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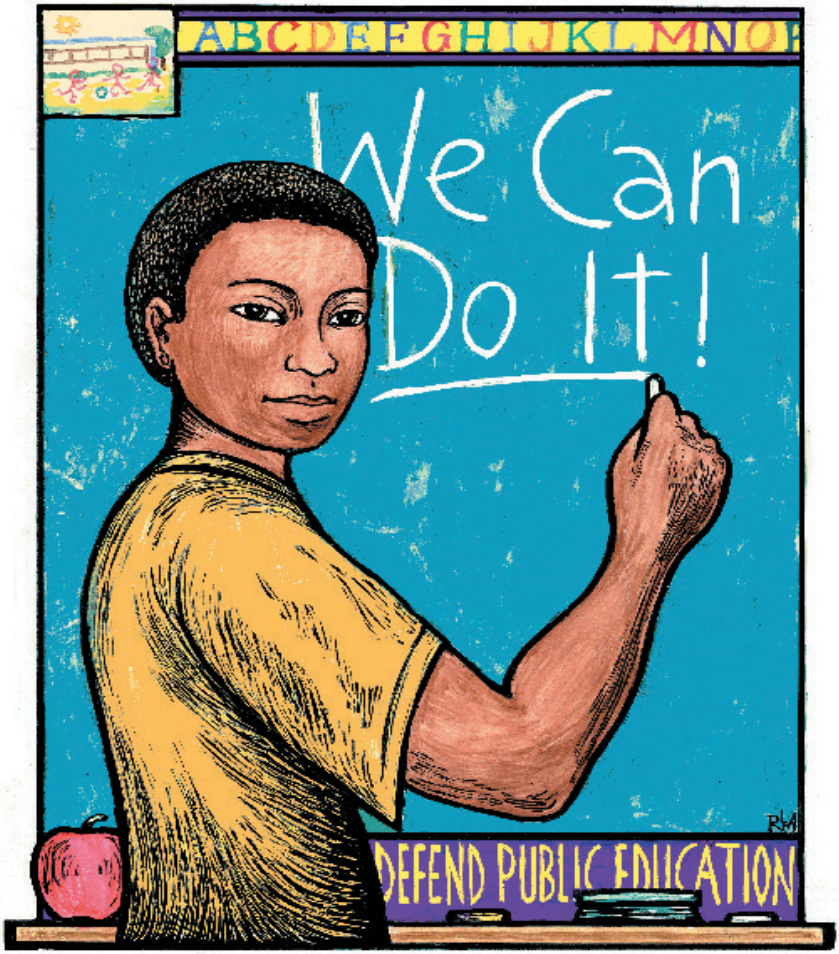

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System Justification Theory and Epistemic Limitations

Understanding Student Teachers' Epistemic Resistance to Critical Topics

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Jamie C. Atkinson

Abstract

Students in teacher education programs are often faced with perceived threats to their epistemological heritages. According to System Justification Theory, when faced with these perceived threats, individuals may become more defensive, epistemically resistant, and cognitively rigid. More specifically, due to a palliative psychological need, students may become motivated to justify what they conceive of as the status quo, or system justifications, to defend their epistemological heritage and socializations. Students may face perceived threats to their social and epistemological heritages in courses which are critically focused, such as foundations of education courses, and courses where there are requirements for both dialogical and dialectical engagement. System Justification Theory offers the potential to be utilized as a way of understanding student teachers' epistemological resistance and epistemic vices while informing teacher educators' pedagogy.

Key Words: Teacher Education, System Justification Theory, Social Epistemology, Social Psychology, Epistemic Limitations

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Introduction

The goal of this article is to introduce System Justification Theory as a way for teacher educators to recognize the sociopsychological and socioepistemic difficulties of students when engaging in critical topics and to add to the dialogue of educational foundations. As members of society, and subject to ideologically laden ideas and motivations, students who enter teacher education programs bring with them potential epistemic limitations inculcated from years of socializations. Over time, those socializations may lead to epistemic limitations. Those epistemic limitations may inhibit student teachers' ability to engage in critical discussions within teacher education programs. Inculcated beliefs, ideologically laden preferences, implicit biases, and socialized understandings may come from family, friends, religious/faith-based groups, community associations, schooling, and social media. Students may have, in essence, an epistemic heritage manifesting various epistemic limitations and entrenchments. In addition, for many students, attending a college or university may be their first exposure to diverse peoples and perspectives, all of which represent socioepistemic, philosophical, and ideological challenges.

In conversations with fellow scholars and students at a mid-size, Midwestern university, there seems to be something missing in educator programs—understanding the social psychology and social epistemology of future teachers. This article is especially prescient for foundations of education faculty who are tasked with examining critical issues, while also encouraging students to recognize and come to terms with their potential epistemic limitations. In no way is this article meant to divorce itself from, nor ignore the critical work of a multitude of scholars who have written in our field and, while attempting to minimize the tendency to drift into saviorism, the hope is that this topic adds to our diverse field and presents itself as a potential way to examine the epistemic nuances that occur in teacher education courses. I utilize previous work in the fields of social psychology, political psychology, and social epistemology, and see those areas as a tool for teacher educators. In conjunction with System Justification Theory, this article highlights several epistemic limitations, which may contribute to the difficulty students face when discussing critical topics in educational foundations classrooms. System Justification Theory has the potential to be utilized as a tool in understanding why and how student teachers exhibit epistemic limitations when exposed to critical topics and ideas.

System Justification Theory

Epistemic limitations may be generally and specifically tied to one's epistemic heritage. In this instance, heritage is referring directly to a social phenomenon, which may extend beyond the defining lines of ethnicity, race, culture, and class. Epistemic heritage is the handing down of normative values and ideas from family members, religious organizations, community groups, friends, etc., and may result from the cycle of socialization (Harro, 2018). Epistemic heritages may include certain ideological persuasions. Ideology has different meanings for different people, groups, and entities, thus "ideology has been ascribed as one of the most elusive constructs in all of the social sciences largely because it has been enormously difficult for researchers to agree on a compact, yet comprehensive definition" (Thorisdottir et al., p. 4). One of the first mentions of the term can be seen in the work of Antoine Destutt de Tracy, a French Enlightenment philosopher in his *Éléments d'idéologie* (1818) whose first volume in this work, titled "Ideology Strictly Defined," defined ideology as a science of ideas. For this article, ideology is defined as a set of doctrines, beliefs, or rationalities, forming a body of ideas reflecting the social needs and aspirations of an individual, group, class, or culture, forming the basis of a political, economic, social, or other system (Gerring, 1997; Jost, 2006; Jost, Nosek, & Gosling, 2008; Jost, Frederico, & Napier, 2009). Individuals may embrace various political, sociocultural, economic, and religious ideologies. For example, an individual may be a Christian nationalist/fundamentalist and a neoliberal and/or neoconservative, broad ideologies encompassing various beliefs, dogmas, and rationalities. There are numerous political, social, religious, etc., ideologies that could be examined, but for the purpose of this paper, the examination will be limited to individuals/groups who, broadly speaking, are both socially and politically conservative, share a preferred political and social vision, or epistemic heritage, and often embrace system justifying beliefs in the institutionalized norms of society – the status quo (Hafer & Choma, 2009; Jost, 2020, 2021, Jost et al., 2007, 2008).

Ideological and its accompanying epistemological entrenchment, epistemic vices, and system-justifying beliefs may result in an aversion to critical self- and system-examinations within teacher education. System Justification Theory (SJT) has potential as a tool in understanding why socially and politically conservative student teachers resist discussions and examinations of critical social issues (e.g., Critical Race Theory, Multiculturalism, Equity, Inclusion, LGBTQ rights, etc.). SJT may help faculty with the following two questions: (1) Why are many

student teachers resistant to discussions about social injustices and inequities from both a historical and contemporary perspective, and (2) Why are many student teachers so accepting of those injustices and inequities, to the point of defending those injustices and inequities? Since the early 1990s, SJT has been an ongoing theoretical project grounded primarily in the fields of social and political psychology and social epistemology. SJT was originally proposed to "explain why disadvantaged individuals and groups buy into negative stereotypes and evaluations of themselves" while also accepting "their lower rank in status hierarchies" (Jost, 2020, p. 9). SJT has the potential to generally answer the questions above and lay the initial work for specific studies in teacher education, primarily in undergraduate teacher preparation programs and foundations of education courses. Student teachers enter teacher education programs with certain ideological frameworks and epistemic limitations to new epistemological understandings, which include perceived notions of fairness, justice, the legitimacy of ideas, and judgments regarding their fellow citizens and social groups.

Antonio Gramsci (1971) "marveled at the 'spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group' and proposed that 'this consent is historically caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence), which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 12; Jost, 2020, p. 2). Student teachers are susceptible to providing this same spontaneous consent described so well by Gramsci. As early as the 16th century, a French law student by the name Estienne de la Boétie produced an essay titled *Discourse of Voluntary Servitude* in which he asked the poignant question, "why do people tolerate, even embrace, their own subjugation when they are under no forcible compulsion to do so" (de la Boétie, 2008/1548)? Boétie outlined three major hypotheses to explain the politics of obedience and, according to the sociologist Steven Lukes (2011), these amount to (a) 'cultural inertia' or the 'force of custom and habit'; (b) 'manufactured consent,' that is, ideology and propaganda; and (c) 'patronage,' such that 'tyrants surround themselves with dependents, who in turn have their own dependents'" (Lukes, 2011, p. 20).

Some of those same ideas can be found in the work of Michel Foucault in his series of lectures (1978-1979) regarding *The Birth of Biopolitics*, and (1982-1983) on *The Government of Self and Others*, which pertain to how individuals can come to discipline themselves, thus reinforcing the dominant norms of society. This self-domination and voluntary servitude to dominant ideologies and epistemological frame-

works have significant connections with Marx and Engels' concepts of ideological hegemony and false consciousness (Lukes 2011; Marx & Engels, 1970; Rosen, 1996). Similar ideas are offered in Louis Althusser's (2014/1970) theories related to ideology, ideological apparatuses and the state and Pierre Bourdieu's (1986/1977) work to include his theories of habitus and social and symbolic capital. Throughout history, there have been extensive examinations of these phenomena, too much to further fluster the reader in this article. Regardless, what stands out in almost all the examinations are how and why "people submit willingly, even enthusiastically, to humiliations inflicted by the powerful," and why individuals often vehemently defend, or justify, the status quo (Jost 2020, p.2). Ultimately, it comes down to an individual's or group's "habit, ideology, and dependence" (Jost, 2020, p. 2). Additionally, people often, and for a myriad of reasons, "internalize the norms of the social order on which they depend even when they are disadvantaged by the social order," and in doing so develop "mental resistance to the fundamental flaws of their social order" (Jost 2020, p. 3; Fehr & Gintis, 2007). Ultimately, this leads to the framework for SJT defined below:

> A social psychological perspective that seeks to elucidate the individual-level and group-level mechanisms contributing to people's inability to see the true nature of the socioeconomic [and sociopolitical] system. In addition to people's blindness to their own oppression, a social system—any social system—can provide psychological benefits…. according to system justification theory, people are motivated—often at a nonconscious level of awareness—to defend, bolster, and justify the social, economic, and political institutions and arrangements on which they depend. (Jost, 2020, p. 3)

System justification lies in a psychological need for certainty and comfort. "People who are either chronically, or temporarily, concerned with epistemic, existential, and relational needs to attain certainty, security, and social belongingness are especially likely to embrace system-justifying ways of thinking (Jost, 2020, p. 6). Our motivation to justify the existing system, including many of the ideas, beliefs, and ideological positions within that system, may not be beneficial to us, and often "perpetuate our suffering, and in that sense, they do not serve our objective interests" (Jost, 2020, p. 6). In that instance, as Boétie (2008/1548) noted, individuals often choose the "security of living wretchedly" over "the uncertain hope of living as [one] pleases" and our student teachers are no different (p. 44). Examples of embracing system-justifying ways of thinking include pledging the allegiance to the flag, attending religious services, engaging in shared group activities with like-minded individuals, remaining affiliated with a particular political party because of family tradition, dominant perspectives

on race, gender, sexual identity, ability, socioeconomic status, etc., all pursued to satisfy the need of a sense of order, meaning, and belongingness, in one's life even if it is only temporary.

System justification works to avoid stresses caused by epistemic chaos and epistemic exhaustion, thus leading individuals and groups toward epistemic resistance and epistemic vices. SJT helps "explain how and why people tolerate, accept, and often vindicate, all of the things they do (and the things that are done to them and on behalf of them) in a wide variety of social, economic, and political contexts" (Jost 2020, pp. 9-10). To this point, there have been over three thousand articles utilizing system justification in sociology and psychology publications (Jost, 2018; Osborne et al., 2019).

In 2009, Jost and colleagues, edited a seminal publication that examined how SJT may be utilized to explain epistemic limitations and ideologies to include its relation to the social and psychological bases of ideology (Jost et al., 2009; Thorisdottir et al., 2009; Uhlman et al., 2009; Ferguson, et al., 2009); the psychological power of the status quo on individuals and groups, including such things as belief in a just world and fairness (Eidelman & Crandall, 2009; Hafer & Choma, 2009; Kay & Zanna, 2009; Mitchell & Tetlock, 2009); epistemic and existential motives to deal with uncertainty management and to change (Anson, et al., 2009; van den Bos, 2009; Willer, 2009); individual and group motivations regarding social cognitions and ideological attitudes (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009; Federico & Goren, 2009; Nosek et al., 2009; Rentfrow et al., 2009); perspectives on justice, morality, and perceived social decline (Eibach and Libby, 2009; Feygina & Tyler, 2009; Haidt, & Graham, 2009); and the implications of SJT for self, group, and society (Cikara, et al., 2009; Nosek, et al., 2009; O'Brien & Major, 2009; Starzyk, et al., 2009). Jost's (2020) culminating work, *A Theory of System Justification*, adds to this body of knowledge and all are potential theoretical tools to inform education faculty's understandings of the epistemic limitations and system-justifying beliefs student teachers adhere to while attending colleges of education, and their epistemic resistance, epistemic vices, and cognitive rigidity when discussing critical issues. From a sociopolitical perspective, Jost (2021) published *Left & Right: The Psychological Significance of a Political Distinction*, which further utilizes SJT to discern the differences between adherents of political conservatism versus political liberalism, supplementing the knowledge professors may find valuable in examining student teachers' epistemic limitations in relation to the sociopolitics of education.

When teaching critical social justice issues in teacher education, the resistance to change and the resistance to critical examinations of the status quo can be explained by the palliative nature of system jus-

tification. There are nine major postulates of SJT which may be of use in understanding potential epistemic vices among student teachers:

1. "People are motivated (often unconsciously) to defend, justify, and bolster aspects of the status quo including existing social, economic, and political institutions and arrangements" (Jost, 2020, p. 62; Jost & van der Toorn, 2012). Members of society may legitimize the status quo regardless of the evidence of inequalities and social justices. Our students, whether they come from advantaged or disadvantaged backgrounds, will often internalize rather than reject existing institutionalized and system norms to which advantaged groups adhere.

2. "As is the case with all other motives in human psychology, the strength of system justification motivation and its expression are expected to vary according to situational (contextual) and dispositional (individual differences) factors" (Jost, 2020, p.62). When there is heightened social, cultural, and political conflict, individuals may be more inclined to exhibit and express system justifying beliefs; for student teachers, this may come from societal issues or threats to their implicit beliefs while in their teacher education programs.

3. "System justification motivation is activated or increased when (a) the system is criticized, challenged, or threatened; (b) the system is perceived as inevitable or inescapable; (c) the system is perceived as traditional or longstanding; or (d) the individual feels powerless or dependent on the system (and its authorities)" (Jost, 2020, p. 64). When there are potential threats to a student's ideological and epistemic heritage, the resulting epistemic chaos engages a psychological need to justify what they have always known.

4. "System justification addresses basic epistemic motives to reduce uncertainty, existential motives to reduce threat, and relational motives to reduce social discord. Situational and dispositional variability in these underlying needs will affect the strength of system justification motivation" (Jost, 2020, pp. 64-65; Jost 2017a, b). Our student teachers often have epistemic and existential needs for such things as certainty, consistency, meaning, safety, and the relational need of a shared reality with like-minded individuals. When this is disrupted, it creates epistemic chaos which then further drives students to system justifying beliefs.

5. "There are several possible means by which the system can be justified, including direct endorsement of certain ideologies, the legitimation of institutions and authorities, denial or minimalization of system problems or shortcomings, complementary stereotyping, and rationalization (Jost, 2020, p. 65). Student teachers often endorse, or profess, certain ideological belief systems, justifying and legitimating those systems based on their epistemological heritage. Student teachers may do this to satisfy epistemic, existential, relational, and other psychological needs.

6. For the next two postulates, whether student teachers are in the advantaged or disadvantaged group, there are situational, or contextual, issues which drive them into various system-justifying actions. "For members of advantaged groups (those favored by the status quo), system justification is consistent with self- and group-justification motives, and is therefore positively associated with self-esteem, in-group favoritism, and long-term psychological well-being" (Jost, 2020, p. 66; Jost et al, 2001).

7. "For members of disadvantaged groups (those disfavored by the status quo), system justification conflicts with self- and group-justification motives, and is therefore negatively associated with self-esteem, in-group favoritism, and long-term psychological well-being" (Bahamondes-Correa, 2016; Jost, 2020, p. 66; Jost & Thompson, 2000).

8. "System justification serves a palliative function. The endorsement of system-justifying beliefs and ideologies is associated in the short-term with increased positive affect and decreased negative affect for members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups alike" (Jost, 2020, p. 67; Jost et al., 2003; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Napier & Jost, 2008; Wakslak et al., 2007). Palliative functions such as satisfaction, contentment, security, a sense of place, certainty, etc. are all potentially met by system justifying beliefs and actions.

9. "Although system justification motivation typically leads people to resist social change (and to perceive it as potentially threatening), people are more willing to embrace change when it is perceived as (a) inevitable or extremely likely to occur, or (b) congruent with the preservation of at least some aspect of the social system or its ideals" (Jost, 2020, p. 67). Probably the most problematic issue with system justification, especially for our student teachers, is that it potentially "undermines their

> desire for change and their willingness to participate in collective action aimed at improving society," especially from within the walls of their school districts (Jost, 2020, p. 67).

Student teachers will soon be working within the social sphere and consistently working with a diverse group of students. How are we, as teacher educators, articulating the role of social science in dislodging troublesome epistemic limitations in our students?

Robert Lynd (1939) noted, "the role of social science is to be troublesome, to disconnect the habitual arrangements by which we manage to live along, and to demonstrate the possibility of change in more adequate [and positive] directions" (pp. 181-182). To this end, there have been over fifty studies conducted and/or published between 2005 and 2022 showing that "exposure to threats directed at the social system can heighten the intensity of system-justifying responses, including (but not limited to) the increased use of stereotypes to rationalize social, sexual, economic, [and racial], disparities," which we, as teacher educators, should evaluate as a potential for understanding epistemic limitations in our students (Jost 2020, p. 62). There are numerous studies reflecting the types of system-justifying beliefs we may witness from our student teachers. The list below is just a few of those studies:

> *1. The Protestant Work Ethic*, which is a system where "individuals have a moral responsibility to work hard and avoid leisure activities; thus, hard work is a virtue and its own reward" (Jones, 1997; Jost, 2020, p. 326; Mirels & Garrett, 1971).
>
> *2. Meritocratic Ideology*, which is the idea that a system exists that "rewards individual ability and motivation, so success is an indicator of personal deservingness" (Day & Fiske, 2017; Jost, 2020, p. 327; Ledgerwood et al., 2011; McCoy & Major, 2007; Mijs, 2019).
>
> *3. Fair Market Ideology (Neoliberalism) & Economic System Justifications,* which includes free-market, capitalist, and neoliberal ideas based on the efficiency, legitimate outcomes, fairness, and justness that a free-market provides; the idea that society should be based on free-market principles; and the Darwinian notion that economic inequality is "natural, inevitable, and legitimate" (Azevedo et al., 2017; Hennes et al., 2012; Jost, 2020, p. 327; Jost & Thompson, 2000; Jost et al., 2003).
>
> *4. Belief in a Just World:* the notion that "people typically get what they deserve and deserve what they get in regard to outcomes—what is, is what ought to be" (Hafer & Begue, 2005; Jost, 2020, p. 327; Lerner, 1980).

5. Power Difference & Social Dominance Orientations: This is the notion that "inequality is a natural and desirable feature of the social order; large power differences are acceptable and legitimate; and there exists a general preference for group-based social hierarchies—a desire for unequal relations among social groups" (Jost, 2020, p. 327; Jost & Thompson, 2000; Jost et al., 2003; Kugler et al., 2010; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001).

6. Opposition to Equality: In general, adherents to this belief argue that "increased social and economic equality is unattainable and undesirable; it would be detrimental to society" (Eagly, et al., 2004; Jost, 2020, p. 327; Jost & Thompson, 2000; Kluegel & Smith, 1986).

7. Right-Wing Authoritarianism: General "aggression toward deviants," a belief that one should submit "to established authorities" and hierarchies, and a rigid, "adherence to conventional traditions" and established norms (Azevedo & Jost, 2021; Altmeyer, 1981,1998; Duckitt & Sibley, 2009; Jost, 2020, p. 328; Jost et al., 2003).

8. Social Darwinism: The "belief that the fittest members of society will succeed and that competitive social hierarchies are not only natural but necessary – a way of improving the human race through natural selection" (Hofstadter, 1992/1944; Jost, 2020, p. 328; Rudman & Saud, 2020).

9. General Social, Political, & Economic Conservatism: Social and political conservatism is deeply rooted in "traditionalism (political & social conservatism), resistance to change (social conservatism), and the acceptance of inequality (economic conservatism)" in all its forms (Butz et al., 2017; Jost, 2006, 2017b, 2020, p. 328; Jost et al., 2003; Kandler et al., 2012).

Social Epistemology and Epistemic Vices

Few students will exit their teacher education programs without a definitional understanding of epistemology. Epistemology comes from the Greek *episteme*, meaning knowledge or understanding, and *logos*, meaning to account, to logic, or to reason (Woleński, 2004). In broader terms, epistemology may be defined as how one comes to know what they know, and how one comes to understand and reason. More recent definitions of formal epistemology include varying degrees to which one has confidence in their knowledge, considering the numerous constraints on knowledge acquisition (Woleński, 2004). How truly

confident can anyone be of their own cognitive successes, the search for truth, considering limited resources, experiences, and combined with the excessive noise of society? Embedded within epistemology are two aspects – knowledge and justification. Our knowledge, our justifications for that knowledge, and the psychological need to defend that knowledge through justification is at the core of this article.

One of the more fascinating aspects of teaching educational foundations is recognizing and discussing how students have become socialized into various epistemological heritages and identity formations. As Harro (2018) discussed, "we are each born into a specific set of social identities," and at the same time, through socialization and epistemological processes, we begin to recognize differences and categorize others (p. 27). Our socialized identities are created through various epistemological processes which are "pervasive (coming from all sides and sources), consistent (patterned and predictable), circular (self-supporting), self-perpetuating (intradependent), and often unrecognizable (unconscious, [implicit], and unnamed)" (Harro, 2018, p. 27). Much of understanding why student teachers think as they do can be examined in the way they have come to identify.

Students may link their knowledge and understandings directly with their identity. As Tatum (2018) discusses, "the concept of identity is a complex one, shaped by individual characteristics, family dynamics, historical factors, and social and political contexts" (p. 7). When we think about who we are, how would we answer? The answer is as much social and epistemological as it is psychological. Working with student teachers on critical issues within teacher education, we must first contend with our students, and for that matter our own, socioepistemological and sociopsychological groundings. Our socializations and the epistemological influences leading to those socializations, "shape our self-concepts, and self-perceptions, the norms and rules we must follow, the roles we are taught to play [in society], our expectations for the future," and how we view other members of society and our social and political institutions (Harro, 2018, p. 29). Regardless of the influence of our arbiters of knowledge, and the exposure to others, we all manifest the epistemological heritage of those who have influenced us, raised us, and taught us. Socializations and knowledge formation combine over time to create our core identities and beliefs.

It is difficult, but none-the-less important, to recognize the potential limitations shaping one's growth and new knowledge formations. More specifically, and in relation to the goal of this article, what epistemological limitations influence a future educator's ability to recognize injustices, to critically examine different perspectives, the world, institutions, and the ability to self-analyze implicit biases, ideologically

laden, and socialized identities. To that end, it seems prudent to understand how one develops *epistemic regimes*—patterns and/or systems of ideologies, philosophies, and other thought patterns and knowledge traditions, by which people know or believe they know. Put another way, epistemic regimes are the arrangements and the practices of knowledge production combined with the social structures in which these practices are carried out—the collective marketplace of ideas where individuals and groups hammer out what is real or is not real and/or factual (Brooks, 2020; Espahangizi & Wulz, 2020; Gläser et al., 2018).

Faculty and students arrive in classrooms having been socialized within certain epistemic regimes, replete with accompanying epistemic bubbles and echo chambers, limiting our exposure to contradicting and/or different perspectives. As members of society, we may also be prone to problematic epistemological characteristics such as epistemic vices. Unfortunately, skewed knowledge formations, and our own, often misguided, certainties of our knowledge lead to a form of epistemological hubris. In turn, individuals may utilize system justifications to reinforce, rather than critique, their own socialized and epistemological heritage. Ultimately, SJT offers a potential theoretical jumping-off-point to help teacher educators recognize and understand epistemological issues in colleges and schools of education. Therefore, it seems prudent to explain the various terms and phrases related to the epistemological problems/issues we should be aware of in teacher education.

