that Art scene, there is no stage to separate the actors from the spectators. (JR, para 10)
His work blends a social purpose and a material aesthetic, where portraits of everyday people are made public to invoke dialogue about social issues such as immigration, gender, politics, voice, and age. Thus, JR flattens the hierarchies between high art and low art, art consumers and citizens, galleries and streets, while also creating social interstices in the cities of original exhibition to the cities where his work travels, places like London, New York, or Berlin. In making the art mobile, JR brings the portraits of Others into new spaces, creating new connections with non-local audiences, and cultivating encounters with a variety of social issues that pervade and plague our world. Through making the ordinarily invisible, visible, JR inspires a social imagination that connects and awakens.

Bourriaud’s notion of relational aesthetics provides one such frame for the social possibilities in art while JR’s activist street art serves as a tangible example of how this concept emerges in practice. JR’s art inspires a social imagination that connects the materiality of people, places, spaces, and affects, moving to productive interstitial social, political, and aesthetic educative spaces. To be sure, educators can do much to cultivate the relational side of the social imagination by using work like JR’s to inspire dialogue or by creating opportunities for students to be activists in their own communities through the arts—visual or otherwise. The power of the arts to affect also creates possibilities for change—in behavior, in thinking—that mobilize bodies toward critical action.

A Question of Criticality

Moving from the relational, I now take on the second question of criticality asking how we can conceive of the imagination’s purpose as Greene states not to resolve, but to awaken. To begin, it is worth acknowledging current conversations on the critical. Some have pointed to the increasing use of the term leading to a decreasing impact of what it means to be critical: everyone and everything is critical (e.g., Kuntz, 2015). In framing criticality, I look to the arts, drawing inspiration from the visual art’s notion of the critique. The artist’s critique is often situated within a studio space, where individuals (the artist and other artists or, in an educational setting, classmates/teachers) consider the artwork conceptually, aesthetically, and even socio-politically through dialogue. Though many understand the critique as simply a focus on negative perceptions of the artwork, it is intended to incite vibrant and constructive dialogues between and among the artwork, the artist, and the viewer. The critique is productively critical. As such, critique resembles what Kuntz (2015) described in relation to research methodology, “more than to simply offer criticism; it is to make newly possible, to expose cracks and interstices that otherwise escape processes of meaning-making so that we might live differently.” It has the potential of being “endlessly optimistic” (p. 26).

Through a lens of optimistic criticality that moves toward difference, we turn back to Greene (1995) who explored the notion of social critique by explicitly taking up the problematics of stasis and the potential in transformation. She wrote,

Social critique…entails an ongoing effort to overcome false consciousness by rejecting an absolute and static view of reality and its resulting subject-object separation. […] It involves the creation of new interpretive orders as human beings come together not only to “name” but to change or to transform their intersubjective worlds. (p. 61)

Here, Greene (1995) again emphasized her pluralist and postmodern vision of the social world—one that is fluid and changeable, one that is relational, one that holds the possibility for change. As
she elaborated, the productive nature of critique emerged again as she yearned for the envisioning of new social possibilities as becoming a normative “attitude of mind” (p. 61). Such optimistic social critique should not be imposed from a disconnected outsider but must come from within, Greene asserted. It must also come from a place of solidarity with a goal of emancipation.

To emancipate through the social imagination is for both teachers and learners to be equipped with the capacity for criticality and wide-awareness so that they might choose to move toward collective action. As Greene (1995) explained,

> We should think of education as opening public spaces in which students, speaking in their own voice and acting on their own initiatives, can identify themselves and choose themselves in relation to such principles as freedom, equality, justice, and concern for others. (p. 68)

Here, opportunities for resistance emerge as individuals are nudged to consider themselves, their becoming, as the cultivation of a social imagination also assumes social empowerment.

As educators seek to emancipate through social critique, they might think of a question posed by bell hooks: How can we transgress and make our “teaching practices a site of resistance?” (1994, p. 21). Here, I envision resistance as affirmative, as productive. To move in this way is to awaken to the possibilities brought forth by the social imagination, to expose the cracks, and to create opportunities for learners to consider the shortfalls and inequities that persist. It is not a matter of finding commonality in shared vulnerability and dissent. It is not a return to “simpler times” through nostalgic reflection. It is, instead, a need to consider social issues as intricately entangled in a complex web of social-political-ethical structures as individuals, together, move productively toward difference.

An example of the complexity of this dialogue emerges in the artist Fred Wilson’s installations/interventions, *Mining the Museum* (1992-1993) and, more recently, *Wildfire Test Pit* (2016). Both of these works speak to a lingering tension in contemporary society—that of how we come to see, frame, confront, and dialogue about issues of race and memory. For the earlier work, *Mining the Museum*, Wilson scoured the collection, archives, and storage of the Maryland Historical Society and pieced together a provocative social statement on the social-political-ethical power that objects hold. He presented his object-findings in the Historical Society’s galleries initiating a dialogue on race with all attendees (Wilson and Halle, 2003).

