

Thresholds in Education (ISSN 0196-9641)

CALL FOR PAPERS

Guest Editors:

Andrea Hyde, Western Illinois University & Janet D. Johnson, Rhode Island College

Special Issue: Critical Contemplative Pedagogy: Embracing Compassionate and Inclusive Education

The Thresholds Story

Thresholds in Education (originally *Thresholds in Secondary Education*) was first published in 1975 by faculty members at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb. Their intention was to “explore fresh ideas and viewpoints that may become the pathways to the future,” and for 35 years this venerable journal published four thematic issues a year. In those 35 years, articles by well-known educators and non-educators including Theodore Brameld, Benjamin Spock (yes, Dr. Spock), Linda O’Neil, Bill Ayers, William Schubert, Jan Woodhouse, Deron Boyles, Ming Fang He (to name just a few) appeared in the pages of *Thresholds* doing exactly that: exploring fresh ideas and viewpoints. However, in the face of rising publication costs and the growing contemporary online publication milieu, the last print version of *Thresholds* was published in 2010. Fast forward to 2014. In discussions between the *Thresholds* Foundation executive board and representatives of the *Academy for Educational Studies*, a plan was hatched: re-launch *Thresholds in Education* as an open access online journal and house it at the *Academy for Educational Studies* web site. In addition to resurrecting *Thresholds*, it was decided that the new *Thresholds* would take on the look, feel, and substance of a slightly more traditional scholarly journal—the original *Thresholds* having had a more “magazine-like,” short-article, look and feel.

The *Thresholds in Education* editorial board was pleased to have Dr. Andrea Hyde from Western Illinois University and Dr. Janet D. Johnson of Rhode Island College accept an invitation to guest edit this issue of *Thresholds in Education* on the topic of critical contemplative pedagogy. We hope you will join us in this endeavor—submit proposals to this issue; visit the *Thresholds* archive at [the Academy for Educational Studies](#) web site; suggest future theme issues and guest editors; in short, join us in continuing to revive and grow an important venue for sharing educational ideas.

Overview

The turn of the last century bore witness to more progressive identity politics, celebration of human diversity and momentous civil rights achievements in the United States. Following this was a rebound in xenophobia, anti-intellectualism and a desire to return to past conditions of legal inequality from those who perceive a slippage in their own security as a numerical or political majority.

In our public schools, far-right political agendas seek to ban teaching that identifies groups or institutions as inherently or systemically “sexist, racist, anti-LGBT, bigoted, biased, privileged, or oppressed” (*Rethinking Schools*, Summer 2021, p. 4). This is not an unusual response, especially

for a society with a history of White supremacy and hetero/sexism, and it cannot be combated with cognitive arguments about the goodness or rightness of facing history or correcting inequity.

In addition to public surveillance over teaching “divisive issues,” public school teachers must operate within the constraints of state and/or district mandates, along with the fears of gun violence and public outcry at dropping test scores that reflect post-pandemic trauma for students. These forces are exacerbated by neoliberal political agendas and powerful market forces demanding employable skills from student and family populations that have more needs and fewer resources than ever before. However, teachers at all levels are resisting these agendas in various ways through inquiry projects, reading texts by diverse authors, promoting individual and community storytelling, restorative practices and emphasizing compassion, solidarity, and care (Hyde & Johnson, 2019; Klein et al., 2016).

The Special Issue Theme:

In our hyper-connected digital world, justice-oriented teaching “materials” are plentiful. Yet, even in states that embrace or mandate “diversity, equity and inclusion,” the most current historical, statistical, or even documentary evidence of systemic oppression is not enough to support transformative change. As critical mindfulness scholars have pointed out, we cannot skip over the “inner work” (Magee, 2019) or “mirror work” (Ginwright, 2022) of justice, when inequity is held in place by unconscious bias (Dasgupta, 2013) and hidden in structures such as policies or habits that persist long after legal forms of oppression are gone. We need *critical contemplative pedagogy*—the merging of contemplative practices with critical pedagogy (Kaufman, 2017)—to facilitate a more effective, sustainable, transformative, and just approach to teaching.

The large and interdisciplinary field of contemporary contemplative studies is rooted in traditions of 19th and 20th century East-West philosophy and could be seen in turn of the 21st century higher education pedagogy through teachers such as Palmer (1997), Zajonc (2008), Hart (2004), and Barbezat & Bush (2013). In 2015, Sharon Todd and Oren Ergas published a special issue on contemplative studies in *The Journal of Philosophy of Education*. The contributors to that issue resuscitated the relevance of Eastern philosophies to Western educational practices considering research on secular mindfulness from neuroscience and positive psychology (via Richard Davidson and Martin Seligman, for example). In that same collection, Terry Hyland (2015) applauded the infusion of mindfulness into education because it is a practice of “secular” spirituality and, as such, an antidote to scientific materialism. That said, we should not be afraid to acknowledge that training of the mind to alleviate suffering for all beings is the original spiritual notion of Buddhism. We can also acknowledge the influence of religion and spirituality in our students’ lives as we consider their full lived experiences within families and communities (Campano, Ghiso, and Welch, 2016).