Epistemological Issues

In our increasingly polarized society, there seems to be a need for members of society to identify in certain ways and to defend that identity. Future educators may experience some of those same palliatively psychological needs to identify in particular ways stemming from their epistemological and socialized heritages. If we are speaking specifically to political and ideological identities, there is an argument to be made that political and ideological polarization is at its highest level in five decades (Tokita, et al., 2021). Social media has not helped with this situation creating information ecosystems which work to reorganize social networks and exacerbate polarization in society (Tokita, et al., 2021). Individuals often seek out affirmation for one's own viewpoints and perspectives and this is no different with student teachers.

Epistemic Bubbles and Echo Chambers

Two epistemic issues that lead to a rise in societal polarization are *epistemic bubbles* (or filter bubbles) and *echo chambers*. *Epistemic bubbles* are "social epistemic structures from which other relevant

voices have been left out," whereas "*echo chambers* are social epistemic structures from which other relevant voices have been actively [and purposefully] excluded and discredited" (Flaxman, et al., 2016; Nguyen, 2020, p. 141; Pariser, 2011). Both epistemic bubbles and echo chambers create epistemological limitations for their constituents and may contribute to *cognitive rigidity*—the inability to change behavior or beliefs when faced with contradicting perspectives (Zmigrod, 2020; Zmigrod et al., 2019a, 2019b). Social media is a significant contributor to epistemic issues such that "informational input is being radically filtered" and individuals relying on social media sites are by-and-large exposed to "arguments and views with which they already agree" (An et al, 2014; Kuklinski et al., 2000; Nguyen, 2020, p.141; O'Conner & Weatherall, 2019; Saez-Trumper, et al., 2013; Southwell & Thorson, 2015). We are all exposed to epistemic bubbles and echo chambers merely by our social groups and affiliations.

Epistemic bubbles can form through "ordinary processes of social selection and community formation" in similar ways that *de facto* segregation occurs, and from no purposeful ill intent by the participant (Bishop, 2009; Nguyen, 2020, p. 142). As individuals, we often have a palliative need to belong and be part of a group (Jost, 2021, Jost et al., 2007). In group versus out group dynamics often lead individuals to participate in epistemic bubbles and echo chambers out of a desire to belong and for a sense of a shared identity. We all may find ourselves inadvertently immersed in epistemic bubbles and echo chambers merely from the desire to stay connected with family, friends, and colleagues who share some, if not all, of our ideological (whether social, cultural, political, etc.) viewpoints and potentially due to the organizations from which we belong or operate within. Regardless of the genesis of the associations, epistemic bubbles and echo chambers lead to constrained perspectives and self-perpetuating epistemic limitations, thus restricting potentially contrary views, which "illegitimately inflates our epistemic self-confidence," or epistemic hubris (Nguyen, 2020, p. 142). Echo chambers are much more malicious social epistemic structures than epistemic bubbles.

Individuals participating in echo chambers may purposefully, and actively, discredit other relevant voices thereby preventing democratic dialogue (Jamieson & Capella, 2008). In an echo chamber, in group perspectives are favored and acted upon while the out group's ideological perspectives are dismissed and/or ridiculed. Members of echo chambers "share beliefs which include reasons to distrust those outside of the echo chamber" (Nguyen, 2020, p. 142). Scholars have discussed this same phenomenon in terms of group polarization, group extremism, and information filtration effects where individuals active-

ly negotiate and constrict information resources to purposefully omit differing ideological positions (Pariser, 2011; Sunstein, 2009a, 2009b). Epistemic bubbles and echo chambers contribute to the palliative need for individuals to belong and to associate with a particular group by neutralizing the epistemic impact of exposure to outsiders with contrary beliefs and differing perspectives (Begby, 2017; Nguyen, 2020) Regardless of which mechanisms we examine, each are embedded within system justification.

Epistemological Vices

Other epistemological issues faced in foundation of education courses are *vice epistemologies*. When examining epistemological vices versus epistemological virtue, I rely significantly on the work of Quassim Cassam who notes, "few of us are model epistemic citizens, the idealized *homo philosophicus*…and one way of making this point is to draw attention to the influence of a range of…intellectual vices in the day-to-day cognitive lives of most members of *homo sapiens* (Cassam, 2016, p.159; Cassam, 2015, 2018). As we mature, much emphasis, whether explicit or implicit, is placed on character traits, including intellectual character traits. Intellectual traits may be positive in nature (e.g., open-mindedness, thoroughness, attentiveness, empathy, etc.) while others may be considered negative, or limiting, traits (e.g. dogmatism, gullibility, prejudice, bias, carelessness, etc.). Obviously, more could be added to the positive and the negative.

Cassam discusses the need to examine *vice epistemology*—a branch of epistemological study focused on intellectual character vices that impede one's knowledge acquisition capabilities by creating barriers to learning (Cassam, 2015, 2016, 2018). This is especially critical in understanding how student teachers may examine, engage with, and process critical forms of knowledge in their foundations of education courses. Hookway (2003) notes that intellectual vices impede "effective and responsible inquiry" (p.198) and potentially increase the cognitive rigidity manifested as ideological/epistemological absolutism. In other words, individual students may "exhibit heightened ideological prejudice and dogmatism" noting a lack of cognitive flexibility when confronted with epistemic challenges (Zmigrod, 2020, p. 34). This form of inflexibility, or absolutism, may then lead to the epistemic vice of hubris.

Epistemic hubris constitutes an "expression of unwarranted factual certitude" and "an inflated sense of epistemic privilege and pride often bound closely to power, [privilege], arrogance, and over-confidence" (Baird & Calvard, 2018, p. 270; Barker, et al., 2022, p. 38; Ogden, 2017). This over-confidence, or unwarranted certitude, manifests in two possible ways, with individuals potentially displaying

"both in relation to their knowledge, credibility, and expertise" (Baird & Calvard, 2018, p. 270). The primary manifestation is when an individual presumes to have "epistemic authority or superiority where one in fact lacks it" (Baird & Calvard, 2018, p. 270; Kraemer, 2015). It thus involves a false perception to the true nature of one's expertise (Roberts & Wood, 2007). A secondary manifestation is "the conviction that one has the right or privilege not to know, or not to need to know," which is also an aspect of anti-intellectualism discussed later (Baird, & Calvard. 2018, p. 270; Tanesini 2016). Individuals who are arrogant with their knowledge claims may misjudge the realities of the situation (Claxton et al., 2013). The reliance on information from within echo chambers and epistemic bubbles convinces individuals that they have the epistemic superiority, thus their epistemic hubris. Faculty and student teachers may be susceptible to the epistemic vice of epistemic hubris. Unfortunately, epistemic hubris, along with cognitive rigidity and anti-intellectualism, may inhibit "sound decision making and the uptake, or assimilation, of new information and perspectives" (Barker et al, 2022, p. 38; Barker et al, 2014; Grant 2021; Zmigrod, 2021).

Social psychologists and social epistemologists have known for some time now that individuals (and groups and institutions) are susceptible to "motivated reasoning, or the drive to see the world in ways that are consistent with one's attitudinal predispositions" and that normative orientations play a role in epistemic limitations (Barker et al., 2020, p. 40; Erisen et al., 2014; Jost, 2020; Marietta & Barker, 2019; Taber & Lodge, 2006). Additionally, there has been significant research conducted on anti-intellectualism versus intellectualism. As noted by Hofstadter (1963) and others (Barker et al, 2022; Baumgardner, 2020; Gauchat, 2012; Merkley, 2020, Motta, 2018; Lupia, 2016; Nichols 2017, Oliver & Rahn, 2016; Oliver & Wood, 2018; Rigney, 1997; Shogan, 2007), intellectualism and anti-intellectualism are not necessarily opposites found on the same epistemic scale nor necessarily mutually exclusive. Anti-intellectualism is in fact an expression of negative affect toward intellect, intellectuals, and/or the intellectual establishment, whereas intellectualism is marked by deep thought, critical engagement, and learning for its own sake (Barker et al, 2020; Hofstadter, 1963; Rigney, 2009). What does this mean for our students? Our students may slide into system-justifying behavior and display anti-intellectual tendencies because of the palliative need for certainty and the aversion to change and complexity. Anti-intellectualism and system-justifying behaviors may increase when exposed to the critical discussion in many teacher education programs, when students are faced with a myriad of epistemic challenges. What may occur prior

to system-justifying behavior and anti-intellectual tendencies, is the phenomenon of epistemic exhaustion and epistemic chaos.

Epistemic Exhaustion and Epistemic Chaos

When student teachers are introduced to critical topics in teacher education, they often struggle to internalize new ideas. They may struggle with their socialized identities and their inculcated beliefs. As they grapple with unfamiliar topics or examine critical perspectives, especially perspectives that challenge their epistemic heritage, they potentially experience epistemic exhaustion. *Epistemic exhaustion* is "cognitive fatigue generated by efforts to determine, retain, or communicate what one believes under conditions that make doing so taxing" (Satta, 2020, p.1). There are three environments where individuals and/or groups may experience epistemic exhaustion: (1) environments where there is a large degree of sociopolitical activity and polarized groupings; (2) environments which may be considered epistemically chaotic; and (3) environments considered epistemically oppressive to those in the minority (Satta, 2020). Each of those situations may arise in foundations of education courses when discussing critical social issues, the sociopolitics of education, and sociohistorical topics.

Epistemic exhaustion may also occur in epistemically chaotic environments. *Epistemic chaos* may occur when an individual and/or group "experiences a glut of conflicting information while lacking widely agreed upon epistemic authorities to resolve conflicts" (Brady, 2015; Satta, 2020, p. 12). Two key features are present in chaotic environments: (1) whether due to main-stream media, social media, or other sources, there are usually large volumes of conflicting claims pulling individuals and/or groups in different directions; and (2) those conflicting claims often coincide with "an absence of widely acknowledged, [or accepted], epistemic authorities to help sort out which of the conflicting claims are true and false" (Satta, 2020, p. 12). In an extension to number two, individuals may make more normative decisions on whether certain knowledge, facts, and/or claims may be justified versus unjustified, reasonable versus unreasonable, or ethically valued versus unjust.

Impacts on Teacher Education

The epistemic limitations mentioned in this article may make it extremely difficult for students to engage in critical discussions and shatter the epistemic walls they have erected. Especially for our students in foundations of education courses, which may indeed be the epistemic exhaustive/chaotic environment, they must grapple with

three forms of epistemic exhaustion: (1) *belief-determination exhaustion* which occurs when students must define and determine what they may believe by articulating their thoughts and supporting those thoughts with experience, information, and evidence; (2) *belief-retention exhaustion*, which occurs when students attempt to retain and justify one's beliefs amidst the pressure of competing perspectives, values, and belief justifications, adhering adamantly to their beliefs in the face of pressure to change; and (3) *belief-communication exhaustion*, which results from the effort to continuously communicate what one already firmly believes, as well as communicating the reasons for those beliefs to others in the hopes of changing others' perspectives (Satta, 2020, p. 3). Each of the above forms are epistemically taxing, especially if one does not have significant evidentiary support for their beliefs and potentially exhibit a degree of epistemic hubris.

Faculty in colleges of education may witness the following epistemic exhaustive behaviors: (1) Students unable to concentrate on epistemically challenging activities and struggling with activities that once were considered manageable; (2) Students relaying the increased feelings of being overwhelmed beyond the normal stresses of course workloads, including the onset of rapid fatigue when discussing certain epistemically challenging material; (3) Students may become detached, apathetic, or resistant to matters they once cared deeply about because they are epistemically unsure and unable to see through the epistemic chaos; (4) Some students may become combative while others may experience pessimism and/or even anxiety, depression, and expressions of hopelessness, which may in turn manifest as disappointment and/or antagonistic feelings to epistemic interlocuters in class, whether a fellow student or faculty member; (5) Students may move in the opposite direction as part of discussions and become more intolerant of other perspectives, entrenched in their own epistemic heritage and system justifications, and unwilling to participate further in class; and (6) Students may deeply internalize potential epistemic transgressions leading to a feeling of guilt and/or despair.

Each of the situations listed above require faculty members to be acutely aware of the students in one's class. Regardless of the reasonings for the varying manifestations of epistemic exhaustion in response to epistemic challenges, the "likelihood of [students] becoming epistemically exhausted increases as the cognitive and emotional cost of undertaking that epistemic activity increases" (Satta, 2020, p. 5). Our challenge in teacher education courses, especially in foundations of education courses, is to mitigate epistemic activities by scaffolding the epistemic demands and preempting epistemic exhaustion through early discussions on how to engage in critical thought. For example,

I now begin my semester with discussions the first three sessions on the nature of critique, fact vs. opinion, epistemic vices, system justifications, etc., introducing students to many of the epistemic limitations early on so we can recognize those when they occur. Students are encouraged to challenge me when they believe I am exhibiting any of those same epistemic limitations. Regardless of how faculty encourage students to overcome epistemic limitations and system-justifying beliefs, we should recognize we are all situated in epistemically chaotic environments requiring extra pedagogical work.

Discussion

The goal of this article was to engage the reader in the challenges and limitations, both social psychologically and social epistemologically, faced by students within teacher education courses. In the complex and polarizing times in which we live, teacher educators should understand the critical roles in the sense-making process and expose students to various knowledge claims to critically evaluate alternatives. However, this becomes problematic considering the politically contested, and politically charged, nature of truth-claims through manipulation by propaganda, ideological agents, and other forms of power, social construction, and knowledge production" (Baird & Calvard, 2019). Critical evaluation requires engaging in epistemic matters, recognizing the epistemic vices, confronting those vices, dislodging system-justifying beliefs, especially when those beliefs act in non-democratic ways, and helping our students navigate the epistemic chaos and epistemic exhaustion often faced in critical course work.

There are few model epistemic agents in our complex society—no one corresponds to the idealized rationality of *homo philosophicus* (Baird & Calvard, 2019; Cassam, 2014, 2016). Acknowledging epistemic vices, recognizing when epistemic vices occur, mitigating those "suboptimal epistemic conditions," understanding normative epistemic activities, providing guidance for epistemically virtuous conduct in class, avoiding "idealizations of knowing" and messy pedagogical practices that do not contend with epistemic vices, should be at the forefront for every teacher educator (Baird & Calvard, 2019, Brady & Pritchard, 2003). Scholars may recognize this as just good reflective practice. However, while many of us consistently reflect on our pedagogy and the need to scaffold difficult material, we rarely consider the epistemological limitations of ourselves, our students, and the system-justifying beliefs that permeate the thoughts of individuals and groups, as well as our academic institutions.

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Looking Differently

Mapping Out Perspectives on Diversity Between Well-Intentioned White Teachers and Students from Diverse Backgrounds

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Abstract

This study examines how one school's well-intentioned White teachers and students from diverse backgrounds—all of whom belong to their school's working groups created to address issues of diversity—conceptualize diversity. Utilizing a qualitative case study, the study shows a discrepancy between what teachers and students felt comfortable discussing, how they conceptualized diversity, and the degree to which both groups evaluated the rate of progress being made within the school. Despite their explicitly good intentions, White teachers' failure to access and incorporate the views of students participating in diversity working groups served to perpetuate the centering of White middle-class perspectives in the school environment and hindered equitable approaches to students from diverse races and ethnicities.

Introduction

The demographic mismatch between teachers and students has been regularly addressed in the United States, especially since students of color became the majority student population in the school system (Maxwell, 2014; Meckler & Rabinowitz, 2019). This fact not only relates to ongoing discussions about how achievement gaps[1] are formed due to the disproportionate allocation of resources to majority White[2] schools (Paris, 2014), but it also calls for further investigation into how White teachers are working to achieve inclusive and equita-

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ble learning environments to close the opportunity gap (Douglas et al., 2008). Many studies have focused on how White teachers understand diversity in their classrooms and what limits their perspectives and practices in terms of achieving social equity and justice in education.

However, few studies focus on the disconnect between student and teacher perceptions of their school's efforts to create a more equitable learning environment. My study sets out to fill this gap by explicating teacher and student conceptualizations of diversity at a large Midwestern high school in which mostly White teachers instruct an increasingly diverse student body. Specifically, this qualitative case study (Merriam, 2009) asks how White teachers approach the school's efforts to support diversity and what students from diverse backgrounds think about the way diversity is addressed by their teachers. Analyzing the intersection of these viewpoints highlights the vital role students play in creating successful diversity programs in schools as their teachers strive to create more equitable learning environments.

Rationale

While student demographics have changed, the racial makeup of K-12 teachers has not, as 4 out of 5 teachers in U.S. schools are White (Meckler & Rabinowitz, 2019). In response, school administrators and curriculum supervisors in predominantly White institutions are working to provide professional development opportunities for faculty in an effort to create more culturally responsive schools. Teachers also work to better understanding the implications of diversity for their teaching content by attending related programs and events within and outside schools and, afterwards, increasing the number of inclusive texts they use. Teachers also create school-wide events and programs in which their coworkers and students can participate to enhance their understandings of diversity (Schick, 2009). Still, these well-intentioned teachers' efforts to create more inclusive environments and teaching practices have limits. Whether these efforts are successful cannot be measured through teacher and administrator self-reporting or surveys alone; student voice must be included in the professional development and evaluation process if the gap between the desired goals of such programs and the reality of students of color is to be closed.

This study examines how one school's well-intentioned White teachers and students from diverse backgrounds—all of whom belong to their school's working groups created to address issues of diversity—conceptualize diversity. Furthermore, the study analyzes students' thinking about their school's promotion of diversity and their views on how their White teachers should support students. Analyzing the

intersection of these two viewpoints highlights the potential contributions students can make by challenging White teachers' perspectives to create a more equitable climate in the school (Sleeter, 2017). This study looks beyond this initial step of having the student diversity group to examine whether the inclusion of students in diversity groups was enough to guarantee that their perspectives were acknowledged and incorporated into the school's efforts to create a more inclusive environment.

Concepts and Theoretical Framework

A framework is needed to critically analyze how White teachers conceptualize diversity, as well as to offer students a space to disrupt the dominant views that teachers have on diversity. For this study, the concepts of diversity and Whiteness are used to explain why there is a discrepancy between how well-intentioned teachers and students of color conceptualize diversity. Also, critical race theory (CRT) is utilized (Delgado & Stefencic, 2012; Fasching-Varner, 2013; Picower, 2009; Sleeter, 2017) as a fundamental framework and tool for how to disrupt Whiteness in the school and facilitate a more equitable school climate. CRT provides a strong mechanism to generate counter stories of non-dominant groups, which dismantle the status quo of power in society. In the following sections, I will outline the concepts of diversity and the theoretical framework of Whiteness, as it is informed by critical race theory, as lenses for this study.

Diversity

Throughout U.S. history, the meaning of diversity has been expanded to accommodate many areas. According to the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Extension Organization (2022), diversity refers to the presence of differences including race, ethnicity, gender identification, religion, sexual orientation, nationality, socioeconomic status, language, (dis)ability, age, religious commitment, or political perspective.

While most educators express support for students' diversity, it is unclear—sometimes to a controversial degree—how they do so, what aspects they focus on, and what their reasons for offering support are based on (Bettez, 2017). Scholars have observed that numerous schools that promote diversity in multicultural education mainly focus on celebrating traditions and food festivals (e.g., international days) and that this approach could be harmful to minoritized students because it perpetuates cultural stereotypes (Nieto, 2005). Some researchers, including Bettez (2017), have argued that to promote diversity in ed-

ucation, schools need to move beyond passive attempts to recognize diversity—such as by celebrating traditions and introducing food—to achieve equity in education. For this reason, identifying gaps in the ways teachers and students understand diversity lays the groundwork for a more critical examination of the ways it is supported in schools. Merely mentioning the term "diversity" can divert educators' attention from the needs of students from diverse backgrounds and from questioning structural inequality.

Whiteness

A critical examination of how diversity is supported within education is needed in order to achieve the equitable society most teachers wish to pursue. As research (Apple, 2012; Jenks et al., 2001) has shown, acknowledging the various aspects of diversity that each individual embodies is not the same as critiquing the hierarchy and power *within* each concept and the intersections between them (e.g. inequalities based on race and gender, race and class, or complexity of inequality based on race, gender, and class). White teachers may attempt to recognize students' diverse propensities, but their practices are strictly limited to the liberal framework of multiculturalism in education (Jenks et at al., 2001). Within this framework, the components of diversity are seen as being celebrated and tolerated without questioning the status quo of power relations. Specifically, well-intentioned White teachers who promote diversity from within the liberal framework of multiculturalism rely on an individual humanity of welcoming and tolerance in order to change the reality that minority groups face in their daily lives at school rather than engaging in a structural analysis of power between the dominant group (White) and minority groups in society (Cross, 2005).

The liberal approach to practices and support for students from diverse backgrounds can be explained through the concept of Whiteness (Cross, 2005; Picower, 2009). Whiteness is the ideology that White people don't recognize their privilege and benefits based on their race due to the attunement of social arrangements and institutions to White perspectives (Picower, 2009). Through Whiteness, White dominance and institutional racism have developed and reproduced the supremacy of Whites as a system.

A common question that arises from recognizing this system is, "How can Whiteness be disrupted?" Scholars in CRT argue that it should be disrupted and challenged through structural transformations beyond individual intentions and efforts (Sleeter, 2017). In this sense, schools' promotions for diversity cannot stop at the good inten-

tions of White teachers who select what they want to focus on or discuss in classrooms or schools, but should further examine structural inequality based on race, class, and other diversity factors that hinder social transformations. One of the tenets in CRT shows that paying attention to the counter stories of students of color moves diversity projects in schools closer to social justice/equity (Sleeter, 2017). Students' counter stories, especially those related to their daily experiences in school, shed light on what it means to be 'diversity support,' and can challenge dominant narratives, which are historically and socially constructed through Whiteness. In acknowledging student stories, well-intentioned White teachers can be more critically conscious of defining the diversity that they try to support in schools (Ullucci, 2011).

In light of the above literature review, this case study asks the following research questions:

1. In what ways do White teachers understand diversity and their school's support for diversity?

2. How do students perceive the school's promotion of diversity?

3. What are the implications for schools that include both teachers and students in the process of forming diversity programs?

Research Method

Background and Setting

The study was conducted in South High school,[3] which is located in a small, affluent, politically conservative town in one Midwestern state. The town is bordered by a city of approximately 135,000 people and two small towns and has a mix of urban and rural economic activities. The town has three public school districts, including South High community school district. The South High community school district serves seven elementary, two intermediate, two middle schools and one high school (South High School). According to the census (2021), the school district's per capita income is 25 percent higher than the state and its median household income is about 25 percent higher than the whole county. The poverty rate is 6.8%, which is three-fifths of the rate for the state, and about 45 % of the population in the area holds bachelor's or higher degrees. White students comprise the majority (80%), which is higher than the state's average (77%). Remaining students are Asian 5%, Black 6%, Hispanic 4%, and two or more races 5% in the school. At the time of this study (2017-2018), the racial make-up

of full-time teachers were all White,[4] while Asian students were 4.7%, Black 4.3 %, and Hispanic 3.6%.

The number of students of color has been increasing since their families move to the town from big metropolitan cities and as immigrant families. Responding to this demographic change, some teachers at the school took an initial step to organize working groups comprised of teachers and students to address issues of diversity. The teacher working group (24 White teachers) is voluntary and tries to bring colleagues together for professional development sessions. The teacher group and the curriculum supervisor offered students of color an opportunity to present their culture to the teacher meeting (e.g. Indian students' presentation). Another invitation was made to the school's LGBTQ+ student group, who shared hardship and challenges in the school. The curriculum coordinator also organized a diversity day with the aid of the teacher working group, and teachers and students spent a whole day learning about diverse cultures through student presentations and guest speakers. The teacher working group and the curriculum coordinator had already been actively organizing events and professional development opportunities related to diversity for more than a year before I started to interview them. I considered the White teachers who provided the events and the ongoing diversity group discussions as being well-intentioned White teachers.

Along with the teacher group effort, the curriculum coordinator in the school invited 28 students to create a diversity working group as a space for students to discuss their experiences in the building and in the surrounding community.

It was with two groups of teachers and students that I spent time and sought to learn more about how they understand diversity and the extent to which these efforts were successful. The meetings occurred in 2017-2018 and I interviewed participants from each group in a group setting as well as individual meetings. I conducted interviews with six teachers who volunteered from the teacher group, and I attended the student group's discussions (four times) and met individuals for an interview with volunteered students from the student group.

Data Collection and Analysis

Utilizing qualitative methods, I collected interview data from six teachers (three White female and three White male teachers) and six students (two Black females, one Black male, one biracial female, one Hispanic female and one White male) who belong to the working groups and who volunteered for the study[3]. Each teacher participated in one-on-one interviews that lasted around one hour. The students

had a one-hour small group interview so that they could share their experiences and thoughts regarding the diversity program and related issues in the school. The students from the small group were also invited to individual interviews.

The interview questions for small group and individual interviews were (a) how do you understand diversity? (b) how do you evaluate your school's diversity program? (c) what characterizes the culture or climate in your school or community?

All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. The data was coded capturing frequent themes and/or unique perspectives utilizing In Vivo coding first and then noting themes that emerged across interviews, using a constant comparative method (Saldana, 2015: Wertz et al., 2011). Combining my field notes with interview data, I narrowed the focus to main themes after multiple readings. The themes are sorted by those representing White teachers' perspectives and student perspectives, respectively.