In the galleries, Wilson’s installation juxtaposed startling arrangements in the gallery rooms. One room housed the marble busts of Henry Clay, Napoleon Bonaparte, and Andrew Jackson on sturdy classical stone pedestals. Adjacent to these busts sat three dark in color yet empty pedestals simply containing labels with the names “Benjamin Banneker,” “Harriett Tubman,” and “Frederick Douglass.” Situated in the middle of the arrangements of three sat a trophy, the “Truth Trophy” awarded for truth in advertising. The irony sets in when the viewer realized the three busts represent white men not affiliated with the state of Maryland while three prominent African American figures who lived in Maryland are glaringly absent from the Historical Society’s archives. In this work, Wilson played with questions surrounding the visibility and invisibility of race—how can we question what we do not see?—and notions of the ownership of truth—what is visible becomes our historical “truth.” Another room named “Modes of Transport” provoked viewer when, inside a circa 1880 baby carriage, they find a Ku Klux Klan hood peering out where a baby ought to be lying. Here, viewers might be brought to consider the legacy of hate, passed from one generation to another. Yet another room contained infamous Native American cigar store statues,
labeled with the names of those who commissioned them, standing with their backs to the viewer. Upon closer inspection, the statues are found to be investigating photographs depicting actual Native Americans in non-stereotypical clothing, poses, and places. Again and again, in each room Wilson curated, the viewer is provoked to pause and consider the racial narratives heard and seen, as well as those that are neither (Talbot, 2013).

In his more recent intervention at the Allen Memorial Art Museum at Oberlin College, Wilson, again, mined the museum’s collection and created subtle juxtapositions with marble sculptures and busts alongside traditional African art. The intervention *Wildfire Test Pit* continues Wilson’s interest in challenging the dominant narratives that run rampant, though largely undetected, in these institutions by specifically playing with the contrast of white marble or plaster cast bodies alongside black (and brown) figural sculptures and masks made from wood or dark plaster casts. There emerges an interesting dialogue as the bodies are not White or Black racialized bodies, but they are bodies that evoke contrast through their color palette as well as their cultural origins. Sharp (2017) explained,

The physical interjection of black bodies into a space occupied by white bodies is extremely pointed. In *Wildfire Test Pit*, black bodies are given central placement, sometimes literally dividing broken white bodies or using crumbling plaster casts as a kind of scenery. In the darkest corner of the gallery—darkest in terms of material, racial, and lighting connotations—black heads are rendered in paintings and mounted on stands, while one lone white head lies discarded on the floor, decapitated. (para 3)

Here, Wilson disrupts, challenges, and critiques a dominant narrative by playing with the placement of bodies that were not created as racialized but become symbols of racialization through their color (dark bodies become Black bodies and light bodies become White bodies). Wilson, using familiar classical European sculptures alongside stylized African sculptures, causes the viewer to pause as they consider the presence/absence of color, the difference of human form, and the historical and racial significance of the body (and different bodies) throughout time.

With these two examples in mind, presence/absence becomes an important and provocative theme in Wilson’s critical intervention work. Greene (1988) frames provocation as an optimistic and productive action. To provoke is to encourage individuals to “reach beyond themselves in their intersubjective space” (p. 12). It is an action that incites movement or the potential for movement as students envision what is possible (what is not, what is not yet) in their social becomings. In Wilson’s work, viewers are provoked to consider the multiple layers of social, historical, political, and ethical considerations, to challenge assumptions, to consider this installation as a site of affirmative resistance. Certainly, this form of resistance is an optimistic movement toward critique as action (one that may or may not be overly optimistic given the power of images that pervade contemporary life). However, Wilson’s statement might be considered through the lens of provocation-as-process. Rather than to resolve, stultify, to cease—an inherently counter-productive movement of critique—the goal is to act, to strive toward Greene’s concept of wide-awakeness. To become critical educators and to provoke a desire for criticality in learners, opportunities should be created for new possibilities toward collective action and optimistic social critique. This can and should happen at all stages of education, from elementary to postsecondary, for, as Greene (1995) asserted, quests toward the social imagination are never finished. The arts, like Wilson’s aesthetic provocations, might serve as an effective means of sparking critical dialogue
that moves beyond the superficial, beyond the confines of the classroom and into the complexity of social interstices.

A Question of Responsibility

In exploring the final question of responsibility—how might we artfully rethink education to break the habits of stasis?—I first consider how the relational and the critical might dialogue with our social responsibilities. The social imagination encompasses Greene’s notion of wide-awakeness as a heightened socio-ethical and pedagogical consciousness. According to Greene (1995), wide-awakeness is “an awareness of what it means to be in the world” (p. 35). As mentioned above, the social imagination can also be conceptualized as an awareness of what it means to be of the world—perceiving the self as an entangled in a myriad of living and nonliving bodies. Inherent here is a need for responsibility. Through becoming wide-awake, one begins to grasp an interconnectivity with these other bodies. There is an envisioning of the need to assume responsibility even through refusal and resistance. Thus, we have a responsibility because we are of the world.

What does this responsibility mean for education, what does it do? Here we must of think of responsibility as a process of becoming different where we allow it to also enact on us. Greene (1988) posited, “a teacher in search of his/her own freedom may be the only kind of teacher who can arouse young persons to go in search of their own” (p. 14). Teachers must become open to disruption, become as hooks (1994) promoted a self-actualized risk taker, possessing a willingness to put oneself in the vulnerable positions we ask of our students. Releasing the imagination is, after all, a risky endeavor. One fall semester, I took a risk and led my introductory graduate-level qualitative inquiry class in an encounter with Norman Rockwell’s (1964) painting “The Problem We All Live With.” What do you see? They were asked. The artwork is quite different from the nostalgic American scenes Rockwell was famous for painting. Instead, the canvas depicts six-year old Ruby Bridges being escorted to a desegregated school past a wall with the graffiti of a racial slur, the scribbled letters “KKK,” and fresh red stains of smashed tomatoes splattered a few steps behind her. Her crisp white dress, socks, and shoes are surprisingly unscathed from the red fruit and they stand out against her dark hair and complexion. Further juxtaposing the short stature of Ruby Bridges are the tall light-skinned yet faceless U.S. Marshalls (heads cut off by the top of the canvas), each body mid-step, inching forward. Ruby is situated in the front left of the composition, clutching books, a ruler, and pencils as she, too, moves.