With the movement to add an equity lens to educational practices and policy, most major leadership organizations, teachers’ unions and policy organizations have embraced educator preparation and professional development that teaches the history and continuation of structural oppression. Many explain that in addition to social policy change, educators’ hidden biases must be addressed through reflective self-awareness¹. The Collaboration for Academic, Social and

¹ See the NAEYC’s Advancing Equity Position Statement <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/equity>

Emotional Learning (CASEL), which long embraced mindfulness as the best means for engaging in self-awareness and self-regulation, describes their revised equity focus as “transformative social and emotional learning” (Jagers, Rivas-Drake & Williams, 2019, p.162). Before this, Beth Berilla (2016) inspired justice-oriented educators to add mindfulness to the culturally inclusive pedagogy that has long been central to our teacher preparation courses, because mindfulness practices facilitate reflective, contextualized, socio-economic and historically rooted content which is recognizably uncomfortable to learn.

From a critical perspective, there are also good reasons to be concerned with cultural misappropriation and white-washing, and the instrumentalizing of contemplative practices following the logic of neoliberalism. The emphasis on self-regulation and being calm could be seen as ways to police bodies and emotions in service of keeping students compliant rather than liberated, particularly for students of color (Johnson, 2020). Though advocates and allies, we are White, cis-gendered, hetero females/women, child-free by choice, credentialed and enjoying economic security and the elevated social status of being university professors. To mitigate our sheltering privilege and because so many healing practices and justice movements originate(d) outside of mainstream White culture in the United States, we have both been exploring the contemplative work and teaching practices of BIPOC scholars for our own professional development. While Rhonda Magee (2019) and Fania Davis² (2019) deserve immense credit for teaching many of us about how mindfulness can heal racial trauma through restorative justice, Angel Acosta affected our thinking about the work we do. He describes the union of compassionate school-based practices such as restorative justice, mindfulness, SEL, trauma sensitive pedagogy, and climate justice as healing-centered education. Through one of his courses, guest speaker, Bayo Akomolafe³, lovingly critiqued this framing as neo-reductionism centered on the body. But what body? We imagine a body of the late-capitalist state and attempt to root ourselves in this environment. What does it mean to be well when everything is deteriorating? Teacher-artist-activist Tricia Hersey, founder of The Nap Ministry, describes how rest is resistance to capitalism and White supremacy. Steeped in Womanism and Black Liberation Theology, Hersey (2022) is involved in creating public spaces for rest, employing yoga and meditation along with music and poetry. She says that our bodies are not machines made for economic exploitation and warns readers away from messages of rest-as-resistance that are divorced from Black liberation. Enriquez et al’s (2016) centering the body in literacy research and practice provides us with multiple paths to exploring the centrality of the body in oppressive educational systems.

On the Scope

This special issue invites scholars, practitioners, and teachers to share their thinking, research, and/or teaching within and around the intersections of critical, contemplative, body-centered, and/or spiritual educational projects at all levels of education, with a particular interest in democratic or public educational spheres within Pk-12 environments. Educational contexts are open, though confined to the United States with its unique civic assumptions and promises, contested as they are, with the experiences, interests, and work of BIPOC teachers and scholars foremost in our suggested themes.

² See her keynote lecture at the 2017 ACMHE Conference <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p3nGJrrVX2Q>

³ His writing can be found at <https://www.bayoakomolafe.net/>

Possible topics include:

- Embodied pedagogies for teacher education or Pk-12 schools
- Critical studies of contemplative practices in education settings
- Critical contemplative curricular innovations
- Advocacy and/or resistance for critical contemplative or embodied pedagogies
- Framing connections among body, mind, emotions, spirit and/or nature
- Contemplative studies and democratic or civics education
- Teaching healing practices for the traumas of oppression
- Radical (self) love as resistance to oppression
- Contemplative approaches to incorporating (taking into the body) state standards
- Educators' bearing witness to their students' testimony about their traumas
- Relationship between personal and collective healing in Pk-12 or educator preparation/development
- The role and risks of spirituality in critical contemplative work in educational spaces
- Connecting White supremacy with the need for critical contemplative practices
- Critical literacies and embodiment as ways to decolonize educational spaces
- The role of art in healing, theory, and practice
- Questioning current discourses around wellness and healing in educational spaces
- Restorative Justice Practices

Author Guidelines

Proposal Format

Please email a 500-1000 word, excluding references, proposal for review in a word document to Andrea Hyde (contact information below) by September 1, 2023. This proposal should include a list of key references that will be utilized in the article, as well as 4-7 keywords. Also, please include a brief author bio (100-word limit) and all relevant contact information.

Final Manuscript Formatting

- *TIE* accepts manuscripts of up to 10,000 words, including abstract, list of keywords, appendices, footnotes, and references, and reserves the right to return any manuscript that exceeds that length.
- All text must be double-spaced; type size must be 12 point with 1-inch margins on all sides.
- Authors should refer to The American Psychological Association for general questions of style, grammar, punctuation, and form, and for footnotes of theoretical, descriptive, or essay-like material.
- The journal defers to author preference in decisions about the naming and capitalization of racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. Manuscripts should be internally consistent in this regard.

General Timeline

CFP: May 1, 2023
Proposals Due: September 1, 2023
Accept/Reject: September 30, 2023
Draft Articles Due: January 15, 2024
Feedback to authors: March 15, 2024

Contact Information

Andrea Hyde,
Western Illinois University
Janet D. Johnson,
Rhode Island College
am-hyde@wiu.edu

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