Results

Based on the analysis, four themes emerged in the teachers' perspectives on diversity and their school's diversity program: (a) Selective focus, (b) Race as a charged issue (c) Dividing class based on race, (d) Limited perspectives on student needs. From the students' perspectives, three themes developed: (a) Teacher avoidance of issues, (b) Frustration with class assumptions based on race, (c) Insensitivity to the various needs of students of color.

White Teacher Perspectives

Selective Focus

White teachers in the school wanted to create a more inclusive environment inside and outside of their classrooms to reflect the recent changes in student demographics. With no exception, the six teachers were conversant in a range of aspects of diversity and stressed the importance of including race/ethnicity, class, gender identity, and sexual orientation in the school's diversity program. One female[5] science teacher said:

> I mean, you have to be open to the, the potential problems in, in, in all groups, whether its sexual orientation, or um, minority groups, or, or what have you. There are issues in all of those areas… Uh, I think all of those issues are important. It's not one over another; it's, it's- all of them have to be addressed.

However, these teachers put more emphasis on gender identity and sexual orientation as rapidly emerging aspects of diversity. This perception could be a result of a club students formed for those of non-hetero sexual orientation organized in the school and the presentation of their different identities to teachers in a professional development session. The effect of the club's presentation on teachers' understanding of and openness to diversity seemed quite clear. One female math teacher expressed her growing awareness of students' diverse gender and sexual orientations after the club presentation. She said:

> Our diversity group came in and talked to all of the teachers with the students, which I think just displays incredible bravery. They got up in front of all of their teachers in small groups and spoke about what we could be doing to help them and some of the struggles that they go through because they're different from their peers. And I think that, you know, that kind of kept the ball rolling.

Further, the reason gender identity and sexual orientation were more easily accepted by the school than other aspects of diversity was unveiled. Here is what the math teacher said:

> [Our state] has not been traditionally diverse. Um, we know somebody closer to us who was identified in that, in that group, of you know, sexual issues, gender issues, things of that, you know, we have a close friend or family member, somebody who's in that, so we're more willing to open up and ask them kind of the hard questions of what makes someone comfortable, but somebody who's different say racially or ethnically, um, they're not in my direct family.

Thus, the teacher's relatively comfortable feeling discussing and supporting gender identity and sexuality as aspects of diversity in school seemingly stems from White teachers' familiarity with the issue from their experiences with their families and local community. The community where the school is located has more direct experience with issues of gender identity and sexuality, which permits openness in the school and a sense of safety when students and teachers deal with these issues. An emphasis on gender identity and sexual orientation provides teachers with a sense that they are making progress in promoting diversity in the school. The female math teacher expressed her satisfaction with how diversity is discussed in the building by pointing out that the teachers were looking beyond race.

> Um, I think that it we-we are diverse in many ways. Um, not necessarily just, you know, we're not very diverse when it comes to ethnicity and race, but we are diverse when it comes to gender issues and, um sexuality, and we're fortunate in that aspect, but, you know, when

> you think diversity, I think a lot of people solely think, you know, race and cultural differences.

This quote demonstrates how White teachers, who have greater level of comfort discussing gender identity and sexual identity with students (rather than race), selectively frame diversity in the school.

Along with openness to gender identity and sexual orientation, another aspect of diversity that teachers and staff saw as creating a more inclusive school environment was to have more cultural events and programs related to students' family backgrounds. Here is what the math teacher said:

> Um, even in the standpoint of we had a diversity, uh, presentation from some Indian families came in to speak about their culture so that we could learn a little bit more…we also are going to have another one where groups of African American families are going to come in and talk about their culture and how it's different.

In fact, many teachers during the interviews mentioned that Indian students and Black students presented their cultural heritages and differences to teachers and staff in professional development sessions. Learning about different non-White cultures is a common practice related to diversity programs in schools across the country, although studies show that enhancing knowledge about different cultures does not guarantee deeper understandings of people from diverse backgrounds and can even lead to forming stereotypes (Bettez, 2017). Going beyond knowledge of different cultures is necessary if White teachers want to be more equitable practitioners, which I will discuss in later sections.

Race as a Charged Issue

While teachers and staff are more open to student diversity based on gender identity and sexual orientation, and tried to understand diverse home cultures, it was also found that teachers avoid contentious issues related to race/ethnicity. Teachers expressed fear of dealing with these issues when they arise between teachers and students of color, and when they arise among students themselves. The math teacher expressed her honest feelings about talking about race:

> I think that it's also a very charged issue right now, when we talk about racial diversity and all, with everything going on in the media and the police, and you know, that people are afraid to say the wrong thing, and so they just don't say anything at all.

Interestingly, the teacher also shared her observation of the school climate of fear of talking about race compared to her own experience as a high school student:

> We had a club in high school called MAPS. Like, the Minority Achievement Programs and any minority could be in… and we talked about it (race) more. Up here I think everyone is just so afraid to say anything. You know, and, and there's still a lot of under, you know, undercurrent of some, you know, prejudice and discrimination that you're almost afraid to say anything…You don't want to get into an argument because you don't want to offend somebody. You know what I mean, versus with gender issues.

The male social studies teacher had the same sentiment of being careful of saying things regarding race. He said:

> Cynthia [curriculum organizer] organized that diversity workshop day and that was positive and was a lot of dialogue…There are a lot of conservatives and a lot of Trump supporters and a lot of- you know, not overwhelming… but they're in my class, and so I have to, I find myself being more careful about just, political discussions… about the way I phrase things here than I was at my old school, knowing that there's kids that go home and tell their parents what I'm saying in the classroom.

Thus, White teachers are hesitant to have important conversations about contentious issues of race/ethnicity because they fear it will disturb the current climate of the school where Whiteness remains unchallenged. This is a big contrast to the previous section where teachers selectively supported students from diverse backgrounds in terms of gender identity and sexual orientation and by learning about racially/ethnically different cultures based on what is considered safe in the White, wealthy community.

Dividing Class Based on Race

Some teachers explicitly expressed an understanding of the growing diversity of social classes in their school. One male science teacher pointed out a change related to social class: "at least from the numbers that I hear, we have a growing, eh, um, diverse-diversity in socioeconomic status."

Furthermore, growing socioeconomic class diversity is viewed in terms of White and non-White students and families. One female associate teacher who helped students with special needs said that a class division among racial/ethnic groups was quite evident in the school:

> I think there is quite a break between, um, those who are of higher socioeconomic status, and between those who are not... [In] South High, who they think is mostly just the upper-class Caucasian people…, lower-class African-Americans feel disconnected, and um, struggling Hispanics and Indian-Americans who don't connect with that, uh, higher class also struggle.

Based on a growing gap between students of low and high socioeconomic status, teachers recognized struggles among students from low-income families and focused on providing more resources and help with their homework as an important aspect for supporting diversity in the school. In the meantime, recognition of the emerging class gap and support for students in lower classes should be examined further because a growing diversity in class emerges within as well as across races (Nasir & Hand, 2006). I will discuss this in detail in the later section "Students' Perspectives."

Limited Perceptions of Student Needs

When teachers were asked about the needs of students from diverse backgrounds, they expressed differentiated opinions depending on students' race/ethnicity. For instance, teachers viewed their non-Black students as being well-integrated into the school environment. The male social studies teacher said, "Hispanic students, Indian students, and ELL students are a very few, they are integrated well." According to this teacher's view, Latino/a, Indian students, ELL students, and other diverse groups were not very visible in terms of needs in the school due to their small numbers. Interestingly, despite each group having a similar number of students in the school, most teachers had a lot to say during interviews about the increase of Indian students, their high academic achievement, and the high pressure they fell to succeed. Below are some examples of teachers talking about Indian students' high achievement and the pressure they feel to succeed:

> And they have a lot of pressure, you know, because they're, um, family units tend to very, value education and be very focused on that, um but also be very strong as a family unit, too. So, I see them, you know, striving so hard and achieving really good things here. So, they tend to, you know, that population tends to do pretty well. But I do see that there could be some maybe, you know, anxiety and perfectionism and things like that (Female math teacher).

> [T]here are cultures that really want to push their students, and again I, a lot of times, think of Asian culture, which, you know sets this high expectation (Male science teacher).

Teachers perceived the needs of Indian students more clearly compared to their counterparts in other racial minority groups despite similar representations among diverse student populations. Teachers' *relative* perceptions toward Indian students' academic success became salient among diverse students' needs. Selective perceptions of student needs were shaped by the schools' dominant norm focusing on academic success, while the other needs of diverse students became invisible.

In other words, Indian students' needs among diverse students were outstanding because they were attuned to what the White, wealthy community and school expected of them.

Students' Perspectives

Teachers' Avoidance of Issues

Just as teachers recognized students' diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, students in the diversity group also acknowledged their school's selective promotion of diversity. In the meantime, it is noteworthy to students to point out the gap between recognition of sexual orientation and active interruption of bias. One Black female student said:

> Sexuality is a big thing. I think we need to talk about sexuality. I heard a lot like 'why are you acting so gay'… I feel like we educate them[teachers]…Teachers ignore what they heard, act like they don't hear about something derogatory related to sexual orientation.

This suggests that LGBTQ+ students in the school are still left to deal with discriminatory climates individually without teachers' interventions, although the school endorses sexual orientation as one aspect of diversity. The recognition of different orientations compared to the majority is a big step for the school, but the differences in perception among students and teachers reveal that important tasks remain to be completed before the ideal of diversity is fully realized.

Students also differentiated their positions from teachers' in relation to race and racism. Students from racial minority groups expressed their frustration with teachers' avoidance of contentious issues of race and racism. Another Black female student expressed her views regarding teachers' avoidance in school saying, "Teachers seem uncomfortable to talk about issues... Honestly, I want teachers to talk about more and am able to talk about issues [of race]."

One White male student who moved from Abu Dhabi shared his observations on the school climate of avoiding discussions about race, saying "I think… religion and race are social taboo and people might respect others' point of view." He, however, expressed the benefit of having conversations about the topic, observing that "absolutely, people could be informed. I am up for that." Because of his teachers' and school's climate of avoidance of race discussions, this White male student sought spaces outside of school to have these meaningful conversations. He said that he had a friend who engaged in discussions about difficult issues, which were not addressed in the school. The discussions usually happened in a country club where his friend and he went together. Here is what he said:

> I do appreciate discussions with my friend who is more conservative than me. I would say I am pretty liberal, but we had conversations and I appreciated it. He was my intellectual superior. We could discuss things [like race]. I could have intellectual conversations with him.

In contrast to the school climate of teacher fear and avoidance—which results in this White student's dissatisfaction—this student noted that even though he and his friend had different views, they could learn from one another.

The avoidance of talking about race and racism negatively affects students' daily school lives, which reinforces the feeling of being outsiders and lacking meaningful conversation in spite of the school's attempts to promote diversity (Douglas et al., 2008). Here is what one of the Black female students, who moved to the school from a large metropolitan city, shared about her daily experience in the school:

> Before I moved here, I didn't look at racism. But, here all things are related to White people. Students ask me where I am from. Teachers watch me. I have a feeling that others think I will do something wrong.

Similarly, the Black male student said he had negative experiences in schools based on his racial appearance; he concluded his comments by saying, "I don't think White girls respect me." Students' perceptions of school culture in which teachers avoid uncomfortable issues of race and students make derogatory remarks, especially about racial assumptions, have influenced their identities as students of color in a negative way.

As such, students wanted to go beyond the general promotion of diversity in the school to more open discussions and examinations of assumptions and stereotypes related to race, class, sexual orientation, religion, and other elements of diversity.

Frustration with Class Assumptions Based on Race

The most widespread perspective in the school and the community was a binary of wealthy Whites and "poor non-Whites," which extended to the student population. This class binary based on race critically affected the perspectives of White students and teachers when it came to students from racially/ethnically diverse backgrounds and diverse students' daily school experiences. Students shared that their economic status was automatically assumed due to their race/ethnicity. For instance, one of the Black female students in the diversity group shared her unpleasant experience in her school. She said:

> My White classmates were surprised to know I live in a house, not in an apartment. White students here think that apartments are a common housing type for people in poverty in the area where the school is.

Her classmates' assumptions were based on her status as a Black person, and they reacted to her with surprise when she told them she didn't live in an apartment, a sign of lower social class. The Black female student said that White students' bias toward students of racially/ethnically diverse backgrounds came from their limited experiences in the small, suburban, White community, which she called a "small town mentality." Even though she acted like she understood where the bias came from, she also couldn't hide her frustration and related that her friends from racially/ethnically diverse backgrounds had the same experience in the school. Another female student echoed the school climate of positioning students of color to the assumed lower class. She noted:

> White students think Black and Hispanic students don't come from good families, they are really struggling, don't have a lot of money. For example, when I was holding my friend's phone while she went to bathroom, my White classmate said 'Oh, you got a new iPhone.' And I said 'No, this is Savannah's phone.' He said, 'How could she afford that?' I think that is not fair to say that.

The dichotomy of economic status based on race reinforced White students' stereotypes toward students of color and caused frustration and resentment among students from racially/ethnically diverse backgrounds. The student's experience resonates with what White teachers said in the previous section. Teachers see this binary assumption in the school but are not aware of growing different class status within the same racial group. Further, White teachers and White students maintain their stereotype of the binary, which fails to respond to the need among students of color to be recognized as individually complex beyond race- and class-based assumptions (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003; Nasir & Hand, 2006).

Insensitivity to the Various Needs of Students of Color

As mentioned in the section on Teachers' Perspectives, students from diverse races/ethnicities—with the exception of Indian students—were not visible to teachers. One Hispanic female student expressed her frustration about the school's insensitivity to Hispanic students' needs. She said, "People think we eat tacos at Christmas. Bias toward Hispanic people is not considered as an important subject to deal with due to the small number here." She interpreted her teachers' lack of attention to Hispanic students' needs as being due to their small number. Even though students of color—from Hispanic to Black to Indian—are similarly represented in terms of numbers, teachers are more attuned to academic success than the need to address assumptions and

prejudices that these students face. In this climate, Hispanic students like the one described above feel left out.

In addition, students of color need the recognition of individual differences within a group. The female student said:

> People don't try to distinguish individuals of Hispanic people. People didn't try to recognize me with other Hispanic girls. I got called as a different name [her another friend]… I like to make people know better about feeling when they say something. Educate them to understand actual people not by race or other categories.

She pointed out that it is important to recognize that differences exist among members of the same racial and ethnic group. Her lived experiences reflect what scholars have labeled as essentialization (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003), which is attributing students' identities to a group character and is as harmful as not recognizing the cultural characteristics of students from diverse backgrounds.

In sum, how students perceive diversity, and the school climate should be a litmus test for successful diversity programs in schools where well-intentioned White teachers teach. Interviews showed that students had different voices and stories in relation to issues and agendas of diversity in the school. It is critical for White teachers to challenge the status quo of school climates where Whiteness is strongly grounded historically and socially to hear their students' voices about diversity programs. Taking this critical step moves diversity programming beyond self-satisfying events to attending to students' multiple and real needs.

Discussion

Based on Markowitz & Puchner (2014)'s study, which pointed out that it is unclear how schools promote diversity in spite of its growing popularity, this study tried to capture how well-intentioned White teachers and their students of diverse backgrounds—all of whom belong to South High School's working groups on diversity—perceive diversity and their school's attempts to promote a more equitable school culture.

For White teachers in the diversity group, gender identity and sexual orientations are selectively facilitated since they are seen as relatively safe in the White community[6]; race and ethnicity, meanwhile, are seen as acceptable topics for cultural celebration but not for discussion, due to fear of raising contentious issues. Observed issues by students, such as assumptions about race and class and derogatory remarks in the school regarding diversity, are not addressed in the school. The limited focus and avoidance of issues basically derive from

a willingness to maintain the status quo of dominant White power relations. The current manifestations of power—such as an unwillingness among White teachers to address race and the presence of world views that assume class based on race—are not challenged and as a result serve to perpetuate Whiteness as a system (Picower, 2009). The findings show that teachers' good intention to promote diversity needs to go beyond selective efforts. Teachers must ask, "How can Whiteness as a system be challenged to build a more equitable diversity program?"; and this question can be facilitated by paying attention to the needs and perspectives of students of color who attend their school.

Having close discussions with people from minority groups has proved to be a powerful and effective means for Whites to adopt transformative action and practices (Middleton et al., 2009; Sleeter, 2017; Tonbuloglu et al., 2016), and the disconnect between teachers and students at South High School shows that the mere inclusion of students when planning diversity programs is not enough to achieve this ideal. Tonbuloglu et al. (2016) observed that the actual implementation of a diversity curriculum in teaching, which goes beyond the mere rhetoric of agreeing on the importance of diversity, depends on constant effort and teachers' awareness of students' needs. Simultaneously, it is critical for White teachers to understand that racism and other types of discriminations are shaped by the wide social structures that produce and perpetuate inequalities among diverse groups so that they can see their avoidance or unwillingness to address the "tough issues" of race eventually help maintain the system for White dominance whether they intend this or not (Crowley & Smith, 2015). The analysis of Whiteness as a system fundamentally transforms the views and practices of well-intentioned White teachers both inside and outside of classrooms, giving them the perspective they need to pursue equity for *all* students in the school (Douglas et al., 2008). Without this critical awareness, well-intentioned White teachers fall into the pattern of trying to fit students of color into an educational system that is structured in favor of Whites. Furthermore, they never have the meaningful conversations with students of color that would help them to eliminate the school culture of negative assumptions and derogatory remarks toward diverse students (Douglas et al., 2008; Middleton et al., 2009).

Along with a critical awareness of current power relations in the wide social structure, understanding the lived experiences of those who belong to non-dominant groups is an important step for Whites if they are to transform their ingrained Whiteness into equitable perspectives and actions. In this regard, scholars (Bettez, 2017; Delgado & Stefencis, 2012; Middleton et al., 2009; Paris & Alim, 2017) emphasize the importance of listening to the counter stories of people from

diverse backgrounds. Middleton et al. (2009) explained that White people exposed to new thoughts and attitudes toward Whiteness need to articulate the discomfort they feel from seeing Whiteness as the dominant social system, and root their new awareness through "difficult dialogues" (p. 302) with those who do not belong the privileged group. Having these difficult dialogues enables Whites to move to a deeper level of understanding of privilege and oppression and construct greater racial consciousness and awareness of Whiteness as a social system that affects individual world views (Bettez, 2017; Crowley & Smith, 2015; Middleton et al., 2009).

In my study, students in the diversity working group shared stories of their diverse experiences in the school culture and showed they are needed counterparts to the well-intentioned White teachers to contextualize a diversity program that will develop equity and teachers' awareness of the systemic Whiteness, which has never been challenged before. Since students in the diversity working group identified the limitations of the diversity program at their school—such as pointing out the avoidance of addressing discriminatory remarks among White students toward students in LGBTQ+, assumptions about students' class status based on race, and stereotypes about Hispanic students—teachers and the school administrators need to delve into open dialogues with the diversity group students and work on challenging these assumptions and stereotypes. Also, teachers need to examine their selective foci on students in the LGBTQ+ group and on Indian students' academic achievements to widen their efforts to support the diverse characteristics of all students. In this sense, White teachers need to understand and learn how to challenge their fear of discussing race/racism in the school, which requires enacting courage. Bettez (2017) argues that connecting the concept of courage to a commitment to equity is a way of actually promoting equity rather than passively celebrating diversity. Teachers also need to examine why they do not address Black and Hispanic students' academic achievements as often as they do for Indian students by questioning whether they (un)consciously hold deficit attitudes toward their academic abilities.

It is promising that schools like South High already initiated diversity programs and organized diversity working groups for teachers and students. However, they would miss a great opportunity for them to make the school culture more equitable if teachers and the school take no further steps to create spaces to discuss serious issues and embrace students' needs by hearing students' daily lived stories in the school. Their endeavor would end up teachers feeling self-satisfied about their good practice without actually employing equitable education on students' end.

While this study is limited to one school' case, the research result will appeal to a larger audience within race and critical Whiteness studies in education because of its focus on what teachers and students in the same space think and do to disrupt White supremacy in schools, the salience of Whiteness in school cultures and society, and the placing of students and their stories at the center, rather than at the margins, of programming and professional development aimed at creating a race conscious and culturally competent public school.

Conclusion

Teachers who were interviewed recognized a wide range of factors that contribute to diversity in their school, but mainly stressed gender identities, sexual orientation and class; while race was acknowledged, teachers did not feel comfortable discussing it. Scholars have linked these approaches to diversity to Whiteness (Leonardo, 2004; Lopez, 1996). By contrast, students identified race and class as factors most in need of attention and discussion. When asked about class in the school, each student interviewed agreed that the intersection of race and class was evident each day in the building and that class was a greater basis for discrimination than the adults realized. However, gender identity and sexuality—as evidenced by the support in the building for LGBTQ+ student groups—received the most attention. Consequently, the research clearly identified a discrepancy between what teachers and students felt comfortable discussing, how they conceptualized diversity, and the degree to which both groups evaluated the rate of progress being made within the school. Despite their explicitly good intentions, White teachers' failure to access and incorporate the views of students participating in diversity working groups served to perpetuate the centering of White middle-class perspectives in the school environment and hindered equitable approaches to students from diverse races and ethnicities. As made explicit in the CRT framework, listening to students' counter stories is essential if well-intentioned White teachers are to realize the more equitable education they are aspiring to.

Notes

[1] The term 'achievement gap' is used due to its prevalent use that has been circulated, but I also point out that 'opportunity gap' is a more accurate term to explain why the differences between White students and students of color exist (Douglas et al., 2008).

[2] I use a capitalized White as well as Black to signal individuals as part of each group

that holds constructed characteristics of Whiteness and Black identities, which challenges unracialized and separate individuals. See Appiah's (2020) analysis of developing terminologies for the meanings of capitalized White as well as Black throughout US history. Appiah, K. A. (2020). The case for capitalizing the B in Black, *The Atlantic.* https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/06/time-to-capitalize-blackand-white/613159/

[3] All names in this article are pseudonyms.

[4] There were one Black female and one Indian female para-educator in the school.

[5] Due to their school schedules along with the diversity meetings, access to teachers for interviews for my study purpose was limited, which hindered obtaining each teacher's more personal backgrounds for understanding the individual view. For this reason, each teacher was not personalized with being assigned to pseudonyms. Instead, I described each teacher as 'female' or 'male' teacher with the subject they taught. Like the teacher case, no opportunity was given to obtain individual student' background, which result in describing them as 'female' or 'male' student along with their racial or ethnic characteristics.

[6] While the author revised this manuscript, a few states including the state where the research was conducted passed a bill banning books and transgenders' choice of bathroom use. It will be interesting to investigate how the school maintains, changes and navigates their relatively open attitudes to students' gender identities and sexual orientations.

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A Historical Analysis of Education Leadership During Texas School Desegregation

Viewing Racial Literacy on a Gradient

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Abstract

During U.S. school desegregation, education leaders played crucial roles that showcased their capacity to humanize their Black students. Their actions, we posit, reveal their level of racial literacy. Using oral history interviews and archival records, we examined school desegregation implementation through a racial literacy lens. We analyzed school district leadership in 1970s central Texas alongside Black students' resistance to white supremacist and antiBlack domination. We show how a white male leader's difficulty to see, hear, and heed his educational community largely explains Black desegregating students' resistance to sub-humanization. In this, we argue that the way leadership views a community determines how it interprets said community's concerns and the extent to which it can lead and humanize that community. This account adds to critical race research that links identity and education leadership, building on new racial literacy perspectives that situate it on a continuum with hegemonic and counter-hegemonic at opposite ends.

Keywords: school desegregation, racial literacy, superintendent, critical race theory, Texas

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Introduction

School desegregation in the U.S., particularly its implementation, showcased one of critical race theory's (CRT's) most simple yet profound premises: that the civil rights movement failed to eliminate white supremacy and antiBlack racism (Bell, 2004; Crenshaw et al., 1995). In this process, education leaders played critical roles that illustrated potential dangers of their under-developed ability to view as fully human their Black students, whose resistance against oppression has historically marked Black freedom struggles (A. James-Gallaway, 2021a). A vital tool apt for facilitating such awareness is racial literacy, which we conceptualize as one's understanding of social, cultural, legal, environmental, economic, and political manifestations and consequences of racism individually and institutionally.

Critical race theorists (Guinier, 2003, 2004; Guinier & Torres, 2002) and education leadership scholars (Horsford, 2011, 2014; Radd & Grosland, 2018) have explored high racial literacy's mitigating effects on white supremacy and antiBlackness. We name antiBlackness, or "antiBlack racism, as structural or institutional acts and supporting ideologies that oppress, subjugate, or subordinate Black peoples" (A. James-Gallaway, 2023b, p. 222), and white supremacy, normalized patterns of white racial advantage structured in domination and oppression (Gillborn, 2005), to specify how racial oppression affects Black peoples. Scholarship has shown that antiBlackness and white supremacy have precluded education leaders from creating institutional equity in the continued struggle to meet the needs of Black students (A. James-Gallaway 2023a; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). This body of work, however, has yet to examine through a racial literacy lens the leadership of white superintendents in implementing school desegregation or to consider how Black students navigated this power struggle. Understanding this facet of school desegregation is important because Black students tended to find themselves in districts led by white superintendents due to the wide-scale displacement of Black education leaders after the 1954 *Brown* decision (Tillman, 2004).