This image moves me and, in the dark basement classroom, I feel a responsibility to engage with this painting in all its discomfort. As a White woman, I will always engage differently with this imagery than those who have been Othered through lived racism and exclusion. In this space, I begin to realize that my discomfort is actually privilege because I experience issues of race and injustice through paintings, not through daily life. I am, again, uncomfortable. Coincidentally, while I was writing this article, a cartoon version of the artwork popped into my social media feed that gave me a very different sense of discomfort. In place of Ruby Bridges, the political cartoonist Glen McCoy (2017) depicted United States Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos wearing a blue dress. She, like Ruby, is mid-step, in an almost identical posture, carrying a black notebook that reads “DeVos” in white script while the words “NEA” and “CONSERVATIVE” are scrawled as graffiti on the wall behind her. Just like in Rockwell’s painting, a tomato is splattered on the wall, and tall headless figures walk protectively in front and behind her. If these visuals we encounter in our daily lives are simply disregarded, if we, as educators, neglect to engage with the power of
aesthetic pedagogy, we might glance and move on; however, the meaning of this image is entirely too disturbing to dismiss. Indeed, we have a responsibility to confront and interrogate what McCoy has put forth.

What I see in McCoy’s image is a miniaturized adult White billionaire replacing the youthful Black body of Ruby Bridges. What I see is DeVos being ushered toward her newly elected position, past what can only be interpreted as the tumultuousness of her confirmation hearings and the public backlash of her nomination. This, instead of Ruby Bridges being escorted, for her safety, to a newly integrated public school in New Orleans where unseen White bodies are hurling tomatoes as well as racist slurs. What I see on the wall are the evils of the National Education Association (NEA) and liberalism as comparable and in place of the KKK and racism. What I see is a privileged White woman whose struggle is being compared to that of Ruby Bridges and others who broke through the segregation barrier in our schools and beyond. What I see is alarming.

The final question continues to pulse: How might we artfully rethink education to break the habits of stasis? To me, McCoy’s cartoon speaks to the dangers of stasis. In the cartoon image, two female figures are thoughtlessly transposed by the artist, their struggles are irresponsibly conflated, and McCoy’s message is troubling at best. The problem we all live with is not only racism or integration—it is the irresponsibility of not being of the world. Todd (2004) explained that what social justice education might strive toward is a type of responsible togetherness that is rooted in pedagogical ignorance. According to Todd, ignorance is not simply a lack of knowledge but an awareness that “knowledge alone cannot solve the issue of living well and responsibly together” (p. 349). What happens, then, when this type of ignorance is embraced as opposed to the perceived ignorance represented by McCoy? When privileges are interrogated? When the discomfort evoked (and provoked) through social media feeds cause pause and contemplation? Our responsibility in education should prod us to confront normativity and stasis, to inquire into what Greene calls the taken-for-granted, to confront knowing and being as inherently political and ethical, to teach through our ignorance. We, as educators, might do our best work by not only dealing with images and texts of social justice, but by confronting and interrogating those that speak of social injustice. This is our responsibility.

Conclusion: Inspiring Movement

It should be clear that the relational, critical, and responsible questions surrounding the aesthetics of a social imagination cannot be easily distinguished—they are interconnected and entangled. As I conclude, I pause to consider how those at various levels of education might move in (or within and between) the spaces of arts encounters. It is worth noting the largely marginalized role the arts often assume in education (Greene, 1995); however, as I have argued in this paper, there is much potential in looking to the arts to inspire pedagogical practice (and even policy) in education that values social justice. Each of the examples of artists and artworks brought forth above are a mere selection of countless examples from the visual arts that might serve as catalysts or conduits for confronting complex social issues. Those in education might consider using images like these to start (age appropriate) dialogue about what has happened and is happening in our world. In a different way, they might look to the ways in which artists work with and through the layers, contradictions, ambiguities, and subtleties and find ways to incorporate such a nuanced practice into their own pedagogies. To be sure, Maxine Greene’s writings on the arts over the past two decades still provide a helpful lens through which we, in education, might consider questions

Advocated by Greene and reasserted throughout this paper, the arts carry tremendous potential as we move toward inspiring a social imagination in our students and in educational practice. It is not simply about creating opportunities for individuals to engage in artmaking and with the art of others (though I do find tremendous value in these acts), but there is much to be gained from simply approaching education with an attentiveness to aesthetics and the movements of an aesthetic education—the doing. Artists do. Artists tune-in to complexities of experience. Artists often become both aesthetic and social activists. Being in education, we can draw inspiration from artists like those brought forth above and we can seek ways to activate our teaching (and education) toward social justice. Greene (1988) explained, “To undertake a search is, of course, to take an initiative, to refuse stasis and the flatness of ordinary life” (p. 122). It is not enough to seek openings for change, we must create them. It is not enough to find fault in the structure, we must become otherwise and encourage students to do the same, though differently and meaningfully. Alongside Greene I want to encourage a refusal of stasis, of mere compliance, and, instead, promote an aesthetic pedagogy that embraces more socially imaginative ways of educating. Hard work lies ahead, but to begin, we must refuse. To refuse, we must move.