The purpose of this article is to examine the school desegregation implementation process through a racial literacy lens that emphasizes school district leadership in 1970s central Texas. We investigate a white male superintendent who implemented school desegregation, a policy intended to advance racial equality; this district leader, however, was unsupportive of this policy, making his efforts to enforce it especially fraught. In telling this story about a white male leader's difficulty to see, hear, and heed his entire educational community, we

also characterize how Black desegregating students responded to his leadership, highlighting their resistance against white supremacist sub-humanization. Highlighting Black students' perceptions allows us to illustrate how they struggled against racial oppression and understood the structural dynamics of their subjugation. We argue that the way leadership views a community determines how it interprets said community's concerns and, ultimately, the extent to which it can lead and humanize that community; furthermore, we demonstrate that Black students displayed resistance to white supremacist, antiBlack domination. This finding contributes to scholarship on how school desegregation upheld white supremacy and proved ineffective at establishing racial equality, work that clarifies the role of sub-humanization in the history of Black education and the part low, or hegemonic (Chávez-Moreno, 2022), racial literacy played in furthering antiBlack oppression. Additionally, this article nuances scholarly conceptualizations of racial literacy (Chávez-Moreno, 2022), challenging the binary frame commonly used to label folx as either literate or illiterate to propose that we consider it on a continuum.

To achieve our aims, this paper is structured as follows. In the next section, we review relevant literature on education leadership and school desegregation and then introduce our theoretical lens, racial literacy as nestled within CRT. To follow, we describe our methodology, then provide a historical narrative of school desegregation implementation involving LaVega Independent School District, its Black students, and its superintendent, Henry Cranfill. While numerous studies have briefly remarked on the various leadership obstacles that curtailed the school desegregation implementation process, our focus on this superintendent is novel as there is no other study, to our knowledge, that specifically interrogates how a white male superintendent imbued with white supremacist ideology implemented school desegregation. The historical narrative we offer showcases this figure and is animated with details about his educational, professional, and personal background; these details help show how a privileged white man with low racial literacy poorly implemented school desegregation in his school district. These circumstances created a situation in which Black students turned to resistance as a form of psychic self-preservation and agency, key principles of CRT in education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). In part, their resistance is an important part of our wider narrative that illuminates a counter-story against white supremacy in school desegregation. To close, we discuss racial literacy's utility, underscoring the importance of historical perspectives.

Research on K-12 School Desegregation and Educational Leadership

K-12 School Desegregation

School desegregation's complicated legacy involves widescale Black school closures and the systematic termination of Black educators (Bell, 2004; Siddle Walker, 2000; Cecelski, 1994). Research has demonstrated that from 1954 to 1968, many southern school districts embarked on a feat of political maneuvers around desegregation that kept their schools in good standing to receive federal funding by shuffling around paltry numbers of students (Bolton, 2005). Mounting federal pressure obligated these non-compliant school districts to begin eliminating dual school systems by the late 1960s, systems that underfunded Black education. As a result, this key part of the civil rights movement has typically defined school desegregation's historical significance by emphasizing the role of race and racism in the 1950s and 1960s.

Some school districts, like many in Texas (Schott & Marcus, 1982), waited until the 1970s to desegregate, indicating the Lone Star State's important yet under-examined lessons about the messy ways this policy unfolded (A. James-Gallaway, 2021a, 2021b). For instance, its prolonged evasion resulted in the federal government in 1970 placing virtually the entire state under court order to desegregate (Schott & Marcus, 1982). However, extant research on the state (e.g., Ladino, 1996; San Miguel, 2001) has produced an underdeveloped understanding of smaller, less well-known places like the Waco area, k-12 Black students' experiences, the school desegregation processes, and educational leadership.

Educational Leadership, the Superintendent, and School Desegregation

Research on superintendents and issues related to racial inequity establish that white supremacy and antiBlackness are continued problems (Grace, 2023). As one of the most public-facing positions in educational administration, the superintendency represents a political role that is in part shaped by a leader's self-efficacy (Whitt et al., 2015), capacity to make politically neutral decisions (Khalifa et al., 2014), and willingness to emphasize why they and their district are *not* racist (Briscoe & Khalifa, 2015).

Although most educational leadership scholars have attended to more contemporary issues in education vis-à-vis Black students and African American education, some have examined historical matters

around school desegregation, namely, Horsford (2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2014), Tillman (2004) and Karpinski (2006). Horsford's body of work highlighted the ways Black American superintendents, who attended segregated schools as pupils and subsequently led desegregated districts as administrators, sought to destabilize inequity to counter dominant narratives about school desegregation as a panacea for Black education. The field, however, knows little about white leaders who might have been less effective in managing school desegregation.

Given the studies of contemporary battles in Texas (Briscoe & Khalifa, 2015; Khalifa et al., 2014), historical exploration of this state can help identify potential roots of these longstanding issues. Mired in bureaucracy while working to balance competing demands, superintendents have technically been accountable to all populations in their districts despite some prioritizing certain subsections. These struggles characterize a long history of Black dispossession (Cecelski, 1994). For instance, recent Texas school closures directly implicated superintendents, illustrating how this process placed them at odds with other community stakeholders (Briscoe & Khalifa, 2015; Khalifa et al., 2014). By examining how educational leaders wrestle with equity, educational leadership scholarship can benefit from more nuanced understanding of the white superintendents who governed districts during the tumultuous school desegregation process.

Critical Race Theory, Racial Literacy, and Sub-humanization

Racial literacy is fitting for this project because its roots in CRT, which strives to "understand how a regime of white supremacy and its subordination of people of color have been created and maintained in America" for social redress (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. xiii), make it expansive enough to analyze institutional and societal nuances of white supremacy and antiBlack racism. Furthermore, school desegregation's prominence in CRT scholarship (e.g., Bell, 2004) make it apt for examining poor racial literacy in school desegregation. Since growing out of critical legal studies in the late 1970s and in the mid-1990s being adopted by education researchers (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), CRT has grown in use across education subfields such as educational administration (e.g., Khalifa et al., 2013); its application in history of education scholarship, however, is still emerging (A. James-Gallaway & Ward Randolph, 2021; A. James-Gallaway, 2022b; A. James-Gallaway & Turner, 2022). Racial literacy's foundation in CRT: (1) accepts that race is socially constructed but yields material benefits to people racialized as white while depriving people of Color from the advantages of whiteness; (2) is instructive across each education level and area;

and (3) clarifies interlocking systems that sustain white supremacy throughout society (Crenshaw et. al., 1995; Guinier, 2004). As a dynamic tool useful for illuminating race-based abuses of power, racial literacy helps showcase the conscious or unconscious enactment of white supremacy and antiBlackness in education alongside its opposition to racial liberalism (Oto et al., 2022).

Racial literacy, we contend, can clarify how racialized groups differently comprehend race and racism across social institutions (Guinier, 2004). Racial literacy emphasizes the institutional, rather than individual, dimensions of racial oppression. "Properly deployed," critical race theory legal scholar Guinier (2003) argued, "racial literacy… [signifies] the ability to read race in conjunction with institutional and democratic structures" (p. 120). Therefore, our conceptualization of racial literacy requires one to practice reflexivity in shaping their praxis according to the sociohistorical significance of race and racism (A. James-Gallaway, 2022a, 2022b).

Education leadership researchers have engaged racial literacy to examine how institutional racism influences leadership in K-12 schools (Horsford, 2011, 2014; Radd & Grosland, 2018). Horsford's (2011, p. 2014) foundational work identified how racial literacy can create racially competent educational leaders, who are prepared to foster equitable student achievement, challenge discriminatory school policies and practices, and take into account the historical context of the local community they serve. This work has shown that the cultivation of high racial literacy promotes Black humanization, opposes racial liberalism, and connects race and power (Guinier, 2003, 2004; Guinier & Torres, 2002).

Thus, we assess racial literacy not in a binary (e.g., racially literate/racially illiterate), but as a gradient, akin to a continuum. This act is crucial because one's low racial literacy is connected to their promotion of hegemony, whereas their high racial literacy is linked to the perpetuation of counterhegemony (Chávez-Moreno, 2022). The racial literacy gradient places hegemonic racial literacies on one end and counterhegemonic racial literacies on the other, situating the two as diametrically opposed. The space in between the two points clarifies where one's racial literacy stands relative to both ends of the continuum (Chávez-Moreno, 2022). For example, race-evasive discourse would sit near the hegemonic racial literacy end on this gradient, and antiBlack discourse would sit squarely on the hegemonic end of the spectrum. In contrast, messages that promote racial diversity, equity, and inclusion would sit near the counterhegemonic racial literacy end, but they would be surpassed by more direct counterhegemonic Black feminist or critical race messages. This continuum situates racial liter-

acy on a gradient that is more conducive to mapping how subtle shifts in the application of racial knowledge relate to one another.

Because virtually everyone can practice racial identification, even if one refrains from ascribing meaning to these differences, most everyone has some level of racial literacy. Therefore, distinguishing and interrelated factors of racial literacy include the level to which one: (1) acknowledges racial difference; (2) recognizes the sociohistorical significance of race and racism in a given national or geographic context; (3) practices reflexivity by critically analyzing how their identities, and those of others, allot or deny power or privilege; and (4) adapts their praxis (i.e., social navigation) based on these understandings to further racial justice.

Sub-humanization and racial literacy are connected. Wynter (2003) proposed that to be considered fully human (i.e., Man) in western society, one must be a white man. This view situates Black people as inherently sub-human, making Black women and girls doubly so. By society granting only white men full humanness, according to this logic, it discourages them from granting the same to other groups and from viewing their white maleness as the reason for their access to institutional power. Thus, the inability to recognize race as structurally significant is directly linked to the level of racial literacy one possesses. Bringing together these perspectives, we build on both the individual and institutional dimensions of racial literacy (Chávez-Moreno, 2022; Laughter et al., 2023) to analyze education as a structure and Superintendent Cranfill as a leader within it; we do so to underscore how both elements worked together to uphold white supremacy and antiBlackness. These perspectives spotlight how whiteness, as a racial identity, is socially constructed yet affords material benefits, which help to sustain racial hierarchies via the subjugation of people of Color broadly and Black people specifically. As we show, Cranfill's superintendency during desegregation reveals how his low racial literacy motivated his sub-humanization of the Black students in his school district.

Method/ology

Positionality

The first author's hometown is Waco, Texas, the locale under investigation. Her Black racial identity and P-16 public schooling in Texas inspired this project and her work more broadly, which explores historical questions about African American struggles for educational justice. The second author, a Black man, grew up in southern and Midwestern middle-class areas yet attended chronically underserved,

predominately Black schools (C. James-Gallaway, 2022). These experiences inspire his research, which centers on race and P-20 education stakeholders of Color. Collectively, our experiences as former K-12 educators who worked in predominately Black schools informs our research on racism in education and concern with Black education.

The Project

This article comes out of a wider project that used historical methods and focused on Black students' experiences with school desegregation implementation in Waco, Texas. It sought to highlight everyday experiences of this policy through the perspective of Black students who desegregated in the 1970s. To analyze Black students' experiences, however, other actors, such as school leaders, were examined, which provided a richer, more complex image of the oppression students faced.

The part of the project on which we focus in this paper provides insight from Black students whom the superintendent of focus led during the 1970-1971 school year in LaVega Independent School District (LVISD). Coupled with primary source evidence that characterized Superintendent Henry Cranfill, Black pupils' oral history recollections animated the extant historical record and informed our analysis of Cranfill's leadership during a hectic school year. Our guiding question was: In LVISD's implementation of school desegregation, what did the superintendent's leadership reveal about his attitude toward Black students? A sub-question we sought to address was: In this context, how did Black desegregating students understand and respond to said leadership?

Evidence and Participants

Oral history interviews, a primary part of this project, link our evidence collection process and narrators (i.e., participants). They represent primary historical sources gleaned from a recorded interview with a witness to or participant in an event (Yow, 2014). These interviews make more comprehensive and supplement the historical record and, aligned with CRT, can elevate the experiential knowledge of people of Color (Bell, 1992; A. James-Gallaway & Turner, 2022), who often challenge mainstream, white supremacist narratives (C. James-Gallaway & Baber, 2021).

Oral history interviews and written records complement one another because they are not in competition and together construct a more dynamic and complete image of the past (Portelli, 1991). Despite conventional beliefs, the written record can be fallible (Portelli, 1991).

Therefore, rather than measuring narrators' memories as fact repositories, oral history interviews supplemented the historical record of school desegregation in and around Waco and provided a sense of what these events meant to some of the individuals who experienced them. To strengthen the connection between the historical record and memory, we evaluated consistency between interviews by comparing them to one another and assessing how they enriched or extended written records. Unlike social science methods, historical and oral history methods discourage the use of pseudonyms because historical writing is expected to be transparent, so it helps make more complete the historical record (Yow, 2014).

The first author conducted oral history interviews from 2018 to 2020 with twenty-one former students and educators. To qualify for the study, narrators had to identify as Black and have schooled or worked in Waco-area school districts from the late 1960s into the early 1980s; they also needed to have attended and/or worked in both a desegregated and a segregated school. Narrators' average age at the time of the interview was sixty-four. Local high school alumni and church networks were used to contact potential narrators, as well as purposeful snowball sampling. Interviews, six of which were conducted in-person, four by video conference, and eleven by phone, included eight men and thirteen women and averaged ninety minutes.

Oral history interviews largely directed the search for written records. The first-hand insight from narrators guided where and for what to look in archives. Thus, the conduction of archival research involved collecting materials, such as newspaper articles, that animated the school desegregation implementation process. From pertinent school districts, written documentation was gathered, including school board minutes, memoranda, official correspondence, graduation records, promotional brochures, and legal documents from the 1950s-1980s to understand the trajectory of school desegregation implementation and key actors.

Analysis

Analysis overlapped with data collection and was guided by CRT, making apparent the endemic nature of racism and the significance of narrative. Once interviews were transcribed, the notes, or reflexive research memoranda (Charmaz, 2008), taken during interviews and archival visits were revisited; these memos captured how interviews were processed and connections made to the extant literature and previous interviews. As noted, interviews directed the search for relevant primary sources (Brundage, 2018), which showed a strong current of educational leadership material. Our use of historical methods for evi-

dence analysis involved creating a timeline of events around the theme of education leadership. Then, oral history interviews were segmented into discrete pieces and ordered chronologically. To animate and nuance this timeline based on written documents, oral history interviews were inserted.

Once the initial examination of archival material illuminated a chronological image of the school desegregation process, re-analysis of interview transcripts from 1970-1971 in LVISD was conducted. Then, re-examination of written documents helped construct a more detailed timeline of events. Interview transcripts were then simultaneously re-read and re-listened to before revisiting analytic memos from interviews and archival trips and notes taken during interviews. From this process emerged broad themes (e.g., seeing, hearing, heeding, sub-humanization) that were reconciled with the larger body of evidence. Last, interviews were re-compared to one another and analyzed in the context of relevant primary and secondary sources. This iterative process shaped a narrative about racial literacy in educational leadership during the implementation of school desegregation in Waco.

School Desegregation's Collateral Damage

The narrative below blends secondary scholarship with our original research, including background information crucial to a critical narration of the past that provides a fuller, deeper characterization of the place under study and its ethos.

Antiblackness and School Desegregation in Waco, TX

Waco, a hallmark of central Texas, is representative of places across the U.S. with protracted legacies of systemic violence against African Americans, occurrences that CRT understands as normal given the permanence of racism in the U.S (Bell, 1992). A number of the participants who contributed to this study recalled the regular and brutal lynchings that occurred at the beginning of the 20th century in and around Waco (Bernstein, 2006; Carrigan, 2004), recollections that stoked in them fear about attending school with white students. This area also served as a hub of Ku Klux Klan activity (Bernstein, 2006; Carrigan, 2004).

The central Texas city of Waco and its neighboring city to the east of Bellmead offer insight into what a federal representative from the Office of Civil Rights, called "a rather unusual situation, wherein part of [Bellmead's LaVega] school district lies in another city," Waco (LVISD meeting minutes, 1968, p. 5). In 1970, Census records indicate Waco's population was 95,326, and Bellmead's was 7,698. Histor-

ically, east Waco was part of LVISD, which included the segregated Estella Maxey Place housing project and various neighborhoods with single-family homes, where most Black LVISD students lived. In the late 1960s, LVISD's Black student population was 48%, a critical mass that during school desegregation incited outrage from Bellmead's rural working-class white population, who constituted the remainder of the district's students (LVISD meeting minutes, 1965, 1970). Discussing racial literacy in the context of white supremacy and class differences, Guinier (2004) underlines that "using race as a decoy offers short-term psychological advantages to poor and working-class whites, but it also masks how much poor whites have in common with poor blacks and other people of color" (p. 114). Living on the cusp of two school districts, African Americans persisted despite attending Waco-area schools that refused to comply with federal orders to desegregate until the 1970s (Newman, 1976).

Until the mid-1950s, LVISD had historically neglected to provide a high school education for its Black students. This inadequacy signaled the district's disinterest in humanizing its Black students by failing to furnish an equal education, that is, by failing to supply a resource it had for decades given to its white students. After going without a Black high school in LVISD for decades, in 1956, African Americans witnessed the erection of George Washington Carver School (G.W. Carver). Conspicuously, the school, led by principal J. J. Flewellen for its entire life, opened just two years after the Supreme Court passed the *Brown* verdict. This timing suggests LVISD was trying to avoid efforts to desegregate by finally working to equalize school resources (Bolton, 2005). The Black community also used the secondary school for adult education purposes, and it was one half of a cross-town rivalry with Waco's only other segregated Black high school, Alexander James Moore High School. Local African Americans regularly and enthusiastically supported G.W. Carver by, for example, fundraising to send its award-winning band to compete internationally, competitions they regularly won by a landslide ("Carver band," 1967; Later, 1967).

Buttressing AntiBlackness: Who Was Henry Lee Cranfill?

The superintendent leading LVISD, however, had little to do with these humanizing feats that unfolded amid Jim Crow. Cranfill spent significant time in predominately white areas of Texas, where patterns of antiBlack racial terrorism were commonplace. The following sketch of Henry Cranfill's life contextualizes his developmental experiences as a school leader in small, rural, white parts of Texas. One of eight children ("H. Lee Cranfill," 1966), Henry Lee Cranfill, Jr. was born in 1917 in Erath County, Texas, which is about 75 miles from Bellmead,

and died in 1992. His 1935 graduation from LaVega High School suggests that his family had moved closer to Waco in the preceding years ("Diplomas handed out," 1935*)*. His tombstone at Waco Memorial Park cemetery notes that he was a Sergeant in the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II.

Marrying Irma (née) King after high school, Cranfill led a traditional white Southern life. In the 1940s, the Cranfills had three children, Carol, John, and Charles, all of whom graduated from LaVega High ("Miss Cranfill," 1965; "Miss Hilary Lynne Booth," 1969; "Central Texans," November 12, 1970). Virtually all their high school classmates were white, as each child graduated before LVISD desegregated, when it was practicing a form of racial segregation that dehumanized its Black students in giving them a separate and unequal education (A. James-Gallaway, 2020). Newspaper records portray his family's relatively prominent social standing in the Waco community. For example, local newspapers published each of his children's lengthy, photo-inclusive engagement, rehearsal dinner, and wedding announcements alongside regular mentions of Cranfill's recreational hunting activity and his membership on local advisory boards ("Central Texans," 1970; "UF contributors' meeting," 1972; "Miss Cranfill," 1965; "Large 9-point," 1967; "Miss Hilary Lynne Booth," 1969). These depictions indicate an adherence to white southern custom that dictated a segregated personal life guided by strict gender roles, practices that upheld white supremacy, patriarchy, and antiBlackness, as well as classism while reflecting the authority Cranfill assumed as a white male patriarch.

In 1952, Cranfill left "China Spring [a small city minutes from Bellmead that adjoins Waco to the northwest] to succeed B. B. Parham as [the school district of] Oglesby's school chief" ("Coryell County," 1952, p. 3). Cranfill served as Oglesby's superintendent before joining LVISD in 1963 as the district's curriculum director (LVISD meeting minutes, 1963). By the following year, the board had instated him as superintendent, and Cranfill remained in this position until he retired one year early after the 1972-1973 school year at the age of 55 ("La Vega school head," 1973).

In 1970, federal mandates came to a head, requiring LVISD to unify its racially separate school system; this move represented high racial literacy on the part of U.S. law and those working to enforce racial equality mandates. Simultaneously, Cranfill publicly refused to desegregate his district, reflecting his lack of preparation to equitably manage a school district trying to dissolve its dual schooling systems (Harris & Washington, 1968). How Cranfill saw and heard his Black students directly contributed to why he worked to implement school desegregation in the way he did—in a way that intended to sustain

white supremacy. Reaching this point foreshadowed the Black Waco community's short-lived enjoyment of joyous occasions at G.W. Carver. By the early 1970s with Cranfill as superintendent, federal court orders forced LVISD, which had three Black and four white schools, to fully desegregate. In secret meetings with attorneys and district judges, the LaVega Board of Trustees, which included Cranfill, was still deliberating the logistics of desegregating their non-compliant district a week before the 1970-1971 school year started (LVISD meeting minutes, 1970). The school board exercised incredible white supremacist power that reflected how racism was institutionally embedded in LVISD's power structure (A. James-Gallaway, 2023a).

School Desegregation and AntiBlack Violence

Just one year earlier, the board had pushed out LaVega High School principal Tom E. Pratt. His resignation was "a protest to the board's action in revoking a previous decision to follow desegregation guidelines" ("La Vega principal quits," 1969). In response to the board halting plans to desegregate again and again, Pratt resigned, a move representative of moderate white opposition to the board's efforts to prolong segregation. As noted above, immediately following the 1954 *Brown* decision to desegregate schools, LVISD's school board decided to build the only Black high school it would ever have, G. W. Carver, which opened in 1956. Part of a broader strategy to lessen the gap between Black and white educational programs, equalization schools like Carver represented an attempt by whites to quiet the protests of local Black residents by giving them a resource they had long been requesting, in this case, a high school (Bolton, 2000). Opening a Black high school in 1956 was highly symbolic and problematic in that it epitomized white refusal to comply with federal school desegregation requirements, and it underscored how poorly white powerholders regarded Black education (Anderson, 1988). This refusal, white powerholders hoped, would be bolstered by a Black community who was pleased to have a new school, decreasing their likelihood to agitate for deeper equality via desegregation. Therefore, Pratt's withdrawal also highlighted antiBlackness, which largely accounted for white refusal to attend formerly segregated Black schools.

Without formally notifying the Black community served by G.W. Carver, LaVega administrators shut down the district's only Black high school just days before the 70-71 school year began. They, however, never admitted to Black students or their families that they had done so. As detailed elsewhere (A. James-Gallaway, 2020), oral history interviews revealed Black students had to learn of G.W. Carver's closing through the local news, community meetings, word-of-mouth, or

redirection after showing up for the first day of school. Even the only Black member of the LVISD school board, Rev. La Dell Thomas, admitted "he did not know the school board was going to present a plan to the court" for approval to close Carver ("La Vega reviews complaints," 1970, 1A). This episode reflects how keen white board members were to use surreptitious deception in the interest of white supremacy and antiBlackness. Evidently, the white school board majority sought to maintain white dominance throughout each facet of the school desegregation implementation process, something Texas school boards would continue to do in the coming years (A. James-Gallaway, 2023a). As a result, suddenly, 1300 Black students found themselves rerouted from G.W. Carver to the district's previously all-white schools ("LaVega boycott continues," 1970). In contrast to G.W. Carver, a 14-year-old school, the district forced Black students to attend LaVega High, which was more than sixty years old and lacked sufficient space for all students. Although Black students' repeated attempts to relay their concerns about the closure went unseen and unheard for weeks, the board ignored their expressions of distress ("Negro pupils," 1970).

Generally, narrators interpreted the contextual factors surrounding the decision to close G. W. Carver as deeply personal. Many students reported feeling intentionally disrespected by Cranfill, whom they viewed as hating and therefore targeting the Black community. Narrators had some faint, broad sense of school desegregation, but their material experience with it was virtually non-existent because LVISD, like many other southern school districts, held out as long as possible to desegregate. Although some narrators understood that school desegregation might bring them better educational resources, most in this study viewed the end of segregated Black schools unfavorably (A. James-Gallaway, 2022b).

Within the first two weeks of the school year, other issues confronted African American students in LaVega schools. Black pupils faced a hostile climate that "made it so we couldn't learn nothing," according to a 2019 interview with former La Vega High School student and walkout participant Michael Bass. Black students' poor treatment was exacerbated by what many saw as discriminatory dress code demands, the firing of a Black coach, and lunch policies that did not provide them space to sit or time to eat—a situation made worse in local businesses closing their shops to Black patrons during students' lunch hour ("La Vega boycott continues," 1970). During a 2018 oral history interview with former La Vega High School student Wanda James, she noted how this dehumanizing practice "made you feel like less than a person." These sentiments and events spurred Black students' strong sense of protest. Walkout participant Marshall Baldwin's recollections,

based on a 2016 oral history interview, align with contemporary messages of civil disobedience that supported Black students' decision to openly challenge their abuse (Graham, 2006).

Administration's willful ignorance provoked G.W. Carver students' anger, and many decided to display their discontent in a clear, concerted act of resistance: a walkout. These factors motivated African American pupils to unite in this, by most accounts, leader-less, spontaneous show of force, which started at LaVega High around 10am on September 14, 1970 ("LaVega boycott continues," 1970). Hours later, about 130 of these former G.W. Carver students marched approximately three miles back to their former school ("LaVega boycott continues," 1970). Thereafter, many students boycotted school for the rest of the week (Matthews, 1970).

Absolving Whiteness Due to Black Resistance

In response, white male administrators wielded their power, threatening to use physical violence to control Black students. Specifically, superintendent Cranfill grew outraged. His fury was directed at Black students, who refused to sit idly by while the district devastated their educational legacy. Uninterested in working to understand why his Black students were so upset, Cranfill called their list of demands "fantastic" ("Negro pupils," 1970, p. 6); Black students had organized this list to guide redress for the school closure and their mistreatment. In Black students making demands of Cranfill, they threatened his sense of white male authority and challenged the white supremacist status quo. On the day of the walkout, Cranfill commented, "I wish I had 100 National Guardsmen, but they say you can't have them unless local protection breaks down …. I guess someone will have to get killed first" ("Violence feared," 1970, p. 3). Cranfill's remarks harken back to President Dwight Eisenhower calling in the National Guard to in 1957 to facilitate the integration of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas (Anderson, 2010). Wishing for either law enforcement to suppress student dissent or death, Cranfill struggled to manage the blowback from the part he played in closing G.W. Carver. Cranfill went on to express, "I don't think the situation can get much worse without bloodshed" ("Violence feared," 1970, p. 3). Cranfill's language squared with white Waco mobs' lynching rhetoric (Bernstein, 2006) in his wishing physical harm upon dissenting Black students. Despite high student participation in the subsequent boycott that resulted in a near 50% absenteeism rate, LaVega High School principal Donald Richardson declined to close the school while "hop[ing] no one g[ot] kill[ed]" (Royals, 1970, p. 1A). This wish tracks with Cranfill's cries of bloodshed. Commentary from both Cranfill and Richardson was laced

with a mocking tone indicating their belief that Black students were innately violent and bloodthirsty, a belief that served to justify using physical violence against them.

On Tuesday, September 15, 1970, *Waco News-Tribune* reported the following details around the walkout ("LaVega boycott continues," 1970). Involved students had delineated thirty-five grievances and "vow[ed] not to return to LaVega High until the phased out Carver High [was] reopened" (p. 1). In response, superintendent Cranfill labeled his Black students "impossible," language that once again invalidated them and their concerns (p. 1). Cranfill also admitted he believed "they are just unhappy with integration, the loss of their symbolism, and the loss of their own identity with Carver High School" (p. 1). Embedded in Cranfill's comments was the condescending assumption that Black students had nothing about which to be upset, indicating his inability to see how race and racism influenced the power he exercised as a white male superintendent or the institutional reach of white supremacy. Black students debunked Cranfill's assumptions, expressing aspirations for their former school; "they didn't care if Carver opened as a high school or junior high as long as it opened …. If Carver was converted to a junior high school then high school age students would willingly attend La Vega" (p. 1). While they understood the necessity of change, former G.W. Carver students were unwilling to accept the school's complete end. In many ways, these Black students showed dynamic leadership capacity and high racial literacy that Cranfill lacked, exhibiting level-headedness and self-determination.

Disrespect Is Earned When Respect Is Not Received

The superintendent's indignities persisted. Cranfill ended the year by sending numerous notes to local and state law enforcement agencies, thanking them "for the wonderful and efficient cooperation extended us during the troublesome school year" (LVISD meeting minutes, 1971). These notes are unique because Cranfill had not previously expressed this kind of gratitude. These notes demonstrated that he viewed Black students as troublesome, warranting law enforcement's assistance in controlling them. As a white male district leader, Cranfill struggled to humanize the Black students in the district he led, an issue linked to the inherent power and privilege he enjoyed as a white man.

Marshall Baldwin's (2016) interaction with Cranfill at his 1971 graduation ceremony captures many Black students' feelings at this time.

> When I got my diploma, I went to shake Cranfill's hand, and I didn't. And every Black kid after me did the same thing, just got the diploma and walked off. And I wasn't—consciously, I wasn't trying to start nothing, but I remember what I had been through the past year, I

> remembered that. You [Cranfill] were one of those in power that could have made a difference, and you didn't. You turned your back to it. You turned a deaf ear to it. You just let things go the way they shouldn't—that they went. Had you stood up and said, "Wait a minute, we can do better," see, I would have had a lot more respect for him. But he didn't. So, I didn't feel like I needed to shake his hand. (p. 42)

Black students saw no use for decorum with Cranfill given his leadership. Declining to shake Cranfill's hand at graduation en masse represented a formal accusation that Cranfill had misused his power; it also reflected that Cranfill had made his Black students feel that he saw them as sub-human. In subverting conventional expectations at their graduation ceremony, Black students exposed Cranfill as a school district leader with incredibly poor racial literacy, that is, as one who lacked the ability to identify the institutional dimensions of racial power or how he upheld them (Guinier & Torres, 2002). Black students saw why Cranfill struggled to hear their concerns and heed their advice. This episode demonstrates the importance Black students placed on giving the respect one expects to receive, and it clarifies why Cranfill's white supremacist, antiBlack leadership did not warrant a handshake.

Seeing, Hearing, Heeding: Leveraging Hindsight with Racial Literacy

Viewing Cranfill through a CRT and racial literacy lens (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Guinier, 2004) exposed him as the standard rather than the exception and typified the structural antiBlack racism that pervaded the school desegregation process. Cranfill, whose actions were unremarkably violent—by history's standards and today's—did not operate in a vacuum. His accomplices were regular people who sat on the school board, taught in classrooms, readied their children to learn each day, and led their respective schools in LVISD. Cranfill's behavior suggests he had decided to (only) lead the white part of his district—seeing (only) them as fully human—while disregarding the educational needs of the Black part of his district. His commitment to sub-humanize Black people motivated this strategy. Moreover, Cranfill's allegiance to the white stakeholders in LVISD was undeniable. His white racial identity, his masculine gender identity, and his middle-class identity motivated his refusal to grant African American children a humanizing education. As a white working-class area with few Black residents, Bellmead was characterized by numerous figures like Cranfill, who saw Black students and their pleas to be fully humanized as threats to the prevailing social order (Guinier, 2004; Roediger, 1991).

This article extends research on how maleness and whiteness shaped school district leadership and how they historically positioned leaders to neglect Black students and their pleas for dignified treatment. Overlapping with other systems of oppression, racial exclusion, white supremacy, and antiBlackness have historically played a chief role in determining access to essential resources—both material and symbolic (Harris, 1993; Mills, 1997; Roediger, 1991). Cranfill's leadership practices were informed by his white, male, middle class identity, which unfolded in a white working-class context that was deeply hostile to African Americans. This hostility transferred to Black students in his district and proved detrimental.

This article makes a salient departure from much extant racial literacy scholarship by examining an ardent white supremacist, who promoted a hegemonic social order (Chávez-Moreno, 2022). Poor racial literacy was evident in administrators denouncing Black students as fully culpable for the turbulence around school desegregation rather than leaders admitting their role in its mismanagement. In particular, Cranfill's misrecognition of his Black students as the problem, not the white supremacist, antiBlack systems he upheld, indicated his poor racial literacy. His brash language reflected his awareness of the reasons Black students were upset, but his poor racial literacy allowed him to label their concerns trivial. Such dismissal exemplifies Cranfill's struggle to deconstruct the significance of race and his belief that Black people lacked the civil, human right to protest. Low racial literacy prevented him from acknowledging the ways desegregation disproportionately burdened African Americans (Cecelski, 1994; Tillman, 2004; Walker, 2000) and obscured his understanding that he had disregarded his Black students' humanity and their race-based grievances. In contrast, Black students' actions were rooted in robust racial literary, of the counterhegemonic ilk (Chávez-Moreno, 2022), that helped them identify their superintendent as a major source of their trouble. Their acts of defiance, punctuated by the walkout and their refusal to shake Cranfill's hand at graduation, portray their willingness to resist sub-humanization.

This case furnishes new insight on school desegregation dynamics in central Texas with a critical eye toward the superintendency, Black education, and racial literacy. By building and applying well-developed racial literacy, Cranfill could have bypassed much of the chaos in which he found himself embroiled. This competency would have supplied him with the tools necessary to ensure his school community was humanized, seen, and heard, actions linked to a faithful heeding of their woes. Allegiance to white supremacy, however, undercut his leadership and tarnished his reputation. Reflecting on his leadership's

inadequacies, Cranfill could have challenged his white supremacist outlook and used his power to register Black student dissent legitimate and worthy of engagement. Had Cranfill worked to *see* the full humanity of his Black students, he would have likely been able to *hear* their cries for dignified treatment—conduct that would have, at least, notified them of their school's closure, or, at best, solicited their thoughts on the matter. Seeing and hearing in such a way could have led to Cranfill's *heeding* his Black students' concerns. Perhaps he would been unable to single-handedly save the school, but his advocacy might have inspired compromise or motivated school personnel to treat them more humanely; it most certainly would have shown Black students that he cared about them and afforded him more handshakes at graduation.

Implications and Conclusion

Although Cranfill's issues cannot be fully explained by his poor racial literacy, this perspective nuances understanding of white supremacist education leadership. Education scholars, therefore, can benefit from paying greater attention to how one sees, hears, and heeds the communities one studies and/or serves. Ignoring historical context not only compromises humanizing research; it also contributes to the sub-humanization of historically marginalized and underserved peoples (Yoon, 2018). Although instrumental, well-developed racial literacy alone is not a panacea for racial justice. While we posit it as an initial step toward educational equity and justice, it is part of a wider social justice praxis.

Teacher and school leader preparation programs can learn from this historical episode, ensuring that they are intentional about challenging the status quo of white supremacy and antiBlackness, encouraging the development of high racial literacy (King, 2022; Oto et al., 2022). We have shown how LVISD's educators declined to view Black students as thinkers or valuable contributors to a new school climate that should have welcomed and included them. In this narrative, Cranfill and the larger white LaVega community disregarded Black humanity, much like the lynching mobs that murdered numerous Black Wacoans decades earlier (Bernstein, 2006). Racial literacy helps illuminate that white supremacy and antiBlackness emboldened those in power to disregard the interests of Black children.

Our illustration reveals that white supremacy and antiBlackness determined whose concerns were valid and worthy of thoughtful response. This episode stresses the significance of race alongside other social identities in shaping educational experiences, as Cranfill's white racial identity, masculine gender identity, and middle-class status con-

verged to create a worldview with white middle-class men at the center and presumptively impoverished Black communities on the periphery. In this historical account, the superintendent refused to register Black students' cries for dignity in part because he did not view their humanity as equal to his. Thus, his poor racial literacy undermined their efforts to be seen, heard, and heeded. Black students' replies, however, demonstrate how they refused to succumb to Cranfill's and LVISD's efforts to subjugate them.

Recent events demonstrate that political leadership in the state of Texas is actively and ardently upholding hegemonic racial literacy. The Lone Star State has passed laws that restrict teaching about race, diversity in K-12 classrooms alongside the legislative dismantling of multicultural, diversity, equity and inclusion programs on higher education campuses (Legal Defense Fund, n.d.). These restrictions have both a long history and significant implications for the school and district leaders expected to implement them (C. James-Gallaway & Dixson, 2023). While practitioners and scholars adjust to this new normal, counterhegemonic racial literacies remain vital to the continued subversion of these white supremacist policies. Subversion might look like education leaders, as well as other practitioners and scholars, engaging reflexively to more deeply understand the structures in which they work to identify opportunities for resistance, practicing what some scholars describe as equity-mindedness (C. James-Gallaway & Wilson, 2023). Additionally, education leaders, other practitioners, and scholars must consider the needs of the racially marginalized communities they may serve, no matter their size. That is, if a small number of Black students are in a predominantly white school setting, it is vital to consider how their needs might be equitably centered. This could mean practitioners do a deeper dive into how they support or undermine Black students in such an environment.

Ultimately, we have demonstrated how a more nuanced understanding of white supremacy can foster better appreciation for Black students' resistance to it and efforts to sub-humanize them. In racially hostile settings with long legacies of racial violence, Black Waco students navigated oppressive contexts that sought to sub-humanize them, rendering them unworthy of humanizing perception, interpretation, or reaction. Thus, Cranfill's antiBlack actions paralleled the same notions of disposability and cruelty that had murdered countless Black people in Waco and beyond. The continuation of these issues across society underlies our call to heighten racial literacy toward counterhegemonic ends (Chàvez-Moreno, 2022) in education as a vital step toward prioritizing Black dignity in education administration. History shows us such is long overdue.

Note

[1] After drafting an early version of this manuscript, the first author drew on the seeing, hearing, heeding framework we present here for a book chapter (A. James-Gallaway, 2022a).

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Teaching From the Margin

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Notes on Navigating a Multicultural Foundations Course at a Predominately White Institution

Valerie Hill-Jackson

Abstract

Situated in West's (1993) politics of difference theory, this article is based on the author's experiences teaching a multicultural foundations course as a Black faculty member for sixteen years at a predominantly White institution (PWI). Employing autobiographical self-study as a methodology, challenges and strategies for teaching while Black are outlined in a three-level typology—which includes the naiveté, transformational teaching, and belvedere levels—assists marginalized instructors in reflecting on and reconciling oppressive PWI classroom environments to thrive in one's career. The complex nature of teaching within marginalization at PWIs is addressed throughout.

Keywords: multicultural foundations courses, autobiography, self-study, marginalization, predominantly White institutions, Black faculty

Precis

At the time of this article's completion, I have taught a multicultural foundations course at a predominantly White institution (PWI) for just over 16 years. Although multicultural foundations courses today universally include an orientation toward diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and is a requirement for undergraduate students (de Novais & Spencer, 2019; Justice, 2020; Miller & Struve, 2020), the majority continue to turn out disaffected students (Cole & Zhou, 2014;

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Denson et al., 2020; Parker III et al., 2016; Vianden, 2018; You & Matteo, 2013). While any success I had in teaching the multicultural foundations course at my institution is its own debate, over the years I received various emails from my students—mostly positive—who thanked me for my efforts to learn alongside them as we unpacked diversity issues in education.

An email from a former student in 2014, whose name I immediately recognized from the thousands of students I have taught, ushered in a tidal wave of feelings. I stared at my screen for several minutes. I read the email slowly. Then I reread it. An excerpt is as follows:

> *I was a student of yours as an undergraduate. I don't remember the precise year, but it was most likely 2005 or 2006. I graduated [from the department] in 2007. While in your multicultural education class, we had a conflict…. I had never had a teacher of color, nor had I been raised in an environment that embraced diversity. Most of the department student body (at the time at least) mirrored the makeup of classroom teachers: mostly white, females of privilege.*

I reflected on this student's communication in the wake of a so-called reckoning on race in higher education (Bartlett, 2021; Harris, 2020; Haynes & Bazner, 2019; Segal, 2021) and as calls for more authentic conversations focused on the experiences of Black faculty continue to mount (Croom, 2017; Dade et al., 2015; Edwards & Ross, 2018; Gregory, 2001; Louis et al., 2016; Tillman, 2001; Young & Hines, 2018).

Consequently, this article is not a re-articulation of the oppressive experiences of marginalized faculty in academia; those assertions via books, reports, position papers, articles, and conferences have already been made ad nauseam. Apart from a few scholars' treatment on the topic (McGowan, 2000; Patton & Catching, 2009; Pittman, 2010; Sleeter, 2017; Stanley, 2006), there are limited practical solutions that Black or marginalized faculty might employ to safely traverse, in terms of personhood and career, the multicultural classroom space at PWIs. Black faculty need to know how to avoid the hazards of teaching about diversity at institutions while being productive in the role.

In the pages that follow, I relate my own story teaching a multicultural foundations course at a PWI in a southwestern state—one of the largest public institutions in the nation. I share these experiences, which I think are characteristic of marginalized instructors, and explore the complexities, complications, and paradoxes of being a Black professor teaching a multicultural foundations course at a PWI. I also offer some suggested strategies as part of teaching multicultural foundations courses that will help clarify some of these issues for novice Black faculty. Framed in West's (1993) politics of difference theory, this paper begins by briefly proposing a theoretical framework of exis-

tential empowerment for the "progressively co-opted" (p. 3) instructors within multicultural classrooms of the academy. Second, I used autobiography and self-study to analyze 16 years of teaching reviews as the backbone of the data corpus of my study. Next, I present a *Levels Theory for Black Faculty at a Predominantly White Institution* (hereafter Levels Theory) as a broad concept or typology with interdependent levels—which includes the naiveté, transformation, and belvedere levels—for considering the issues experienced by marginalized instructors teaching multicultural foundations courses at PWIs. I proffer that the three-level typology assists Black faculty and other marginalized instructors in reflecting on and reconciling oppressive PWI classroom environments to thrive in one's career.

Theoretical Framework

The impressions of West (1993) underpin this article as he advises that Black intelligentsia should become critically aware of the *politics of difference* that reveals the very operations of power within their immediate work contexts, which:

> puts them in an inescapable double-bind—while linking their activities to the fundamental, structural overhaul of these institutions, they often remain financially dependent on them. For these critics of culture, theirs is a gesture that is simultaneously progressive and co-opted…There is, of course, no guarantee that such pressure will yield the result one wants, but there is the guarantee that the status quo will remain or regress if no pressure is applied at all. (pp. 3-5)

Considering such marginalizing effects, proposals to support Black faculty in academic spaces abound (e.g., Cupid, 2020; Endo, 2020; Jones et al., 2020a; Jones et al., 2020b; Thompson & Louque, 2005). Such ideas have credibility because the road to promotion and tenure is circuitous, and for marginalized faculty, their research, service, and teaching agendas can be negatively impacted. However, teaching remains an understudied feature of this tri-fold mission in the academy, requiring serious attention and deliberation as many Black faculty have been denied permanent status at universities due to poor classroom performance (Basow et al., 2013; Parker, 2017). Although the charge of teaching is not considered a high priority in some institutions of higher education and adversely impacts salary (Fairweather, 1993; Porter et al., 2020), it quickly becomes as important as research and service while contributing to a climate of high stakes tenure in the academy (Parker, 2017).

Many critical race theory scholars propose that such discussions on the marginalization of Black faculty are sine qua non for advancing

diversity in the academy—considered one of the last bastions of White privilege and power (Feagin, 2002)—among faculty that remains largely male (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2020a), heterosexual (Bilimoria & Stewart, 2009), and White (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2020a; Trower & Chait, 2002; U.S. Department of Education, 2020). By contrast,

> African American and Hispanic people, who account for approximately 31% of the national population, comprise only 4% and 3%, respectively, of the full-time professors (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Of all the full-time faculty in U.S. degree-granting postsecondary institutions in fall 2018, 40% were White men; 35% were White women; 7% were Asian/Pacific Islander men; 5% were Asian/Pacific Islander women; and 3% each were Black men, Black women, Hispanic men, and Hispanic women; American Indian/Alaska Native and those who were of two or more races each comprised 1% or less of full-time faculty. (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2022, p. 3)

The scarcity of Black professors in the academy is disproportionate to the 14% demographic rate of Black America in the United States (U.S. Census, n.d.).

Since academia is a mirror of society, it would follow that the experiences of the ivory tower would reflect the interests, culture, and values of the status quo faculty for which it was designed. Long ago, Newman et al. (1978) pointed out that White institutions have historically discriminated against Black members of society by way of systemic exclusionary practices that caused diminishing effects on income, employment, health, and the list goes on. Fast forward over four decades later, Kendi and Blain (2021) arrive at the same deduction in which discrimination of Black people in White institutions in America is normalized. These writings converge to underscore two shameful reminders: how little progress the country has made in breaking down racist barriers to support Black people and such research performed on the status and suffering of Black people in America are relegated to the margins—much like the people who experience such indignities.

Dovidio et al. (2001) assert that in addition to the adverse effects of prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination directly affecting the opportunities for stigmatized people, another consequence involves the unique career and psychological vulnerability of the disparaged. The academy is a societal structure that keeps those who are different from the White, male, heterosexual portrait in controlled configurations of academic apartheid throughout the university. Further, the minuscule presence and revolving door status of underrepresented faculty (Edwards & Ross, 2018) create a particularly tenuous predicament for us (Aguirre, 2020; Croom, 2017; Parker, 2017).

Methodology

Even though self-study research related to instruction for multicultural foundations courses is in its early stages, there are advantages to conducting self-study about enacting multicultural instruction in higher education. Given the significance of equity and social justice reform in teacher education, of particular importance is how self-study can support the development of instructors who are responsible for implementing curricular reform efforts (Cherng & Davis, 2019; Ghosh, 2023; Parkhouse & Massaro, 2019; Smith, 2009) amid student resistance (Arsal, 2019; Evans-Winters & Hines, 2020), presumed incompetence of marginalized instructors (Harris, 2020), and the political firestorm of diversity in higher education (Brown, 2004; Smith, 2020; Rolle et al., 2000). I firmly advocate that self-study may support scholars of color teaching in PWIs to improve our practice through a critical assessment of praxis (Kitchen & Berry, 2021; LaBoskey, 2004; Samaras, 2002). The research question driving this study is: How does one come to understand the role of marginalization as an instructor of a multicultural foundation course at a PWI? Drawing on West's work, I present these findings in the form of several stages of instructional growth I experienced in learning how to teach controversial subjects as a Black woman at a PWI.

Data Collection and Analyses

I leveraged a few sources of data as a basis of my career-long reflection on teaching the foundations of multicultural education course. First, I used autobiography to pull out memories, supported by instructional notes and calendars. Over several months, and unprompted by guiding questions, I reflected on my experiences teaching the multicultural foundations course (Raynal et al., 2023). The recollections came in waves, so I used a note-taking app on my phone to record my teaching memories (Pearson et al., 2023). I focused my spontaneous memories (Berntsen, 2021) on multicultural teaching strategies, student resistance, and the way I felt during these 16 years in the classroom. During that time, my journal amassed 17 distinct entries with over 15,000 words. I utilized a self-constructed Levels Theory as a broad concept or typology with interdependent levels—which include *naiveté*, *transformation*, and *belvedere*—as a priori themes that are rooted in DEI-related literature and used as a basis for categoric coding of data (Saldana, 2021). The Levels Theory is used as a typology to organize major ideas that emerge from the data as well as to chart my teaching journey. The three-level typology assists Black faculty in reflecting on and reconciling oppres-

sive PWI classroom environments to thrive in one's career. Next, the themes from the Levels Theory and the data were then entered into a spreadsheet and coded, for which I noted the convergence and divergence from pre-determined thematic meanings. I looked for recurring patterns among the data corpus that buoyed each theme.

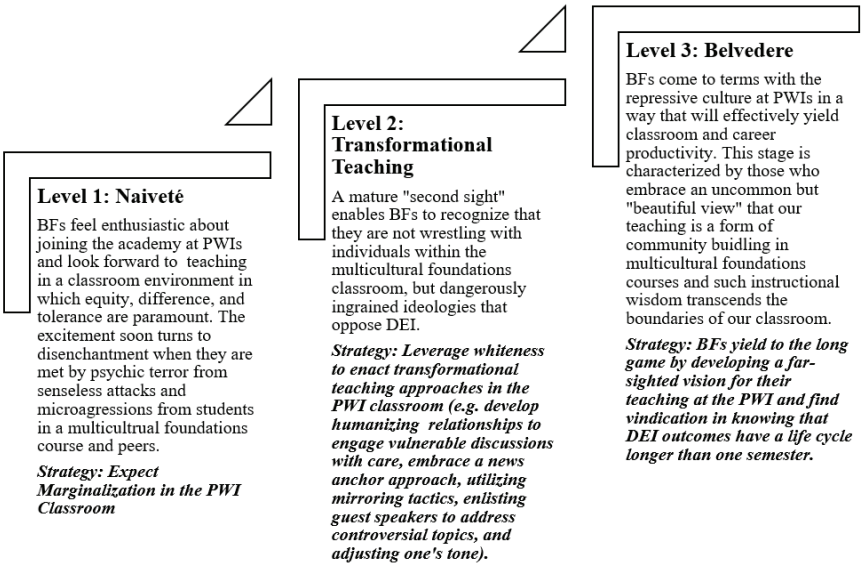
Second, the qualitative findings are complemented with 16 years of student evaluation data housed on a platform operated by a division of measurement and evaluation at the PWI. The student evaluations are rich in quantitative data and descriptive statistics that charted my average teaching evaluations that spanned from 2004 through 2021 and demonstrate my teaching impact over time. The questions on the student evaluation for faculty teaching are established in advance by the measurement and research committees at the PWI. The question items were posed to students utilizing a Likert-like scale of one to five, from least to most effective. In addition, open-ended questions are included in the student evaluation instrument and serve to capture qualitative comments from students. I used these findings to confirm or refute the themes (Norris et al., 2015) identified in my autobiographical journey.

A Levels Theory for Black Faculty at Predominantly White Institutions

The Levels Theory, depicted in Figure 1, provides an overview of the three major themes identified in this self-study, which marks my

Figure 1

Levels Theory for Black Faculty (BF) at Predominantly White Institutions



gradual level of awareness and competence as a teacher of multicultural education. Level one in the typology is marked by unchecked gullibility or naiveté of marginalized instructors. In level two, the battle-tested Black faculty member leverages mistakes, successes, resources, and best practices to transform the relationships and learning outcomes in the PWI classroom. The belvedere is considered the apex of all three levels and exemplifies a quiet understanding that foregoes short-term wins for a long-term vision to support the next generation of equity-minded students.

Level One: Naiveté

Many of today's Black faculty have been drawn to academia for the love of teaching, and the unconscious expectation is that everyone there, peers and students alike, share in an egalitarian spirit of acceptance and tolerance. The academy, for these trusting academics, is where the classroom is exhorted as a place where truth-seeking and knowledge are paramount. When Black faculty are assigned to college teaching, it is often diversity-related or multicultural foundations courses despite our training or degree (Jimenez et al., 2019). However, Black faculty take on the charge of teaching multicultural courses with rigor, responsibility, and integrity because we realize how our predecessors, who entered PWIs at the height of the civil rights era under semi-protective Affirmative Action policies (Equal Employment Opportunity, 1965), fought and paid a huge dowry for our presence.