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Abstract

This review of Intersectional Pedagogy: Complicating Identity and Social Justice (2017) discusses how Kim A. Case’s edited volume mobilizes knowledge about incorporating intersectional approaches in a range of classroom contexts. This book powerfully demonstrates how intersectionality can be meaningfully infused into course design in such a way that post-secondary students are empowered to understand and interrogate items including their own privilege(s), social locations, and potential social action. Each chapter uniquely provides scholarly reflection on personal understandings and valuing of intersectional theories, struggles and successes with intersectional pedagogies, and useful strategies that readers might try in their own classrooms and/or research.

Keywords: intersectional pedagogy; evidence-based pedagogy; gender; social justice; diversity; multiculturalism; inclusivity

Kim A. Case’s (2017) Intersectional pedagogy: Complicating identity and social justice is a fresh, motivating text valuable for scholars and educators alike. Organized into three sections; “Intersectional theory and foundations,” “Intersectionality and classroom applications,” and “Intersectional pedagogy for social justice,” Case successfully orchestrates a chorus of contributors who not only speak to these three foci, but also with one another’s ideas and impressions. Unlike how Case points out that teachers so often operate “in silos” (p. 15), each chapter resists attending to only its own project; contributors explicitly acknowledge the intersections existing between papers, effectively building on one another’s learning, experiences, and expertise. As a result, and as a well-edited book should, there is careful attention to drawing connections between chapters. Case leads the contributors in not only an artful unfolding of how an intersectional framework might enhance learning in different contexts, but also, provides multiple entry points and inspiration for educators to progressively reframe their practices and classrooms as well.

Elizabeth R. Cole and Case set the foundation for this validating tone in (1) the foreword by Cole and (2) the first chapter by Case. Cole first calls attention to the necessity of the collection, highlighting the limits of how intersectional feminism has been taken up when rooted in tunnel-vision-like understandings. She reminds us of intersectionality as a “mechanism” to think about socially constructed identities rather than understanding it “flat[ly]” as “merely descriptive”—“the
obvious fact that every individual simultaneously occupies multiple social locations with respect to race, gender, social class, sexuality, etc.” (p. ix). As a result, several scholars link back to the surface-value quality of such single-axis analysis (pp. 6, 28, 37, 63, 103, 112), calling for complexity and depth in intersectional work. Cole also provides a brief overview of the history of intersectionality, beginning with Crenshaw (1989) and how it has since manifested in literature and culture. She concludes that we have not arrived at a “post-intersectional moment” but rather, at a place for the potential of intersectionality, especially in the classroom, setting up nicely Case’s “case” for intersectional pedagogy in chapter one.

Buoyed by Cole, Case calls for intersectionality particularly with social justice learning. Refreshingly, she reveals past intersectional pedagogical mistakes as a starting point, admitting that in her first attempt served “as a lesson in what not to do” (p. 1). She taught from an additive perspective, keeping “social categories artificially separated” (p. 2). However, she then illuminates what a productive model might look like, with her visual aids especially capturing a compelling vision. The first, by artist Greg Kitzmiller, depicts multiple sets of overlapping circles, demonstrating different major aspects of social identity (race, ability, social class, etc.) as well as representing invisible or forgotten intersections as well (“immigrant status, global nationality, or imperialist/colonized citizenship” etc.) (p. 4). Overall, her goals are clear: to “examine how educators and learners can address issues of intersectionality in a diverse classroom” (p. 5), to provide an “intersectional pedagogy model,” “develop inclusive intersectional studies,” and “promote an [inter/multi/disciplinary] infusion of intersectional studies” (p. 8). As such, she provides: (1) a succinct overview of a model for and tenets of effective intersectional pedagogy, (2) instruction to maintain “vigilant connection[s]” (p. 10) to foundational Black intersectional scholars, (3) a warning to avoid “flattening” the framework by, for example, only considering personal marginalization, (4) discussion regarding privilege analysis and social action as integral, and (5) encouragement to form educator peer learning groups for pedagogy development.

The following chapters detail a handful of perspectives regarding intersectional theory, how it functions in classrooms, and how it might frame social justice teaching. In chapter two, Ronni Michelle Greenwood takes up the challenge to examine intersectional foundations by exploring a few disciplinary applications: nursing, social work, and psychology, punctuating her work with specific classroom applications. For instance, in investigating intersectional social work education, she suggests students might “discuss cross-cultural differences among women in agency and choice” such as the “ways context shapes Muslim women’s agency and choice to wear, or not, the hijab” (p. 33). Although scholars such as Sensoy and Marshall (2009-2010) argue that the veil in its many forms often “exclusively function[s] as the shorthand marker of women’s oppression” and warn that “the repeated circulation of the image of the veiled, sad Muslim girl reinforces the stereotype that all Muslim girls are oppressed” (p. 16), Greenwood argues that such talks could deepen students’ intersectional analysis so that they think beyond social positions to consider “time, place, and history in experiences of power, dominance and subordination” (p. 33).