The innocence of Black faculty is quickly replaced by unexpected duplicity that occurs in the PWI classroom. Black faculty will soon come to understand that their very presence as a person of color in the academy is political (Basow et al., 2013). Their faculty teaching position is further complicated by a Black faculty-White student power differential (Aguirre, 2020), which may cause distress for White students with delicate constitutions who find it upsetting to participate in DEI discussions (DiAngelo, 2018). For many Black faculty, the multicultural classroom becomes a place of terror (Young & Hines, 2018), oppressive whiteness (Flynn, 2015; Hill-Jackson, 2007), pain (Aguirre, 2020), socio-political arbitration (Darder, 1991), and plagued by student microaggressions and resistance (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2020; Haynes, et al., 2020; Hill-Jackson, 2007; Louis et al., 2016; Sleeter, 2017). Black faculty will soon be betrayed by a hegemonic ethos that typifies a silent yet defiant classroom culture.

You must be aware of, as Coates (2008) explains, the façade of politeness and political correctness inside the PWI classroom that continually victimizes the marginalized instructor. Hill-Jackson (2007)

notes that White students cloak their feelings about "otherness" from their marginalized instructors and engage in a kind of multicultural theatre; a surreptitious performance that opposes concepts presented in the multicultural foundations course. For those students who find it difficult to conceal their feelings about DEI matters, Black faculty in multicultural courses are met with folded arms, sour countenances, and other dismissive body language, or students who verbally push back in disrespectful ways about multicultural ideas. For several decades White students have been emboldened and, in recent years, may take to social media to discredit Black instructors (Yancy, 2018). On occasion, these students will feel the need to report you to other faculty or college leadership as your teachings will be considered heresy, hereby inventing the call-out culture (Ahmad, 2015; Huell, 2020).

While department heads and college administrators should model diversity leadership by triggering mechanisms to safeguard Black faculty from the hostile climate in the academy (Chun & Evans, 2015; Martins, 2020), you cannot wait for or expect the university leadership to acknowledge your plight. Despite the presence of progressive-minded leaders, Black faculty continue to experience both subtle and obvious emotional distress caused by their students with nearly no protection from administration (Gorski & Parekh, 2020; Tuitt et al., 2009).

Eventually, the constant emotional assault by students at PWIs may lead to a Black faculty member's acrimony or attrition. I must counsel you against becoming bitter by the hegemony within the academy because it stifles productivity. The constant worry about our students' actions and reactions at PWIs is taxing for Black faculty and may interfere with your course objectives and aims. "One hallmark of wisdom in the context of any struggle is to avoid knee-jerk rejection and uncritical acceptance" (West, 1993, p. 25). At this stage, Black faculty are encouraged to pause and assess the situation, recalibrate, and then pursue inventive pedagogical approaches to redirect the oppressive nature of the classroom.

Strategy #1: Expect Marginalization in the PWI Classroom

To overcome naiveté, I had to quickly learn that the oppressive environments within the multicultural classroom are to be expected (Basow et al., 2013). For White students at PWIs, our Black faces become avatars of political correctness. It is assumed by our White students that we come with a set agenda to brainwash them toward radical or "woke" thinking and unscrupulous intentions to exert our power as faculty members over them. This awareness should marshal the realization for Black faculty that supremacist ideology is omnipresent in the academy, and instructional marginalization becomes a byproduct of one's positionality.

Feagin (2002) and Kendi and Blain (2021) theorize that a white supremacist way of thinking is inextricably linked to the hegemony in American society. Here, it becomes necessary to discern that supremacist ideology is manifested through every societal structure (health, law enforcement, education, etc.), and marginalization becomes the outcome in which inequity is condoned, validated, and reproduced in society. Students at PWIs, as members of mainstream society, become unwitting participants of supremacist thinking. Although faculty are symbols of expertise and power in American culture, the Black instructor is perceived as "other" and less capable than the White, male, heterosexual norm (Yancy, 2018). In the email cited at the beginning of the article, my former student confides, "I had never had a teacher of color." The student's statement, while innocuous, signals her unfamiliarity with a Black person in a position of authority. Students in multicultural classrooms at PWIs, like other members of society, come to accept the supremacist ideology as their truth and resist instructors who do not represent the status quo representation of faculty. This dominant ideology in society makes certain hegemonic values and ideas natural within the academy. Students in PWI classrooms are unaware of supremacist ideology because it is ubiquitous and invisible, nor can they recognize their complicit role in its' influence (Marx, 2004; Perry et al., 2009).

To be an effective educator within the context of a PWI, the naïve Black faculty member must have an endosseous understanding—a consciousness that resonates within one's bones—that the politics of difference permeates the academy. Further, Black faculty must fully absorb that the fight against marginality is not against resistant students but a pervasive and profound ideology that bolsters hegemony. Black faculty must comprehend that the battle is sociopolitical and not personal in nature, and one must uphold professionalism while maintaining self-assurance. As a strategy, Black faculty members must be cognizant that White students are more inclined to mimic the ideology of the bourgeois academy, act as surrogates for hegemony, and hold more power over Black instructors in society and in the PWI classroom. This new "second sight" (Itzigsohn & Brown; Jackson, 1999), or critical awareness about the politics of difference, affords Black faculty the wherewithal to endure hegemonic spaces in academia. Ultimately, Black faculty have two options: fall victim to students' psychic terror in the PWI classroom or learn how to respond with transformational teachings that will allow one to be an effective Black instructor in a climate of marginalization.

Level 2: Transformational Teaching

The classroom remains the most radical space of opportunity and struggle within the academy (hooks, 1994). The transformational teaching stage is differentiated from the first stage because it is within this existential space that one learns "how to be" in the academy. By the time the Black faculty member reaches this level, they have already undergone a shift in perspective or outlook about their institution's culture. They are now ready to find teaching and learning opportunities that may successfully attend to the learners in the PWI classroom. It is at this level of high perception that faculty of difference grasp that they can use their presence at PWIs as a conduit for change by engaging in shrewd pedagogical opposition full of optimism, truth, and creative scholarship. West (1993) declares that those of us who are highly critical of the PWI must try to subvert it from within the PWI. West argues that we must find creative ways within the context of our lives to resist the various forms of marginalization and embrace a new politics of difference; these artistic techniques may serve to counteract the hegemony in the PWI classroom.

As a tactic to soften the road for the inexperienced, the Black faculty member must wrestle with critical precepts about race. The line between surrendering and surviving in PWI classrooms is thin and requires serious contemplation. One can either linger in this ineffective angry state, not teach in a way that is full of integrity, offer a watered-down curriculum to pacify students, leave, or redirect this emotional energy into more profitable outcomes for one's students and career. As instructors who believe in advancing the human condition, we should always choose the latter.

Strategy #2: Leverage Whiteness as Pedagogy

Quite possibly, the theory of whiteness has surfaced in recent decades as the most compelling concept to address racism (Gorski & Parekh, 2020; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998; Mayor, 2018; Sleeter, 2017). Whiteness is not about the color of individuals or inciting guilt in mainstream society. Rather, *whiteness* is the "overt and subliminal socialization processes and practices, power structures, laws, privilege, and life experiences that favor the White racial group over all others" (Helms, 2017, p. 718). Whiteness is a way to critique issues of privilege and power by those who have it and those who remain at its mercy. This means university classrooms, where serious discussions about diversity transpire, should be natural places to unearth and dismantle racist systems designed to meet the needs of Whites (Cabrera et

al., 2017; Rogers-Ard et al., 2013). Situating whiteness, rather than racism, as the linchpin of anti-racism focuses attention on how White people's identities are shaped by a broader racist culture and brings to the forefront the duties of White people to tackle racism (Giroux, 1997).

In our passion for excellence and equity, Black faculty may inadvertently flout one of the very principles of diversity to which many of us subscribe: meet students where they are. It is important to teach in ways that support student growth and allow them to be reflective of their inherent biases through approaches that unpack whiteness. Black faculty must work within their context to "both interrogate the ways in which they are bound by certain conventions and to learn from and build on these norms and models" (West, 1993, p. 25). Over the years, there are five key experiences that I have exercised in my classroom space, which infused whiteness as a pedagogical tool.

1. Vulnerable dialogues: To teach White students explicitly about privilege, power, and identity, it is important to begin the semester with relationship-building interactions. Students are more likely to engage in tough topics later in the semester when they have had an opportunity to get to know the instructor and trust you at the start of the semester. Through lectures that began with personal check-ins and short reflective assignments, I got a chance to know my learners and their fears about engaging in controversial topics. I also became vulnerable and shared stories about my children and partner. These little acts allowed my students to see me as a full human—mother, friend, wife, and educator. Additionally, I shared my missteps as someone who strives to be culturally competent. These adjustments allowed me to get to know my students and them me. Dialogues and assignments that hold space for vulnerability offer opportunities for the students and Black faculty to see each other as individuals. Kubota (2002), for example, shares this classroom tactic in the following way:

> I began to use my cultural and linguistic background as a tool for raising students' awareness that they must acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to successfully negotiate in our culturally and linguistically diverse society. In the beginning of a course, I disclose my cultural and linguistic background in as detailed as possible. I even mention some of the painful experiences I have had in interacting with students in the past. This strategy appears to accentuate the problematic of Otherness and marginality, but the important point is to appropriate this Otherness to our advantage. (p. 303)

2. News anchor approach: The field of multicultural education is littered with incredible DEI literature. When sharing these ideas with students in PWIs, place distance between the ideas and you.

Much like the Socratic discourse method (Knezic et al., 2010), the news anchor approach removes your passion for the subject and presents the diversity scholarship in systematic, objective, and dispassionate ways. In sharing the research, you might pose the content as, "According to researcher 'x'" or "What does scholar 'x' mean when s/he says…". Hill-Jackson (2007) suggests that objective or non-political pedagogical approaches in presenting course content can encourage independent student growth in a way that decreases their feelings of being attacked and removes you as the attacker. When well implemented, the news anchor technique allows you to confer a neutral stance to detach the message from the messenger (Amobi, 2007). This approach is not a co-option of one's teaching integrity but a reconciliation of the enormous need for intellectual compromise considering nefarious and hegemonic activities within the academy (See Weber and Mitchell (2002) and Milner (2005) for more on identity and teaching).

3. Mirror approach*:* Activities for students in a multicultural classroom at a PWI should not bring resentment or frustration with the content. Instead, the assignments should allow White students to reflect on their own culture while developing empathy for the experiences of others. For example, I use an assignment known as the identity wheel in which students characterize the persons in their everyday social circle. Students are required to unpack their social media contacts to determine the extent to which the members of their sphere of influence represent diverse relationships. It is sobering for students who espouse diversity to see how closely their well-meaning intentions champion real-life relationships. Self-reflection is the linchpin for advancing multiculturalism, which focuses students' attention on how their identities are fashioned by a larger hegemonic culture and brings to the forefront the obligation that White people should have to combat racism (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Giroux, 1997; Jardina, 2019).

4. Guest speakers*:* As a Black professor, there are certain topics that should be avoided in the multicultural classroom. Because students may transfer ill feelings about some diversity topics onto the Black professor (Jackson, 1999), students' normative gazes will quickly turn to levying poor teaching evaluations because of their ambivalence or outright hatred for the topic of multicultural education. Student evaluations of their courses severely impact a professor's career, but women faculty of color are particularly at risk (Shorter, 2023, para. 1). Bavishi et al. (2010) calculate the impact of a professor's ethnicity and gender on teaching evaluations:

> …students' perceptions of university professors are influenced by professors' department, gender, and ethnicity, suggesting that differ-

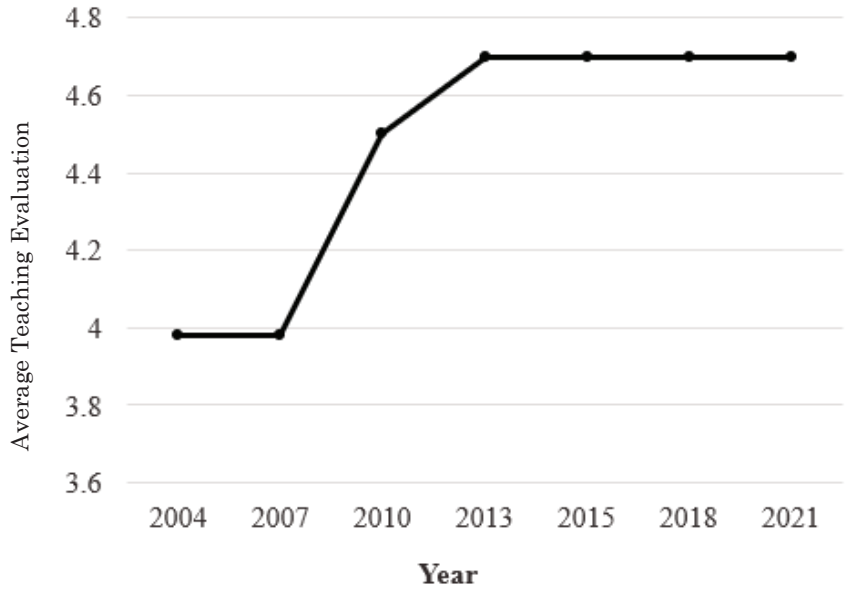
> ent groups may receive different treatments. Science professors were viewed in a significantly more positive light compared to humanities professors while African American professors were viewed as less competent and legitimate compared to Caucasian professors. These results therefore point to the challenges and obstacles that such groups and others may face in classrooms, research, and academia. (p. 9)

Consider inviting a guest speaker, a White colleague, who is well-versed in topics such as White privilege to present controversial topics. I have found that students are more open to learning about a provocative issue when it is taught by a sincere and patient diversity educator who is also White. In the early years of taking on contentious topics in my multicultural class, my teaching average was about 3.9 on a 5.0 Likert-like scale (see Figure 2). Around year four, I implemented this tactic of outsourcing discussions on whiteness and privilege, and my average teaching evaluation score for this course increased to 4.2. On occasion, when I dare to take on tough topics in the classroom, then my evaluations are most assuredly impacted (Boatright-Horowitz et al., 2009; Gatwiri et al., 2021).

5. Tone*:* Topics related to DEI are difficult to teach but equally brutal for the uninitiated to learn. As instructors who seek to meet our

Figure 2

Average Evaluation for Teaching by Year for Hill-Jackson's Multicultural Foundations Course at a PWI, 2004-2021



learners where they are, it is important to consider their positionality and experiences by adjusting the overall attitude or tone of our course. I toiled and adjusted the tone of the course in two ways. First, not all multicultural textbooks meet the needs of White students. The content in many sources is perfect for advanced diversity audiences but may be delimiting for White students who are early in their multicultural journey. I identified multicultural literature and resources that are more suitable for my students' level of readiness. Paul Gorski's *Critical Multicultural Pavilion* (n.d.) is a well-resourced site to begin identifying and building your course library. Second, I adjusted my personal posture and temperament. I studied as a critical race theorist and brought that seriousness to my course early in my teaching career. I was surprised to learn, through feedback and course evaluations, my students felt personally attacked. In my arrogance, I dismissed such accusations but soon learned to validate their feelings. I softened my approach and (a) created a new climate that was warm and welcoming; (b) began each lecture with a joke that was focused on K-12 situations; and (c) learned to patiently respond to, and not react to, the rare student who questioned a reading or my authority. I learned that tone is a subtle but powerful form of effective communication (Lunenburg, 2010) for the multicultural classroom.

These measures may appear overly conciliatory, but cultural workers at this level reconcile the pain of teaching on the margins of a hegemonic system with the reality that their mere presence can exact meaningful change in the academy. They must perform work defined by normative accomplishments (i.e., high student evaluations) and acceptance. Black faculty must adapt our egalitarian teaching style to an accommodationist one, not for mere survival of one's career but to adjust to students' readiness to engage in diversity issues. This does not mean that our courses lose integrity or thoroughness. In so doing, the Black faculty member chooses to redirect a focus from one's survival in the academy to a new commitment to the learners and their needs.

Level Three: Belvedere

The etymology of the word belvedere is quite interesting: "bel" derives from the word beauty, and "vedere" means view. The belvedere or beautiful view level combines the sensibilities of the transformational teaching stage with a renovated mindset. The belvedere represents a well-earned vantage point that is merited by making plenty of mistakes but refined by years of experience. At the belvedere or highest level, the Black faculty member commands a fine view of the multicultural landscape at PWIs. One usually arrives at this point after many

years of intentional teaching to counteract deficit thinking and serious reflection on the classroom. It is at this juncture, 16 years into my time at a PWI, that the belvedere reveals two critical ideas: there exists a discreet politicization of Black faculty's identity and role and it is important to protect multicultural learners and learning.

First, the major institutions of society—including the academy—replicate the reality of systemic racism. The PWI, as an American enterprise, embodies centuries-old conventions around race and racism. "Clearly, for the U.S. system of racial oppression to last for centuries the white racial frame's ideas, images, and emotions had to become deeply imbedded in the everyday operations of the important organizational and institutional structures of society" (Feagin, 2013, p. 161). The White racial frame or whiteness ideology that validates and reinforces racial oppression manifests in every aspect of the academy—including the multicultural classroom. The realization of whiteness as a lens through which the Black professor is perceived is important in creating a counter-Black frame that will ensure your productivity in the professor's role (Thomas & Asunka, 1995).

Second, Black faculty at PWIs represent the next generation of cultural workers. As cultural workers or bridge-builders, we have been conscripted to continue the fight for civil rights. As Black faculty, we have an incredible opportunity to activate multicultural philosophies among our White sisters and brothers. The most difficult places to perform diversity pedagogy are at once the same places for which these teachings are most needed. If Black faculty are to have a positive impact on our students, then we must recalibrate the aim of our multicultural foundations course and avoid the trap of trying to develop diversity allies in one semester. Rather, our chief responsibility is to introduce a new way to appreciate DEI issues and help them unlearn inaccurate definitions and assumptions that will stay with our students for years to come.

As Black faculty, it appears counter-intuitive to protect your students when you find yourself under attack. By shifting your efforts onto the students' well-being and frame of thinking, you are also protecting course objectives as well as improving your teaching efficacy in the PWI classroom. It took about a decade into my tenure teaching the multicultural foundations course, but I learned to love, welcome, and empathize with my White students by realizing that they have been sheltered and socialized in a uni-perspective way (Hill-Jackson et al., 2007). Consequently, I enjoyed a precipitous rise in my students' evaluations of my teaching from an average score of 4.2 to 4.7 on a 5.0-point scale. If we are to be effective in our teachings, then democratic concepts must resonate in students' hearts and minds over time and cat-

apult these learners to live out egalitarian principles in unimaginable ways. White students are the largest demographic in society, and these large numbers intimate a potential for them to be major influencers in American society. The multicultural classroom, therefore, is a widely available and revolutionary space to advance short- and long-term DEI ideas (Hu-DeHart, 1993, 2000).

Strategy #3: Yield to the Long Game

Resist the urge to look for swift instructional gains and rest in the assurance that our pedagogical labor will have long-term returns. The Black faculty member must have stamina and patience for the long game—the hope and potential to influence students' respect of, or appreciation for, diversity as a crucial component of American society. Since our White brothers and sisters occupy spaces of institutional power and change, we must use our interactions with them as opportunities to bring them along in the underappreciated meaning of an inclusive society (Tatum, 1994; Thompson & Tyagi, 1993).

As cultural workers who struggle silently in academe, this remains our charge in the ongoing fight for civil rights. Marginality, on the surface, appears and feels restrictive for the Black faculty member. But hooks (1994) points to the possibilities for marginalization and proposes that:

> Marginality is much more than a site of deprivation: in fact…it is also the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance. It was this marginality that I was naming as a central location for the production of counter-hegemonic discourse that is not just found in words but in habits of being and the way one lives. As such, I was not speaking of marginality one wishes to lose—to give up or surrender as part of moving into the center—but rather of a site one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one's capacity to resist. It offers to one the possibility of radical perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds. (pp. 149-150)

West (1993) reasons that with a revived commitment to weather the assault from the status quo, the rebirthed intellectual can emerge with revamped self-assurance and political astuteness. West concludes:

> The most significant theme of the new cultural politics of difference is the agency, capacity and ability of human beings who have been culturally degraded, politically oppressed and economically exploited ……This theme neither romanticizes nor idealizes marginalized peoples. Rather it accentuates their humanity and tries to attenuate the institutional constraints on their life-chances for surviving and thriving… the new cultural politics of difference affirms the perennial quest for the precious ideals of individuality and democracy by

> digging deep in the depths of human particularities and social specificities in order to construct new kinds of connections, affinities and communities across empire, nation, region, race, gender, age, and sexual orientation. (p. 29)

Black professors in the ivory tower must continue to find a way to strive for self-protection and excellence within a system that never was intended for their inclusion.

Concluding Thoughts and Implications

In the face of such calculated or benign resistance in the multicultural foundations classroom, Black faculty must progress—armed with counterhegemonic strategies that form your shield of protection in the PWI classroom. The Levels Theory as a construct underscores the complex nature of the Black faculty member's experiences in a multicultural foundations course at a PWI. In this way, the marginalization that engulfs the Black faculty member's experience is no longer a condition of disadvantage but becomes one's superpower.

At level one of the Levels Theory, the Black faculty member is naïve and overcomes their innocence with an acute awareness of the pervasive and pernicious nature of white supremacy. If one expects hegemony, you know how to prepare for it mentally and practically. At the transformation level, the Black faculty member exercises a heightened consciousness about hegemony by operationalizing whiteness as an innovative strategy to effectively teach students at PWIs. I have discovered that it takes an astute scholar endowed with second sight to move from a stage of aloofness to political self-actualization. When whiteness is used as a pedagogical strategy that privileges such teaching tools as vulnerability, self-reflection, objectivity, guest speakers, and tone, the once tense classroom space can be transformed into a place of possibility for students and productivity for Black faculty. West (1993) advises that "the new cultural politics of difference consists of creative responses to the precise circumstances of our present moment" (p. 5). The overarching theme of the transformation level impresses upon Black faculty to consider one major idea: to meet White learners where they are.

Finally, the last stage or belvedere level of the Levels Theory, is characterized by those of us who understand that our teachings in multicultural foundations courses must transcend the boundaries of our classroom. We find vindication in knowing that DEI outcomes have a life cycle longer than one semester. The belvedere level signifies a lengthy vision—one that seeks to include allies for the long term as opposed to a course that alienates students for the short term. Ulti-

mately, the Levels Theory may help marginalized instructors deconstruct classroom resistance to productively navigate the treacherous teaching terrain of multicultural courses at PWIs. As I reflect on 16 years of teaching a multicultural foundations course at a PWI, I can honestly convey that the perspective from the belvedere level is full of hope. The belvedere level, after the difficulties encountered at the naiveté and transformation levels, ultimately afforded me a beautiful view and an instructional vision to support my students who found their way to my classroom. As one who has achieved a belvedere mindset, I embrace my charge to be a freedom fighter in the ivory tower.

At the same time, I still worry for Black faculty and other instructors of difference caught in West's (1993) double-bind, who teach DEI-related courses at inconsistent rates when compared to their White peers (Jimenez et al., 2019), forced to evaluate the structural and cultural inadequacies of PWIs for which their livelihood of research, service, and teaching are professionally dependent. In the midst of nationwide anti-DEI legislation that seeks to restrict diversity offices and coursework (Bryant & Appleby, 2023), misplaced hysteria about culturally relevant pedagogy (Ray & Gibbons, 2021), and challenges to Affirmative Action through the United States Supreme Court's ruling in *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard University* (2023) to strike down affirmative action and other racial and ethnic preferences in college admissions, never before have the lives and livelihoods of Black Faculty been more threatened. The urgency of now is clear: There is a critical need to critique multicultural foundations classrooms at PWIs as a sociopolitical backdrop in which power and meaning are consistently negotiated. The multicultural foundations course serves as another site for calculating the politics of difference with the hope to elevate remedies to support Black faculty. Instructional guidance is crucial as the presence of Black faculty in higher education remain disproportionate when compared to the larger society (NCES, 2022) and as attrition among faculty of color is on the rise (Dolezal, 2022)—a potentially tragic loss of the talent and expertise (DeWitty & Murray, 2020). The ways the PWIs function for all faculty often contribute to a culture that further marginalizes faculty of color (Dolezal, 2022), and these experiences do not end at the door of the university classroom for Black faculty.

In my personal teaching experiences with hundreds of college students over the years, I learned to teach from the margin while navigating the pitfalls and not just survive but thrive at a PWI. As I ponder those early years of my teaching career, I would tell my immature self to be patient and that it is alright if you do not reach all students within the confines of your PWI classroom. I would implore

my inexperienced self to heavily mentor those who get it, make concessions for those who do not care to get it, and model patience and care for those who need time for the seedlings of DEI to blossom. I would advise my novice self to practice what I preach and meet my White learners where they are, as these students in my PWI classroom may someday become partners in the fight for justice—so teach with rigor, resourcefulness, but most of all, teach strategically so you can live to fight another day. As a final point, I would share the email from my student who wrote to me nearly a decade after taking my multicultural foundations course. It is fitting to give my former student, my unlikely ally in DEI, the last word in this article: *"I wanted you to know that I am now pursuing my Ph.D. from [redacted university name] with a focus on social justice and equity within the classroom…. forgive my attitude as an undergrad."*

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Cloak of Racial Oppression Theory in Education

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Abstract

The more immediate concern of social injustice should explore the significant barriers Black men face in society. Although White America would like you to believe that things have improved, the current climate proves otherwise. The amount of hate toward people of color has been made obvious because of the Donald Trump administration. And one can even make the argument that most whites have ignored the enormity of racial tension escalating right before their eyes. It is easier for them to ignore the reality of racism, than to address it openly and honestly. But the barriers that Black men face are pushed even further to the outskirts of the minds of society to completely devalue their existence. These barriers may be more challenging to uphold if there's a framework like the cloak of racial oppression theory to identify the systemic barriers that exist in educational institutions. The cloak of racial oppression theory will likely generate discussions to encourage White America to consider how they have weaponized their privilege to oppress people of color, particularly Black men. And out of these discussions may come a solution in shifting the mentality regarding racial oppression. However, the problems arise, when those in the know realize that white privilege only works by oppressing other groups, which appallingly justifies their advantage and to admit such that may compromise their iniquitous privilege. As the Harvard Law Professor Derrick Bell states, "Whites simply cannot envision the personal responsibility and the potential sacrifice inherent in the conclusion that true equality for blacks will require the surrender of racism-granted privileges for whites (Bell, 2012)." But even the staunchest supporter of white privilege recognizes the horrendous abuses perpetrated on the Black man. More likely than not, they can at least see that racial oppression is harmful and has unfairly targeted Black men.

As a form of oppositional scholarship, the cloak of racial oppres-

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sion theory challenges the notion that Black men lack value as illustrated by societies' unfair treatment and grounds its conceptual framework in the idea that the Black man possess unique skills that if channeled properly can be and has been influential on a global scale. This theory describes the burden of racism to point out the disparities that Black men face, but also to identify an approach to overcoming the setbacks, specifically in educational institutions. The cloak of racial oppression theory is grounded in the realities of injustice that Black men face daily. The cloak of racial oppression theory therefore accepts that inequities exist but also challenges the notion of those racial barriers as perhaps a minor setback for a major triumph.

Through unobtrusive measures like observations and lived experiences the author was able to provide a lens into the ways in which Black men internalize the burden of racism. The methodology used to investigate the theoretical framework was phenomenology, which seeks to understand, explore, describe, and know the meaning of a given phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman 2011). Within the phenomenology research methodology, this theory employs several data collection approaches to generate data relevant to the concept of oppression (Creswell, 2007), including: observation and document analysis, interviews, and survey. In qualitative inquiry, three data-gathering techniques dominate: Observation, interviewing, and document analysis (Glesne 2011, p. 142). By adding the quantitative survey instrument, this allowed the theory to consider the lived experiences of Black men in America and the pressure they feel by simply being Black.

Introduction

The Cloak of Racial Oppression Theory is a theoretical framework that explores the emotional and psychological weight that racism places on Black people, particularly Black men (Washington, 2019). It was first introduced by this author as a way of imagining the burden of racism in American institutions i.e., schools, businesses, country clubs, etc. It is a multi-level theory loosely based on the concept of Racial Battle Fatigue by William A. Smith to describe the psychosocial stress responses from being a racially oppressed group member in society and on a historically White campus (Smith et al.2011). And similarly, it uses aspects of Derrick Bell's critical race theory because it discusses the way racism has shaped social institutions and stigmatized men of color (Bell, 1990). However, the Cloak of Racial Oppression Theory explores the notion that the practice of White Supremacy is intentionally devaluing Black men in education in order to eradicate their influence in society. As explained by a lawyer and Milwaukee Public School Lobbyist Caesar Stinson says:

Dealing with the racial aspects of schooling is like wearing an over-

> coat that you can't ever remove. Rain, sleet, or snow you're forced to wear this heavy coat that continues to weigh you down until you can't take it anymore and you slowly start giving up on your goals and aspirations. I've seen it happen so many times in my line of work where these young men can't take the enormous pressure and give up. They don't know how to navigate the education systems nor are they able to build the kinds of relationships necessary to help them get through these systems of inequity (Personal communication, 2017).

For Black men institutional racism that occurs in educational systems, Stinson states, is like wearing an ineradicable topcoat that disrupts progress. This kind of disruption takes the form of oppressive policies and racialized educational programs that subjugate Black men.

The zero-tolerance policy is an example of an educational policy that has targeted men of color since its inception. Much of the data shows that due to the subjective nature of zero tolerance policies, the policy has disproportionately applied to Black males (Ford, 2021). Black male students are consistently suspended at rates six to seven times higher than those for other students. Moreover, Black male students are expelled at a much higher rate than any other student. Black boys represent 8% of the student population but are 25% more likely to be expelled from school. Black males are also more likely to be treated unfairly in school like being talked down to or completely ignored, even if the Black student performs better academically than White students (Gordon, 2018).

Describing the pressure Black men experience as a cloak provides a perspective for people to consider when assessing the disparities in social institutions. Even after laws and policies are enacted to offset racial inequalities Black men continue to be marginalized in every sector of society (Bonds, 2014), and are at a far greater risk of being forced out of schools through referrals, suspensions, and expulsions. The cloak in this instance is a symbol of weighted oppression that Black men carry with them throughout life and never being able to remove the cloak under any circumstance.

Historically, nearly every imperial institution has created narratives to support their position of dominance, in which one or more groups have been marginalized, often an ethnic, religious, national, or racial one is targeted and stripped of their relevance, and in America it seems to be the Black male group. As examples, consider the contentious nature between the Trump presidential administration and the Obama presidential administration, between predominantly White Colleges and Historically Black Colleges or between traditional nonprofit organizations or community-based nonprofit organizations in urban areas. In all cases, the story is that the minority organizations

underperform and are inferior to White organizations (Washington, 2020). Moreover, white organizations recognize the power of persuasion through propagating false narratives and portray their whiteness as virtuous and synonymous with exceptionalism, whereas Black men are perceived by White supremacist as savages and are even stigmatized as barbaric (Smiley, C.J. and Fakunle, D. (2017). Largely controlled white institutions feature a white male toxicity that leads to oppression, namely them holding disproportionate power and liberties in the form of social capital, and as a result being privileged over all other ethnic groups. The Cloak of Racial Oppression Theory suggests that the institution of White Supremacy describes how white racism forms a weighty cloak (an overcoat) over the shoulders of blacks, especially the Black male. The heavy garment is forcibly worn by blacks every day and every moment of their life if they live in America; from having to adjust to societal hatred and institutional discrimination to emasculation and systemic prejudices.

All these things work together to marginalize the indelible influence of Black men in society (Assari and Lankarani, 2017) and on a larger scale these inaccuracies work to reduce the value of African Americans globally (Curry, 2017). There is substantial research quantifying the impact of discrimination on Black men. For decades researchers have studied how racism toward African Americans is practiced throughout the world (Curry, 2019).

In a recent study Maryam Moghani Lankarani and Shervin Assari et al.2017 pointed out the psychological effects of oppression on Black men and how it is used to marginalize their contribution to society. In attempting to elucidate the psychological impact of oppression, the effects of both overt and anticipated or perceived experiences of race-based discrimination have been examined. Studies of overt or manifested discrimination typically measure events occurring at the individual level by asking respondents if they have been "treated badly or unfairly," "differently," or are somehow "disadvantaged" relative to others based on their gender, racial or ethnic background (Krieger et al. 2005). The foundation of this work came from the earlier stress research paradigm, where individual differences in vulnerability to stress were seen as key to the development of mental health morbidity (Kessler et al. 1999).

Factors that were thought to predispose individuals to negative mental health outcomes include unfair treatment and social disadvantage as well as other social stressors, such as inadequate levels of social support, neuroticism, the occurrence of life events, and chronic role strain (Adler et al. 1994, Brown & Harris 1989, Henderson et al. 1981, Kanner et al. 1991, Lazarus 1993, Pearlin et al. 1981, Thoits

1983). Later studies examining the possible consequences of perceived discrimination began to document that simply the anticipation of being marginalized, treated badly or unfairly had as powerful an impact on individuals as objectively measured experiences (Kessler et al. 1999). Both developments helped move the field toward hypothesizing that chronic experiences of oppression can have long-term psychological effects on the productivity of Black men (Washington, 2021).

Additional factors that led to the research is the fact that Black men are disproportionately shot and killed by police more than any other ethnic group. Black men are stopped, arrested, jailed more, and significantly overrepreseted in U.S. prisons. Black men are six times more likely than white men to spend time in prison (Assari & Curry, 2020). Black men are stereotyped as threatening because of an inherent fear society has toward them. Studies show that tall, physically fit or confident Black men face greater discrimination from police officers and elicit stronger judgments of threat. More broadly the study demonstrated how race can influence how people interpret physical traits. This difference in interpretation is a matter not of magnitude but of meaning: The same level of confidence or uprightness can be perceived as a positive for White men but negative for Black men (Hester and Gray, 2015).

The Black Feminist Movement

The Black Feminist Movement, also known as Afro-feminism, and the Cloak of Racial Oppression Theory recognizes the intersectionality of racism that both the Black woman and Black man experience through systems of "Imperialist White Supremacy" as described by Bell Hooks (2015). Black feminism philosophy centers itself around the idea that Black women's liberation like Black men is a necessity and a requirement in the advancement of humanity (Zillah, 1978). Due to their interdependency, the Black Feminist Movement and the Cloak of Racial Oppression Theory combine to create a perspective on the weight of racism and how it should be considered a threat to our very existence. Thus, opening-up conversations in which these two intersecting identities deepen to reinforce one another and possibly lead to better outcomes for the Black woman and man.

Arguably, a critical dimension of the Cloak of Racial Oppression Theory relies on the Black Feminist Movement because of the shared experiences of Black people, and the credibility of their movement in terms of the way it frames racism and the pressure racism places on Black people where man, woman and child can be the victim of institutional racism. In fact, many Black men feel like they only receive

empathy from Black women and that is made clear through the expression, "As long as we're alive we will hold you down." This expression has become a part of the discussion that separates the Feminist Movement from the Black Feminist Movement that recognizes Black women are protecting the lives of their sons from the sons of the White women they stand in solidarity with. Indeed, many people in America understand that racism exist and that it is used as a weapon toward Black men, but no one understands the weight of racism as much as Black women (Hooks, 2015)

In the end, the Cloak of Racial Oppression Theory contends that the Black Feminist movement adds context to the theoretical framework while providing an additional lens to examine race, in turn, the two work together to further dialogue and provide a radical critique on the way in which it marginalizes people of color. It (racism) is a socially constructed concept used to victimize Black men and prevent them from gaining access and opportunity in society (Smith, 2021).

Inferiority Complex

The Cloak of Racial Oppression Theory suggests that for Black men to be fully affected by the weight of oppression they must be convinced that they are inferior, not adding up to the standards, confused about themselves, and having a lack of self-esteem. The idea of the inferiority complex is to convince Black Men that they aren't of value and overall useless to the grand scheme of things. This is what White supremacy is predicated on; the subjection of one's value system (Smith, 2011). For example, the policy of maintaining control over the black community is by removing the Black Man thereby encouraging dissent and eventually absolute destruction from within. Systemic paradigms are also used to justify the over criminalization of the Black Man, which has perpetuated the narrative of Black Men being untrustworthy or dishonest, again as a way to marginalize their influence and promote white supremacy.

Another major way in which whiteness against Black Males is used to create inferiority is by suggesting that the areas in which we excel don't require thought. For example, on February 16, 2018, Laura Ingraham of Fox News told arguably the smartest sports player in the history of the National Basketball Association, Lebron James, to "shut up and dribble," after he commented on the performance of then commander-in-chief, Donald Trump (Maurer & Beiler, 2017). In contrast to the notion that inferiority doesn't lend itself to the practice of oppression, as would be illustrated by the many examples on every news station across the country, the cloak of racial oppression theory claims

that the feeling of inferiority creates feelings of inadequacy. In fact, because inferiority, White supremacy and oppression are interlinked, it provides context to the basis in which the theory was built upon. The Cloak of Racial Oppression Theory emphasizes the heavy toll of carrying white racism around on the shoulders of the Black Man, thereby exhausting him at a much faster pace than any other ethnic group (Smith, 2011) (See Table 1).

Racial Battle Fatigue

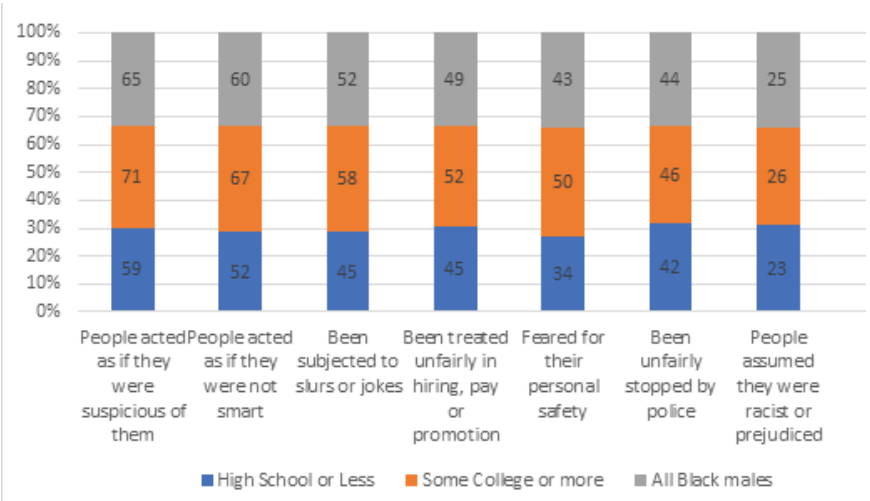
William A. Smith describes the Racial Battle Fatigue as a cumulative result of a natural race-related stress response to distressing mental and emotional conditions. These conditions emerged from constantly facing racially dismissive, demeaning, insensitive and/or hostile racial environments and individuals that have hatred toward you (2011).

Smith believes that racial battle fatigue stems from racism and mi-

Table 1

Black Men Who Have Attended College Are More Likely Than Those Who Haven't To Say They've Faced Certain Situations Because of Their Race

% of Black males, by educational attainment, who say each of the following has happened to them because of their race or ethnicity:



Note: Black males are those who only report being one race and are non-Hispanic. "Some college or more" includes those who have an associate's bachelor's or advanced degree and those who have attended college but did not obtain a degree. "High school or less" refers to those who have a high school diploma or its equivalent and those who did not complete high school. (Source: Survey of U.S. adult Black males conducted Jan. 22-Feb. 5, 2020)

croaggressions, and to view these acts in today's society he says: "One must not look for the gross and obvious. But the subtle, cumulative mini assault is the substance of today's racism."

Racial micro-aggression is a form of psychological trauma and is defined as: (1) subtle verbal and nonverbal insults directed at Black men, often automatically or unconsciously; (2) layered insults, based on one's race, gender, class, sexuality, language, immigration status, phenotype, accent, or surname; and (3) cumulative insults, which cause unnecessary stress to Black men while privileging whites (Smith, Hung, & Franklin, 2011).

Black men disproportionately experience racism, stereotypes, and other forms of discrimination in predominately White spaces and must always be on guard or anticipating the next attack that is inevitably going to occur (Reeves, Nzau, & Smith, 2020).

Racial Battle Fatigue causes Black men to experience various forms of mental, emotional, and physical strain which can lead to psychophysiological symptoms. Similarly to the Cloak of Racial Oppression Theory, Racial Battle Fatigue explains how racism becomes a burden and physically exhausting for Black men. Symptoms of Racial Battle Fatigue are suppressed immunity and increased sickness, tension headaches, trembling and jumpiness, chronic pain in healed injuries, elevated blood pressure, and a pounding heartbeat. And when Black men with Racial Battle Fatigue anticipate racially motivated conflicts, they may experience rapid breathing, an upset stomach, or frequent diarrhea/urination. Other possible symptoms are constant anxiety, ulcers, increased swearing or complaining, insomnia or stress/anxiety dreams, rapid mood swings, difficulty thinking or speaking coherently, and emotional and social withdrawal in response to racial microaggressions or while in environments of mundane racial stressors. These stressors can lead to long-term health issues and cause Black men to lose confidence in themselves and their self-worth (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). And although many of these stressors negatively impact other groups of oppressed people this theory specifically examines the effects of oppression on Black men to minimize those effects.

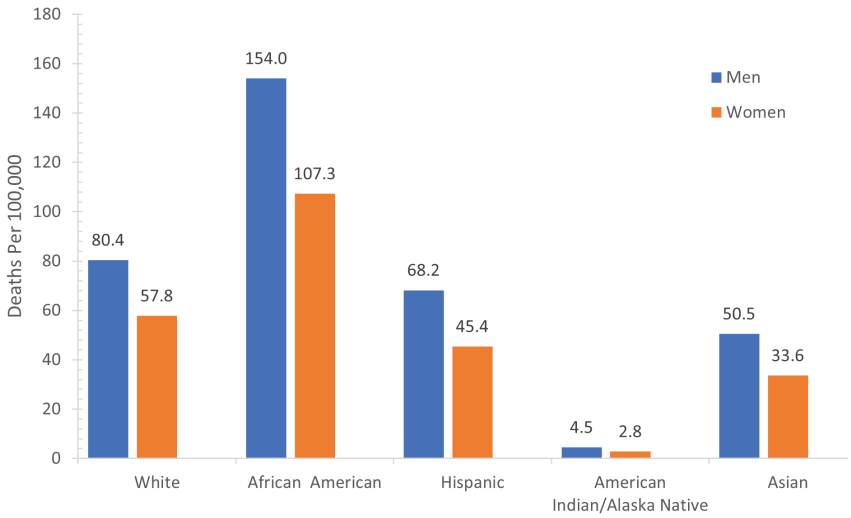
Racism is often preserved as a personal threat or battle and after facing that threat or battle continuously in predominately white spaces, Black men may experience Racial Battle Fatigue and are left mentally, physically, and emotionally drained. And when Racial Battle Fatigue goes untreated or dismissed this stress-related psychological and physiological disease can be lethal and can kill gradually and stealthily through hypertension and poor health attitudes and behaviors (Smith, 2007). Studies have consistently shown a higher prevalence of hypertension in Black men than in white men and white women, a main

reason for the higher incidence of cardiovascular disease in Black Men. The long list of putative causes for this higher prevalence suggests that the real reasons are environmental. The higher prevalence of hypertension in Black Men living in the United States instead of Africa demonstrates that environmental and behavioral characteristics are the more likely reasons for the higher prevalence in Black men living in the United States (Fuchs, 2011) (See Table 2).

Critical Race Theory

Derrick Bell's Critical Race Theory further explains the burden Black men experience in his groundbreaking work Race, Racism, and American Law (1970). Observing the impact that law plays in deciding educational policies, Bell (1970) declared its effects were to "segregate, stigmatize, trivialize, and de-intellectualize" Black men (Bell, 2023). In essence, he argued that laws deliberately maintain and even escalate policies and practices that predictably result in Black men being under educated in public schools. The ironic impact: Quelling the learning process acts to encourage more crime or the vilification of Black men. Bell (1989) explained further:

Table 2
Minority Groups Have a Higher Burden of Chronic Diseases



The diagram shows that compared with whites; members of minority groups have a higher burden of chronic diseases from hypertension. Diagram provided by Dr. William A. Smith of the Huntsman Medical Institute (2019).

> Racial disparities are best controlled when members of the community are educated and have developed opportunity through active participation in the labor market, education system, and the legal system all while having access to valuable resources through concerted participation in societal norms. Healthy societies are societies where people matter and are contributing to the progress of their communities, where the tolerance for ineffectiveness has its limits, where communities prefer to handle their own problems rather than ignore them. … The rule of thumb for establishing safe communities and overcoming racial barriers is to have equitable access to educational opportunities (Bell, 1989).

Equitable opportunities are substantial in standardizing social order. This is a pivotal concept in understanding the value of Black men and affirming their contribution to society. It is through opportunity that individuals affirm their identity and strengthen their abilities (Smith, 2018).

Critical Race Theory can explain why opportunities are limited for Black men. It argues that social institutions are inherently racist and serve as a tool that perpetuates, limits, and denies institutional access to Black men (Bell, 2005). In construing this Theoretical framework, this article address's the notion of racial stigmas as barriers that limit opportunity for Black men. Racial Stigma surveys the history of American race relations, with a particular focus on how African American men were branded as inferior, not truly belonging to the American social fabric, and a threat to White privilege and to White control. It then examines how stigma interacts with the social psychology phenomenon of implicit bias and how both processes influence and create the troubling phenomenon that African American's, and especially Black men, are disproportionately disrespected by society (Braithwaite, 1989).

Sensing the use of the word, inferiority, shame, may be evocative, John Braithwaite (1989) acknowledges the act of shaming people can be a dangerous endeavor. If overdone, the shaming can be toxic to an individual's self-concept and debilitating to one's spirit. On the other hand, if not utilized to any extent at all, anarchy may ensue where irresponsible citizens repeatedly and indiscriminately trample upon the rights of others (Braithwaite, 1989). Achieving a proper balance necessitates a common purpose to the shaming act; that being, achieving the omnipresent goal of providing equitable opportunities for Black men without humiliating them.

In his reasoning process, Bell (1989) noted the power of labeling which leads to stigmatization. Stigmatization is counterproductive because it leads to out-casting ("dis integration" (p. 55)) which ultimately leads to the humiliation of individuals. He argued that shaming Black people for succumbing to the pressures of discrimination trivializes

their triumphs and marginalizes their contributions. As a crowning statement of his position on racism, Bell (1989) declared it to be an "ineffective weapon of social control partly because it is a degradation ceremony with maximum prospects for stigmatization" (p. 14).

Deligitimizing Myths: Black Men Are Savages

Since being brought to America on the first slave ship, the term "savage" has been a way to negatively describe Black men. Despite their exceptional physical and mental abilities White America has continuously attempted to disregard the Black man's contribution to the growth of civilization by using derogatory terms and inflammatory language. For example, the young, unarmed Black man Michael Brown who was brutally killed on August 9, 2014, in Ferguson, Missouri by a White officer Darren Wilson was described by some in the media as a savage. Although he had just graduated from high school and was preparing to start college during the fall semester, his physical presence and attitude toward "authority" was used to describe the seventeen-year-old Michael Brown as a "savage (Romero, 2020)." Additionally, political adversaries of President Obama such as Michelle Bachmann, Karl Rove, and Rush Limbaugh have referred to him as a "political savage; unfit for office." This term has become the platform to dismiss Black life as less valuable and perpetuates a negative and criminal connotation in forms of micro-insults and micro-invalidations (Fakunle & John Smiley, 2017).

Moreover, the recent killings of unarmed Black men have generated discussions and conversations surrounding the term "savagery" and how this term is used in the context of reshaping perceptions of Black men. At the 2019 National Conference on Education a panel was assembled to discuss terms that should be stricken from educator's vocabulary primarily because they reinforced negative stereotypes. The term savage was brought up 22 times more than any other word as a word that needed to be eliminated from the lexicon of educators. Delegitimizing myths of the black man being savage, being over sexualized, being unintelligent, together with stereotypic images of them being barbaric become tiresome, and by legitimizing these inaccuracies violates the U.S. Declaration of Independence which states that all men are created equal. It should not be forgotten that even the burden of "delegitimizing" outlandish notions adds another layer of unwanted pressure on the shoulders of the Black man; for example, if a violent crime occurs and gains national attention, the sheer fright of that person being Black can be overwhelming because of the mere thought of White people associating that isolated incident with the behavior of

all blacks. Likewise, white people are dismissive of the massive school killings being tied to white males. They are allowed the liberty to separate the behavior of a few from the overall perception of the group (Morrison, 2021).

Recognizing that the irony is not missed, the Cloak of Racial Oppression Theory identifies two broad functional approaches to delegitimizing racial myths and overcoming racial barriers. Positive-Reinforcement (implies giving a positive response when an individual show positive and required behavior) helps build a sense of self and that fraternal support works to destroy the misperception outsiders have toward a particular group For example, the saying goes, "am I my brother's keeper" and if so, you won't hurt your brother or bring harm to him because in doing so you will only be hurting yourself. The way communities gain strength is through the support of one another. To tear each other down only weakens the whole. Creating high expectations and helping one another exceed those expectations builds community influence. So, telling someone that you're proud of them goes a long way. Stereotypical myths that promote White Supremacy ultimately abates whiteness because eventually those myths will be proven wrong and those perpetuating the myth will be viewed as dishonest, and once trust is breached it is very hard to reclaim. By encouraging the Black Man through positive reinforcements, it improves his confidence and reduces the anxiety that exist when confronted with racism. The last approach in delegitimizing negative myths through the cloak of racial oppression theory is Self-Efficacy.

Self-Efficacy, according to psychologist Albert Bandura who originally proposed the concept, affects every area of human struggle. By determining the belief in oneself, that power holds their ability to affect the outcome of their situation, it strongly influences both the power a person must face challenges competently and the decisions they are likely to make (Bandura, 1982). The implicit view that "you" possess a strength that very few others have and that gives you an advantage in overcoming any obstacle set before you. Psychologists have studied self-efficacy from several perspectives. Educator Kathy Kolbe adds, "belief" in innate abilities means valuing one's set of cognitive strengths. It also involves determination and perseverance to overcome obstacles that would interfere with utilizing those innate abilities to achieve goals (Kolbe, 2009). So, basically the concept of self-efficacy states that the Black man has it within himself to be great, if only he digs deep to uncover his limitless potential.