In chapter three, Tugçe Kurtis and Glenn Adams importantly explore decolonial intersectionality, informed by transnational feminist perspectives; they argue such an approach has transformative potential. However, they don’t shy away from discussing critiques, such as how “mainstream approaches” can function to “neutralize its revolutionary potential” (p. 49), concluding that its most effective use is to teach about privilege, and how decolonial intersectionality “attempts to make invisible intersections visible” (p. 55). They also provide two strategies of cultural psychology analysis for application—“normalizing silence” and “denaturalizing expression-oriented rationality” (p. 52). For instance, their research suggests “an appreciation of maintenance-oriented
relationality...[that] may even be expressive of authentic personal desires and promote well being” (p. 52). Overall, their zeroing in on “lurking” (p. 56) forms of racial and colonial privilege(s) serves to reinforce major themes of foundations of intersectional theory discussed across the volume as well as uniquely explore the affordances of decolonial intersectional approaches.

Next, section two is focused on intersectionality in the classroom, beginning with Patrick R. Grzanka in chapter four. After a compelling personal anecdote, he moves into an intimate reflection at his first attempt to establish an intersectional psychology of gender course, much in the confessional spirit as displayed by Case, whom he draws from. As any teacher would appreciate, he details the difficulty with inheriting learning outcomes, designing the syllabus, and piloting lessons and coursework. For instance, he honestly addresses the tensions between teaching psychology and intersectionality. Further, he details both failed and successful strategies, such as, like Case lamented, taking an additive teaching approach versus assigning meaningful ongoing fieldwork including having students “go to a public place where a meal is occurring and...observe gender” (p. 71) “to facilitate an iterative process of consciousness-raising” (p. 70). Additionally, he reflects on feeling troubled by potential missteps. In one such moment, he states: “As a White, queer man, I find myself personally and politically troubled by any efforts to displace gender that might inadvertently obscure my own cisgender privilege” (p. 70). The chapter concludes with Grzanka advocating for pedagogies of “critical ambivalence” (pp. 76-78), and again, displays powerful personal reflection in expressing that such an approach “helps [him] resist fetishizing feminist and multicultural approaches” as “a critical ambivalence towards the structures we inherit and inhabit can help sustain the kinds of intersectionality-grounded conversation this volume encourages” (p. 78).

Returning to Case in chapter five joined by Desdamona Rios, they pair up to provide a nearly exhaustive list of ideas about how to launch a course using intersectional pedagogy while also avoiding some of the challenges detailed by both Case and Grzanka in chapters one and four. Case begins by describing the evolution of learning goals on her intersectional syllabi before launching into how intersectionality was infused throughout the course. Of particular interest are the tables of lists of course readings and resources used, helpfully providing several items educators might use if embarking on a similar intersectional pedagogical project. Admittedly, as a former high school teacher and current PhD student researcher investigating adolescent literacy, I would have liked to see the authors to discuss the potential of and possibilities for intersectional pedagogy in the K-12 system rather than focusing solely on higher education contexts. However, that said, I would argue that many of the lesson design ideas are applicable for at least upper secondary school contexts. For instance, Case’s list of resources including TED talks, blog posts, Buzzfeed videos, and so forth (pp. 92-93) are an excellent starting point for teachers of young adult students.

Nancy A. Naples examines intersectional approaches in chapter six, and how they differently provide powerful analytic lenses. She calls for feminist researchers to be explicit with their epistemologies, methods, and implications for praxis, and for feminist teachers to historicize complex intersectional approaches. Offering insights based on teaching an interdisciplinary course on theories of intersectionality, she suggests: “the most powerful approaches to intersectionality examine the ways these interactions produce contradictions and tensions across various levels of analysis and dimensions of difference with the goal of producing insights for feminist praxis” (p. 114). Like Case, Grzanka, and Rios, Naples also divulges challenges, including how her graduate students struggled to conduct intersectional research, which, as a current graduate student with a keen interest in taking this direction with my dissertation project, I found to be a valuable insight.
Chapter seven represents another return to Case, this time joined by Michelle K. Lewis, where they address approaching intersectional LGBT psychology with a racially diverse student body. The course focused on developing students’ critical thinking and reading, with the aim to promote conscientization. Like Case and Rios, Lewis also offers helpful tables of sample class activities and assignments including group readings and skits, quote and video analysis (p. 134), and sharing cultural backgrounds (p. 137). Photography and public education campaign projects especially emphasized intersectional learning and proved fruitful; one student designed a crossword puzzle to “encompass all of her intersecting identities in one powerful visual aid” (p. 139). However, Case and Lewis’s inclusion of minor, powerful details that any teacher would appreciate, such as using short poems that “can be built upon in terms of using them for teaching and critical thinking” (p. 141), are especially indicative of the usefulness and thoughtfulness of this volume.

Teaching intersectionality with a student population of primarily racial minorities, Naomi M. Hall, like Case and Lewis, and takes a culturally centered approach in chapter eight. Like several chapters, Hall also goes into detail regarding effective teaching strategies including quote analysis, reaction blogs, autobiographical diagrams, and counter storytelling. For instance, for counter storytelling, Hall thoroughly describes the three phases of the narrative process that unfolded, even reflecting, “I found that giving the students at least a week…provided sufficient time” (p. 163)—a tip any educator would appreciate when planning their program. As such, Hall contributes to a volume that provides both breadth and depth of teaching ideas across chapters.

In chapter nine, David P. Rivera marks the beginning of the final section on intersectional pedagogy on social justice. Drawing from critical race and queer theories, he delves into more “hidden,” marginalized intersections by continuing the tradition of this text to foreground his work in a personal experience of early naiveté in learning about identities. Furthermore, he asserts that such personal divulging can be a powerful teaching strategy; self-disclosures can be critical for effective modeling for students to consider privilege in their own social locations. Similarly, he also advises educators to invite students to provide ongoing feedback, so as to “strengthen the student teacher alliance, a necessary component in an effective educational process” (p. 188). Considering often-silenced intersections, he advocates for moving experiences of the oppressed to the forefront to increase visibility and reduce microaggressions. He also discusses pertinent strategies, such as being mindful of language intentionality, for example, the “unconscious practices” of consistently presenting significant terms such as “race, gender, and sexuality” in the same order, “which might imply that race deserves exploration before gender identity” (p. 180).

In chapter ten, Matthew J. Bowling and Jacquelyn Harris join Rios tackle moving past student ‘uniqueness’ in intersectional pedagogy. The four texts they incorporated into their course proved impactful, as evidenced by their students’ discussions and writing. For instance, reflection papers connected their learning from the texts to their own lives and potential social action projects and the service-learning Intersectionality Project was the “most powerful” (p. 201) of the course. However, what stands apart is the inclusion of student testimonials chronicling what elements of the course were most meaningful for them; for example, Jackie admits that she was “defensive” at first, but after discussions, she came to recognize the intragroup differences in their group of African American women (p. 204). Matthew admits he came to better understand “the unique [White, male] privileges [he] possesses and the contexts in which these are most advantageous” (p. 206). Creating space for students to speak to their experiences not only legitimizes this teaching approach, but effectively functions as a sort of “practicing what they preach”; as Cole outlined in the forward, “our students need to be about to nimbly employ an intersectional analysis to make sense
of the complexity and diversity of human experience as well as the processes that create and maintain inequality” (p. xi) and the students testimonials demonstrate evidence of this.

Finally, in the concluding chapter, Adrienne Dessel and Timothy Corvidae delve into experiential activities that social justice educators might employ, including metaphors of intersectionality, writing testimonials of social identities, and privilege fishbowls. For instance, using metaphorical thinking as a design challenge during discussions stands out as a meaningful group activity. A compelling example of this was a “playful and flexible” metaphor where a group used art to facilitate intersectional thinking, co-creating a mural of various colours and shapes that “change[d] each other as they overlapped” (p. 219). Such experiential activities are elegant in their simplicity in terms of how easily an educator could prepare materials for such a lesson, but also inspired because of how powerful the metaphorical thinking can be. Additionally, a helpful handout is provided with an overview of five such metaphors—a convenient tool any educator could take right from the book and into their teaching context as it is nearly a ready-made lesson plan.

Overall, while reading this book, I felt inspired and certainly, nostalgic for my classroom. However, as a novice researcher, I was motivated while reading, as its goals align with my own scholarly interest in bringing intersectional thinking into the classroom—specifically, in literacy and literature learning contexts. Particularly, Grzanka’s question, “What happens to intersectionality in English?” (p. 77) prompted me to connect my reading back to my teaching practices, my aspirations with my dissertation, and how I might teach literature intersectionally during my PhD. However, this book is applicable to a variety of classroom contexts, expertly demonstrated by the contributors working with an array of students in different disciplines. As such, I thoroughly believe that this volume offers clear, thoughtful, and necessarily concrete ideas about how to undertake intersectional pedagogy in such a way that educators can create transformative learning experiences.

References

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In writing *Baudrillard, Youth, and American Film: Fatal Theory and Education*, Kip Kline has performed what I see as an extraordinarily valuable service to our field. Bringing the thought of Baudrillard into the fold of educational theorizing is critical not simply as an expansion of the theoretical resources available to philosophers of education, but also because Baudrillard brings with him a much-needed critique of the way our discipline has traditionally gone about its own critical task. One of the central claims of the book is that ideological critiques of content have become outmoded and unproductive against the recent iterations of global capitalism (evidenced in Kline's discussion of critical media literacy in Chapter Four). Kline, along with Baudrillard, suggest the need for a shift to analyses on the level of form, a la McLuhan's famous contention that “the medium is the message.” This insight is long overdue in educational thinking and critique. Specifically, we all must take heed of the ways in which many of our supposed criticisms of the system are actually already built into its own code, and encouraged for purposes which ultimately support the foundational structure of the current order.

While there is much to be said about, and in praise of, Kline's detailed and thoughtful treatments of the teen films he analyzes in the book, I want here to focus on a few of the underlying theoretical points that the films are meant to illustrate. First, I wonder about precisely how to locate the problem when it comes to the various hyperreal simulations of teens that the films he analyses proffer. It seems that there are two avenues that one could take when critiquing these simulacral images. On the one hand, one might think that the problem with the depictions of teenagers in these films is that they are false, showing teenagers in a light which does not accurately or fairly
represent the way real teenagers are in the real world. There are passages in the text that might lead one to think that this is Kline's line of critique, as when he says that “It could be the case that this is what is called for in response to the simulacra of the adolescent in films that end up informing discourses about youth as really shallow, really immoral, really ineffectual” (p. 84). However, what is critical to realize here is that the emphasis in this claim is not on the shallow, immoral, and ineffectual, but on the really. Kline makes clear that his objection to the hyperreal simulations of teens as shallow, immoral, and ineffectual is not that these representations are false, since in the latter two orders of simulacra, representations cease to be truth apt at all, or at least precede their own truth or falsity. As he says, “the question of the film's relationship to reality becomes moot as we approach the fourth order of simulacra” (p. 48). For Kline, the problem with the simulations of teens in films is not that they fail to accurately represent real teenagers, but that the images which are created by those simulations lead to unfortunate and violent outcomes for actual people in the actual world. The problem, as he puts it, is that “this kind of movie does reinscribe, exacerbate, and sustain problematic discourses about youth that promote the kind of violence I have in mind here” (p. 76). Thus, when Kline laments that “it is increasingly difficult to find spaces in which teens really are political or social agents” we can assume that this is lamentable not because teens really are political or social agents, but that it would be better for them (and perhaps for us) if we understood them to be political or social agents (p. 66). I think there is a problem with this way of construing the issue as well, however. I wonder if, in casting the type of violence done to teenagers in this way, Kline hasn't run afoul of his own arguments that we must focus on forms of violence rather than the content thereof. For Kline, it seems that the problem with the hyperreal simulations of teenagers is that their content results in negative outcomes for teenagers in schools, and that the solution is that we ought to substitute the negative content for something more positive (i.e. that teens are socially and politically agentive subjects, have rich inner lives, are to be shown human and cultural respect, and so on). However, if we are true to the form over content dictum in this case, isn't it more accurate to say that the violence done by these simulations of teens doesn't consist in the fact that the teens are simulated as apathetic and disengaged, but in the fact that the teens are simulated at all? Doesn't simulating teens in a way such that we understand them as politically agentive do exactly the same type of formal or structural (as opposed to contentful) violence that simulating them in any other way whatever does? Doesn't simulating teenagers at all, even in a positive way, take away the very agency that Kline hopes to allow them? Isn't the problem with simulated identities the very fact that they are forced onto us, regardless of their content, as Kline himself eloquently argues in Chapter Five with respect to The Breakfast Club? Recall here that part of the point of The Breakfast Club is that the various identity simulations which are foisted on the characters are fundamentally the same in their structure, and hence operate by the same oppressive logic. Whether one is simulated as a nerd, jock, popular girl, or rebel, one is simulated, and that is the important thing. If this is the case, I wonder why Kline here chooses to focus on the content and outcomes of the simulations of teenagers as the source of violence, rather than their forms.

My second set of questions has to do with the picture Kline paints of what fatal resistance might look like going forward. Simply put, I want some more details on this question. Are there historical examples of this type of resistance to which we might turn for inspiration? Obviously, a large part of the Baudrillardian vision here is that the final two orders of simulacra are sui generis, without precedent in human history, so perhaps it is unreasonable for me to demand historical examples of what resistance to these developments could look like. However, if there are no historical examples, what reasons do we have for thinking that fatal resistance will work? How do we
know that hyperconformity to the system will push it to the point of inversion rather than simply push it further into hegemonic domination (if this is even possible)? That is, it seems to me that underlying the argument for fatal strategies that push the logic of current conditions until, as Kline puts it, “they flip” is an assumption that such a flipping point exists. But why make this assumption?

Kline’s examples of how fatal theory might be put into practice in education are somewhat puzzling to me, specifically with regard to his idea that hyperconformity to the logic of the system is what is called for. He suggests (p. 123) that we might observe a hard distinction between education and schooling as a way of engaging in this hyperconformity, but it seems to me that if the system, as Kline rightly suggests, muddies the distinction between schooling and education, wouldn’t hyperconformity to the system necessitate a push for the total erasure of this distinction entirely? Kline also suggests that “restoring children and adolescents to their own strangeness, encourages a sense of inner alterity and radical otherness” is also a way of hyperconformity in a system which is precisely contrary to these goals (p. 123). Again, this to me seems more or less like traditional resistance, which aims at disrupting a system through advocating its opposite. On my reading, hyperconformity would seem more like performing reductios of the current system so as to expose its rotten inner logic. I am reminded of an exasperated response to current testing regimes offered by a professor of mine, who suggests that we ought to expand testing to include kindergarteners and preschoolers, and begin administering tests on every single school day not needed to prep for the next test. Thinking historically, and noting as Kline does, the influence of the avant garde art world on Baudrillard’s thought, I thought of the actions of the anti-authoritarian art group, Orange Alternative (OA), which formed in Poland in the 1980s and advocated what they called “situationist communism.” OA performed public “happenings” which were meant to ironically take the logic of the oppressive Polish political climate to their absurd conclusions. For example, at one national festival, OA members gathered around a statue of the founder of the Polish secret police and sang songs about how much they loved the police. When the members of the group were arrested during this spectacle, they thanked the police and praised their work loudly. The idea here was to expose the absurdity and ultimate vulnerability of a political regime that is forced into the position of arresting people for proclaiming love of the police. Similarly, OA members organized an event entitled “who is afraid of toilet paper?” in which they publicly and freely distributed toilet paper, then a very scarce commodity in Poland, and were ultimately arrested for doing so, again forcing out the absurdity of the political regime. I bring up these examples to attempt further thinking on the issue of what fatal hyperconformity might look like. Are these examples like what Kline has in mind? If not, why not? And what in their place?

Finally, I want to push on another objection that Kline attempts to defend Baudrillard from, namely that he is a sort of nostalgic primitivist, critiquing the contemporary decline into sign fetishism and semiotic identity codes which have replaced the “unmediated, face-to-face, messy human relations” (p. 92) of symbolic exchange. As Kline outlines, Baudrillard’s “lament for the loss of symbolic exchange in modernity and after” is deeply informed by the anthropological insights into indigenous societies and specifically the idea of the Gift in the works of Marcel Mauss and Georges Bataille. For Baudrillard, the gift as the exemplar of symbolic exchange represents “that which is outside of the capitalist code.” (p. 78). Baudrillard distinguishes between the messiness of direct symbolic exchange and the “cool” modernity of communication. Kline quotes him: “Whoever had the idea of ’communicating’ in ancient societies, in tribes, in villages, in families? People don't need to communicate because they just speak to one another.” This fall from our tribal, symbolic origins into our current semiotic space is also referenced in the discussion of
identity formation, where Baudrillard seems to suggest that our pre-semiotic life of danger, risk, and a genuine fight for survival has been supplanted by what is referred to as an “experimental life” where our identities control our existence and we are forced to artificially create situations which simulate the immediacy and messiness that we once enjoyed in the symbolic. Implicit here is a sort of evolutionary claim about the development from the pre-capitalist symbolic into the semiotic current era. Kline suggests that it is mistaken to read Baudrillard as simply fetishizing “symbolic cultures that he never actually experienced” (p. 78). I think that this defense of Baudrillard is correct, but there is a related critique that I want to now suggest, drawing on the work of psychoanalytist Jacques Lacan. From a Lacanian point of view, the problem with Baudrillard is not that he problematically fetishises the sign (a transparent misreading) or that he fetishises cultures that he never actually experienced. Rather, Lacan would suggest that problem here is not that Baudrillard never experienced these symbolic cultures, but that they never existed in the first place, at least not as Baudrillard has imagined them. The difference here is both anthropological and theoretical. Where Baudrillard draws on the insights of Mauss and Bataille, as Kline points out, Lacan pulls anthropological insights from Strauss, arguing that, when it comes to identity formation and cultural signs, there is no significant difference between semiotic modernity and the tribal pre-modernity promoted by Baudrillard. Baudrillard, on Kline’s presentation, seems to argue that our identities are foisted upon us in a violent way by the simulacral representations to which we are subject in our daily lives. For Lacan, these types of pre-coded identities exist long before the simulacral signs of modernity, namely in the very existence of language. Evolutionarily, Baudrillard seems to view humanity's pre-semiotic life as fundamentally natural in its symbolic messiness, unencumbered by the identity codes of modernity. For Lacan, this naturalness never existed, and as soon as man has entered into what Lacan calls the symbolic order, his identities exist as pre-coded by language itself. As Lorenzo Chiesa puts the point, “Lacan postulates a primordial biological discord between man and his environment, centred on premature birth and a subsequent disorder of the imagination, from which language and the Symbolic immanently arise.”

Crucially, Lacan’s investigation into these matters, which he undertakes most notably in his early seminars on desire and language (1953-1955), take a decidedly and necessarily anti-Darwinian line, suggesting ultimately that the emergence of the symbolic order and humans as desiring subjects (as opposed to purely animal, instinctually-driven ones), cannot be explained through the usual Darwinian mechanisms of gradual evolution and adaptation. Lacan specifically states “the dimension discovered by analysis is the opposite of anything which progresses through adaptation, through approximation, through being perfected. It is something which proceeds by leaps, in jumps.” It is this primordial break which creates the opening out of which the symbolic comes, an opening over which we cannot cross since we are always already in the symbolic order as human beings due to our boundedness in language. To concretize this discussion, Kline and Baudrillard point out the pre-coded identities in modern simulacral capital of the Jock, the Stoner, the Princess, and so on (as in Breakfast Club) and suggest that in pre-semiotic symbolic societies, these sorts of identity formations do not structure the social space in the same way that they do in the latter orders of simulacra. Lacan counters this by pointing out, along with Strauss, that the figures of, for example, the Shaman, the Priest, the Chief, the First Son, and so on structured what Baudrillard fetishises as pre-semiotic society in precisely the same way that the Breakfast Club-esque identities...

structure our own society. There is no human ego without prestructured identities, since we are always already subject to the dictates of the symbolic order, i.e. language (what Lacan calls “the big Other”). Put succinctly, a Lacanian perspective would ask of Baudrillard, what it is that is so special about the symbolic? Why think that pre-semiotic cultures were entirely or even relatively without the sorts of precoded identities that Baudrillard objects to in modernity? Why think that an unmediated subject or unmediated hot interactions between subjects existed before the latter orders of simulacral capital? On page 101, Kline explicates Baudrillard's notion of the fractal subject, the individual who is captured by the identity simulations of his time but who perceives himself as liberated by the proliferation of choices of precoded identities. For Lacan, on the other hand, all subjects are fractal, for as soon as we enter into the law of the symbolic order, the rules of which bind our identity formation from before we are born (e.g. in our parents choosing a color for our baby-room) we have lost control of our own subjectivity in a way that can never be regained. I wonder why Baudrillard and Kline think that this era of subjective immediacy in identity formation and interaction ever existed, and what their proposal is for recapturing it.

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