Other ways to delegitimize racial myths suggest a more passive approach reserved for only a few, and these approaches require the Black community to act as if the myths don't exist, which is highly unlikely

considering that perception is reality when it comes to race related issues. Myths typically demonstrate inaccuracies in one's perception but serve a profound purpose in providing a lens to look through when examining race and the oppressive practices of White Supremacy. For example, America abolished chattel slavery in around 1865, but quickly instituted peonage, Jim Crow, and mass incarceration to prevent the advancement of colored people; it extended civil rights then proceeded to erode them, especially voting rights; it ended legal segregation but preserved widespread de facto segregation in schools, housing, and jobs; and despite initiating affirmative action, allowed employment discrimination and vast economic inequality to persist (Smith, 2020). And although there are those who have completed assimilated to the dominant ideology of white supremacy, few within the community are comfortable functioning in that space.

The space of being oblivious to the realities of their existence and simply allowing things to be as they are often serves as a defense mechanism that protects individuals from being emotionally consumed by the weight of oppression (Dubois, 1903). Yet for most Black men, ignoring the pressure of racism isn't an option. It is omnipresent. Such that positive-reinforcement or self-efficacy used in delegitimizing racial myths may achieve the intended objective by empowering the subject to endure hardship as a good soldier and overcome all obstacles present. Examples of the approaches include encouraging words (e.g., I believe in you, you can do this, I trust that you're going to make the right decision), which places value on the individual and lifts them up so that they remain confident in all that they do.

The Cloak of Racial Oppression Theory (CROT)

Cloak of Racial Oppression Theory (CROT) is defined as a theoretical framework that offers researchers, practitioners, and policymakers a realistic approach in understanding the burden of racism and institutional inequities to find solutions that lead to the tearing down of racial barriers. Placing the Black male experience at the center of analysis, CROT provides a critical lens in examining the inhumanity of racism to uncover the overt and covert ways that racist ideologies, structures, and institutions contribute to Black genocide. Generally, people ignore the racial pressures that black men experience in America because it is assumed that they have thicker skin and are able to endure harsher circumstances (Hoffman, Jordan, & Norman Oliver, (2016)) but in reality, they bleed the same as anyone else, and treating them as if they don't only condone racist acts that reinforce negative stereotypes. CROT correlates negatively with intolerance, inequality, discrimina-

tion, and white privilege. Several scholars have found that these acts of discrimination cause severe psychological damage extending well beyond any individual, whereas people who practice equity and the fostering and protection of others are better contributors to society and enhance overall societal growth and prosperity (Mahoney, 2015). In contrast, like critical race theorists, CROT argues that institutions are "socially constructed, historical patterns of cultural symbols and material practices, including assumptions, values, and beliefs, by which individuals and organizations provide meaning to their daily activity, organize time and space, and reproduce their lives and experiences" (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 2). Therefore, if an individual is intolerant or racist at home, he or she will always be racist in whatever space they're in because their world is constructed as such.

Another important idea in CROT is diplomacy to resist the normative constraints placed upon Black men by engaging in authentic dialogue or having representatives to speak fearlessly on their behalf. This helps to confront the invisible racist bully. For example, communities that promote restorative justice or peace keeping practices are healthier (Zehr, 2005). Dialogue invokes civility and collegiality while empowering people of color by allowing them to be heard and forcing others to listen. So, diplomacy provides advantages to black men, and is ostensibly intended to promote peace among all groups as well as between those within these institutions that don't realize their oppressive tendencies.

Conclusion

Cloak of Racial Oppression Theory implies that the Black man's struggles are largely due to the burden of racism, and it also points out that institutional factors play an important role in denigrating the influence of Black people in America. Through the creation of this theory, it has become clear that oppression is systemically manufactured to control and maintain White Supremacy, but it also suggests that Blacks can have the ability to overcome any setback. For the reasons explicated in the theory, the use of this framework has many implications for addressing the pervasive racism in society and the harmful effect it has on black people's mentality. Policies that promote equity must be prioritized and developed with Black men in mind. The Cloak of Racial Oppression Theory does echo the sentiments of the critical race theory in stating that institutions in America are inherently racist but remains more optimistic in believing that even the most indecent person can be shown the wrong in their ways.

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Book Review

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Ideas in Unexpected Places: Reimagining Black Intellectual History
Brandon R. Byrd, Leslie M. Alexander, & Russell R. Bickford

Reviewed by Dia Sekayi

Keywords/Phrases: intellectual humility, Black intellexctual history, intellectualism, experiential knowledge

Introduction

While engaged in research on intellectual humility and how it is received, interpreted, and applied in African American contexts, I knew instinctively and because of conversations with colleagues, that Black intellectual history would need to be explored and presented alongside any discussion of intellectual humility. Intellectual humility is defined as the thoughtful and accurate assessment of one's knowledge and the recognition of the limitations and fallibility therein. Intellectual humility can be considered the center of a continuum with intellectual diffidence on one end, and intellectual arrogance on the other (Church & Samuelson, 2017; Cobb, 2019). Intellectual humility, therefore, is neither of those extremes, though it is often interpreted as the former. I hypothesize that one of the reasons intellectual humility is instinctively processed as self-deprecation is the history associated with Black thought in the United States; thought that has been suppressed, omit-

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ted, and not given its proper due in the literature or in practice (Byrd, 2021; Gordon, 2013; West, 1987). I set out to learn more about Black intellectual history and encountered a new book. Intrigued by the title, *Ideas in Unexpected Places*, I read the work with great excitement about supplementing my intuitive understanding of African American intellectual history and the related trauma and empowerment therein. This volume includes work by an academically diverse group of scholars that represent the fields of geography, Africana studies, American studies, education, English, history, the humanities in medicine, law, and political science. Their disciplinary diversity adds richness to the text and its potential to appeal to a wide audience.

In the foreword Baldwin notes that he pushes the boundaries of intellectual history and acknowledges "that to define an intellectual by training, employment, or even the vaunted idea of vocation also leaves unexamined the gatekeeping elitism and capitalist blind spot that the very notion of 'professionally trained' leaves intact" (p. xiii). The result is, in part, an homage to the practical and intellectual value of the efforts of a much wider than usual range of thinkers both in and outside of the academy.

Overview of the Book and Lens for Review

This text promised the reader a look into a broader conception of African American intellectual history than is typically contained within the ivory tower. Though the five-part text is written by traditional scholars, they each present content that captures and values the epistemic work of Black people whose contributions are clearly transformative, but often invisible, underexplored, or undervalued.

Understanding resistance to intellectual humility was my motivation for reading this book, and it is also the lens through which I review it. Acknowledging ideas in unexpected places is an act of intellectual humility. This allowed the editors to recognize and honor the intellectual contributions of those not typically valued as thought leaders or thought partners. Moving forward with this text despite the potential resistance to the academic legitimacy of non-traditional thinkers, was an act of courage. By publishing this book, those non-traditional thinkers are now part of the academic record. Writing this book, therefore, avails new content for exploration by other scholars.

Organization of the Book

The book is organized in five parts: intellectual histories of slavery's sexualities; abolitionism and Black intellectual history; Black internationalism; Black protest, politics, and power; and the digital as

intellectual. Since the test consists of 17 chapters and space is limited, I will first provide a general review of each of the five parts, then draw examples from the text that document the presence of intellectual humility in the development and content of this text.

General Review of the Five Parts

Part I comprises three chapters that explore and document the culture of sexual exploitation during the period during and after the enslavement of African people in the United States. The perspectives of women were highlighted with a clear theme of the value of experiential knowledge and its utility for a much broader application to social justice. In these chapters, the authors allowed the women's voices to punctuate their own plight with clarity and confidence about exploitation as culturally embedded rather than a series of unrelated incidents. The narratives in which the chapters are grounded reflect experientially based intellectual currency. In fact, chapter 3 makes reference to "the intellectual labor of emancipation" (p. 35).

Part 2 focuses on abolitionism and Black intellectual history. This collection of three chapters highlights a period in history prior to emancipation and illuminates the power of these intellectual expressions even in the throes of enslavement. Chapters 5 and 6 have an international focus and underscore the relevance of Haitian independence for the African diaspora. The elements of the Haitian constitution reflected their foresight regarding the kind of country the citizens wanted: one that was free from colonization, slavery, and war. This constitution was framed as literature by the author; it was seen as an intellectual product.

Part 3 continues a focus on Black internationalism and interdependence. The authors revisit the diasporic relevance of Haiti, the role of Liberia for African American families, and the intersection of DuBois' seminal work on Black reconstruction to each of these countries. The final chapter in this part focuses on the Jonestown tragedy respectfully reframed as an African American effort to improve upon their position in the United States. The connective tissue in these chapters is the African American quest for freedom through international means and the transformative power of Haitian scholarship, in the form of their constitution, for Black people the world over.

Part 4 offers insight into Black protests, politics, and power. Chapter 11 provides an analysis of the written word through its exploration of the Freedom News and the Freedom Schools from which the publication emerged. Chapter 12 also focuses on a structured educational institution, the Communiversity of Chicago; here the author endeavors to "deconstruct the notion of Black Power movement organization as solely erratic" (p. 191). The activism that was born from the Univer-

sity of Papua, New Guinea is the subject of chapter 13. This chapter highlights the impact of student-led publications and organizations as intellectual contributions. The author gives much needed attention to activism in the Black Pacific and the connections and distinctions between this part of the Black diaspora and that of the United States. Chapter 14 closes out this part with a focus on the written and oral expressions of radical Blackness as a response to the themes of exploitation through imperialism, white supremacy, and capitalism.

Part 5 presents a timely discussion on technology and how the history of African Americans must be considered as this country makes technological strides. One need only refer to the recent transition to virtual life during the pandemic, particularly in the realm of education, to understand that the realities of inequity persist despite digital innovation. In her introduction to this collection of chapters, the author describes digital humanities as inclusive of a broad range of perspectives to the study of humanities that make space for "new kinds of questions and connections." The chapters in this part tap into creative endeavors as intellectual acts.

Intellectual Humility

The core of intellectual humility is the accurate assessment of one's own knowledge. However, various scholars have explored the nuance of the concept (Porter et al, 2022). The elements of intellectual humility employed for this review will be owning of the limitations of one's own knowledge, valuing of the knowledge of others, and the recognition of the potential fallibility of knowledge. In this section, I will highlight a few examples of how intellectual humility functions in this text among the authors and in the lives of the individuals and groups highlighted in the authors' work.

The text in its entirety pushes me to assess my knowledge regarding the daily lives of enslaved Africans, those in the post-emancipation south, and the politics of expatriation by Blacks in the 20th and 21st centuries. The sociology of education is my primary academic focus, so I found my knowledge lacking. The authors masterfully document the lives of women and families in a way that brings the experience to life. Their treatment of the women's experiences as their intellectual property was adept and reflected the owning of the authors' limitations of their ability to fully know the women's circumstances by deferring to the experiential knowledge the people on whom these chapters were focused.

Owning the Limitations of One's Knowledge

The undertaking of this book is tacit confirmation of the absence

of broader community voices from our collective academic knowledge base. The reader is edified through understanding the intellectual contributions of people outside of the academic community.

The intellectual value of experiential knowledge is the highlight of this text. Intellectualism is viewed beyond the boundaries of the written and published words of an academic. We are encouraged in the foreword of the book to "rethink the identity of an intellectual…as a concentrated moment in time instead of a job" (p. xiii). The editor goes on to claim the abundance of everyday brilliance.

Part 1 is a collection of work on the sexual exploitation endemic to the culture of the south during slavery and post emancipation. The collection of chapters covers not only the resulting trauma, but the courage of the victims to speak out and lobby for their right to respect, recompense, and healing. In this part of the book, experience is deemed as the core of knowledge; "experience is foundational to knowledge that then informs people's consciousness" (p.27). In chapter 3, the author writes that "haptic intelligence is vital to human intelligence" (p. 48). The knowledge of one's body as worthy of inclusion in intellectual history is remarkable. Honoring non-written forms of intellectual capital is a welcome counternarrative.

The chapters draw from enslaved persons' narratives, both traditional and fiction-based, as well as the use of the law and the press by formerly enslaved persons to transform their own lives and those of their brethren. For example, sexually assaulted women who bore the children of slave holders used paternity laws to lobby for financial support. This exercise of brilliance is far from common knowledge among non-historians.

The use of Haitian independence by the subjects highlighted in Part 2 is an act of intellectual humility; it is an acknowledgement of the value of others' knowledge and how it might be used to enhance one's own understanding in ways that have not yet been explored.

Potential Fallibility of Long Held Beliefs

In Part 3, Chapter 10 explores the massacre in Jonestown, Guyana through a lens of African American expatriation and leaves prior study of the event incomplete without this layer of consideration. The author treads lightly out of respect for the tragedy, but presents a rare yet important perspective on the motives of the predominantly Black victims that led them to Guyana.

The chapters in part 5 explore the digital as intellectual. Gumbs' concept of speculative documentary describes the possibilities for the future that are either limited or expanded as a result of our current

thinking (p. 253). Viewed through the lens of the fallibility of knowledge, this concept indirectly encourages us as readers to stay open in our thinking and processing of new knowledge, knowledge not yet fully understood, and knowledge that requires reconsideration.

Each of these examples reflects an acceptance that our previous and current ways of thinking about the issues at hand may be incomplete or flawed. In the first example, the reframing is empowering as it identifies the heroism among a group known primarily as victims. This reframing reminds me of how I felt when I learned that Rosa Parks was a civil right activist who made a conscious decision, not just a woman who was too tired to give up her seat as I had been taught. In the second example the flaws in our thinking today may limit future possibilities.

Summary and Implications for the Field

In my qualitative research course, I ask students if they believe that they as researchers can ever know more about the participants' experiences than the participants themselves. About one-third of the class responds immediately with no. When we discuss it, most of them come to clarity that not being able to articulate one's experience in an academic way does not mean that it is not fully understood. They come to understand that there is more than one way to demonstrate knowledge and the experience is and remains the intellectual property of the participant.

This text has several implications for the field of social foundations. First, it is a reminder that those with the most direct experiences have a critical contribution to make to the knowledge base in education. While each of the chapters in the present text was ultimately written by a traditional scholar, each author employed not only the words of "regular folk" to substantiate the authors' claims, but also acted as a vehicle to express the claims that were expressed by "regular folk."

Second and relatedly, the text serves as a reminder that though scholars in the field collect and interpret the stories of their participants, the content is generated by the experience of those participants and carry meaning and value to other similarly situated participants, not just to the scholarly audience. As academics, we target other scholars with our work to satisfy the requirements of the academy, but our work is largely inaccessible to the study participants by virtue of location in scholarly databases to which they likely have no access, or due to the language employed in academic writing.

Finally, the form through which knowledge is expressed in the text is diverse. The written word is typically upheld as the preferred medi-

um through which knowledge is shared. In this text the written format includes newsletters with stories written by children, historical fiction, visual artwork, and poetry. Though the field of social foundations is based in the history, philosophy, anthropology, and sociology of education and is inherently focused on people and their experiences, those experiences tend to be seen as most valid when filtered through the lens of the scholar. We have an opportunity in practice to center the experiences of our constituents and reframe their experiential contributions as valid intellectual products.

Reviewed Book

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Book Review: As We Emerge from the Pandemic, Is Goliath Stll Dead?

A Review of Diane Ravitch's *Slaying Goliath: The Passionate Resistance to Privatization and the Fight to Save Public Schools*

Reviewed by Roger P. Catania

More than two years ago I set aside my usual stack of books and articles on schooling and education so that I could focus on the most consequential matter to face public education in my lifetime—Covid 19 and the closing of schools. As the Superintendent of a small rural New York school district I announced that we would be closing our school doors starting March 16, 2020, and began steering us toward the new, necessary, and as yet untried shift to remote instruction. My focus from then on was developing an expertise in public health and online instruction, and trying to hold together my scattered, fearful, and uncertain community of students, teachers, and families. Almost overnight I lost all interest in the usual educational matters that had once consumed me—issues such as new and changing standards, test scores, and state report cards—and immersed myself in topics like viral transmission, Covid testing, quarantines, and video conferencing. So I missed the

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2020 publication of Diane Ravitch's latest attack on the educational accountability and privatization movement.

Two years after Covid's emergence we are still trying to determine if the pandemic represents a significant setback for schooling or an opportunity for positive and lasting change. *Slaying Goliath: The Passionate Resistance to Privatization and the Fight to Save America's Public Schools* may offer us direction. I led the effort to reopen our schools in the fall of 2020 and then retired in the summer of 2021—emotionally exhausted from the experience. Now I find myself returning to these concerns about the assault on public schooling that Dr. Ravitch and I share. It is a critically important time for us to be reconsidering the future of public schooling given the opportunities and challenges that the end of the pandemic (if it ever ends) will bring. Within this context I read *Slaying Goliath*. Doing so brought me right back to the forty-year history of educational accountability in America and the threats to public schooling that—perhaps—are still with us.

Diane Ravitch's *Slaying Goliath* is an early epitaph for the decades-long reform and accountability movement in public education. Ironically, Dr. Ravitch was an early proponent of accountability. She may have helped midwife the movement, but now—in a dramatic reversal that started in 2010— she is helping to defeat it (Ravitch, 2010a, 2010b, 2013, 2020). The disruptive reform measures she criticizes are well known—charters, vouchers, standards, high stakes tests, punitive teacher performance reviews, and punishing "failing" schools. Her villains are the corporate "reformers," a group committed to privatization whom she refers to more pointedly as "Disrupters." These Disrupters include the wealthy and the powerful—corporate CEOs, billionaires, philanthropists, marketing wizards, and governmental leaders from both political parties that include education secretaries from the previous three administrations. The Disrupters utilize a network of foundations, conservative think tanks, and libertarian policy groups backed by billions of dollars.

Dr. Ravitch makes a powerful argument against the accountability movement and The Disrupters; her assertions are very persuasive, and her research is excellent. She makes the overarching case that privatizing public schooling is a form of repression by an unaccountable ruling class over the interests of everyday citizens, making this the broader tale of America's struggle for democracy; it's a theme plainly evident within both national and international circles today.

But Ravitch is not simply vilifying the transgressors; she is celebrating the defenders of public schools. She calls this group The Resistance. They are the heroes and heroines of her story, and they include parents, students, scholars, union activists, Civil Rights organizations, public

education bloggers and—at the center of this campaign—teachers, tens of thousands of teachers. Teacher strikes in 2018 and 2019 dominated the news as teachers marched on state capitols in West Virginia, Oklahoma, and Arizona. In states and cities like Chicago and Los Angeles teachers demanded higher salaries, better working conditions, better learning conditions for students, and new funding streams for public education.

Thanks to these efforts the movement to disrupt schools is on life support, Ravitch says, but it still lingers on, kept alive by the wealth and arrogance of its benefactors. She uses evidence and common sense to reveal the reasons for their undoing—the failure of charter schools in New Orleans and vouchers in Florida, the ineffective results of state school takeovers in places like Tennessee and Michigan, and the widespread failure of the Common Core standards and teacher evaluations based on student test scores. The voice of the Resistance has been heard, Ravitch says, and the power of the Disrupters is dwindling.

Ravitch provides all the intensity of a heavyweight championship fight in the later rounds. While the Disrupters may be on the ropes, the bell has not yet sounded. Perhaps here is where the reader should be wary of Ravitch's persuasive optimism.

The movement to privatize American education may be fading, and schools and teachers may have taken on a new, critical, and heroic importance as a result of the pandemic, but legislation has not changed. Federal law still requires every state to test children, align those tests to statewide academic standards, release assessment data, monitor and evaluate schools according to that data, and intervene in those schools that perform poorly. Statewide mathematics and English exams are still required every year in grades 3 through 8 and at least once in high school, while science exams are required once every three years starting in grade three. Other subjects remain a lesser priority (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015).

State laws reiterate federal mandates and then go further, requiring value added measurement (VAM) teacher and principal evaluation systems. These VAM-based evaluations are on the books in 34 states (Ross & Walsh, 2019), including New York, with its Education Law subsection 3012-d. Known as the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR), New York's system of evaluating teachers and principals requires schools to base employment, promotion, retention, tenure, termination, and supplemental compensation decisions in part on the use of student test or assessment scores, with the remaining part based on teacher observations (*Annual Teachers and Principals Evaluation*, 2021). Some of this requires statistical measures of student growth, calculated on spreadsheets according to complicated algorithms, impos-

sible for non-statisticians to understand. Many of these accountability mandates were put on hold during the pandemic, but they remain on the books. As the pandemic recedes they will likely be making a return. Ravitch may be declaring accountability's defeat, but while these laws still stand victory remains elusive.

Beyond the difficulty of breaking the powerful hold existing law presently has on accountability practices in education lurks the more subtle, yet pervasive, challenge of confronting educational inequality. Troubling inequitable conditions and outcomes preceded the accountability movement and will likely survive it. Disrupter "solutions" like testing, choice, charters, and teacher evaluations were always too simplistic (not to mention misguided) to overcome the immense social forces that allow some children to succeed in school while others struggle. But Dr. Ravitch's heroic tale of good vanquishing evil may be equally narrow as an alternative prescription for increasing equity and reducing underachievement. As we emerge from the pandemic we would benefit from setting aside this dualistic viewpoint in favor of a deeper and more contextualized interpretation.

The social foundations perspective offers us this fresh outlook. Social foundations provides a critical lens on schooling and education that considers multiple dimensions and levels of complexity. It encourages us to consider ideas about class, race, culture, poverty, and inequality. Social foundations recognizes the influence of politics, history, philosophy, and economics on schooling and education. Given the radical changes to both school and society brought about by the pandemic, what better time to reconsider schooling and education through the social foundations contextualized perspective? Doing so is perhaps too much to tackle in this review or in *Slaying Goliath*, but it would be advantageous for educational scholars and policymakers seeking better answers for the future.

Like Ravitch, I welcome the repeal of testing, privatization, and evaluation mandates. But investing all of our hopes on dismantling the structures of accountability is unlikely to bring about the widespread benefits for students and schooling that many seek. The social foundations perspective offers new avenues for critical inquiry and progressive action. Real and tangible educational progress will require us to better understand and respond to the pressing social conditions that impede children from marginalized groups and the institutions that serve them. The pandemic has more starkly revealed those conditions and offers renewed motivation for positive change. Ravitch asserts that we are on the way to saving America's public schools, but I suggest that we be prepared for a struggle ahead in case slaying Goliath is not enough.

Reviewed Book

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Book Review

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Pedagogies of With-ness: Students, Teachers, Voice, and Agency Edited by Linda Hogg, Kevin Stockbridge, Charlotte Achieng-Evensen, & Suzanne SooHoo

Reviewed by Hannah Edber

Pedagogies of With-ness: Students, Teachers, Voice, and Agency (2021), edited by Linda Hogg, Kevin Stockbridge, Charlotte Achieng-Evenson, and Suzanne SooHoo, aims to center youth voices in U.S. and New Zealand contexts, and to offer examples of how teachers can work in solidarity with students to "change realities problematized by these voices" (Hogg et al., 2021, p. xix). Work on student voice generally engages with power dynamics between teachers and students and the possibility of social change that emerges from considerations of student voice (Chukwuere, 2021; Cooper & Anwaruddin, 2016; Müller-Kuhn, et al., 2021) and *Pedagogies of With-ness* takes up these themes as well, to varying degrees of success. This review addresses two main issues where the volume falls short: its failure to engage with the significance of geographic space and place, and its occasionally oversimplified treatment of student voice.

The editors of *Pedagogies of With-ness* open their volume with gratitude to their publisher (Myers Education Press) for "the opportunity to feature scholars from two countries as a path to global solidarity of teachers for and with students" (p. xii). The editors do not acknowledge the specificity and context of the two locations featured in the book (the

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U.S. and New Zealand), nor do they take up what global solidarity might look like in practice beyond the production of this volume. By neglecting to engage with critical geography, *Pedagogies* misses an opportunity to seriously and critically consider what global perspectives on student voice can and do for educational foundations.

In this review, I will first discuss the multiple ways "student voice" has been taken up by critical scholarship. Then, I will introduce how critical geography helps scholars in the field consider the "spaciocurricular" (Helfenbein, 2021)—what material spaces, places, and geographies teach. Finally, I will discuss how *Pedagogies of With-ness* misses opportunities to "take place seriously"—to consider how "geography is…an inherently political as well as pedagogical enterprise" (Helfenbein, 2021, p. 6) and thus stalls the possibilities for solidarity in action called for in chapter one. This is important to the rest of the book because without a consideration of the material and political significance of place, possibilities for global solidarity through this project stay vague, underdeveloped, and difficult for the reader to imagine or engage.

Student Voice and Agency

Critical education scholarship establishes student voice as a fund of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) to be tapped, developed, and uplifted in the interest of democratizing educational projects (Cooper & Anwaruddin, 2016). Student voice can strengthen academic outcomes for students (Kahne, Bowyer, Marshall, & Hodgin, 2022). It can and should be taken up to establish restorative justice practices that combat the school-to-prison pipeline (Gardner, 2016; González, Sattler, & Buth, 2018), and to contribute to more inclusive school environments (Berman & MacArthur, 2018). While taking student voice seriously offers critical possibilities to foster students' resistance capital (Yosso, 2005; 2016) and to participate in dialogic pedagogy that attends to students' lives (Van Manen, 1988), students and their voices are also shaped by, and shape, interconnected and co-constituted assemblages of violence (Wozolek, 2021), power, interests, and investments. Student voice is not a fixed entity with an unwavering meaning. It is not unattached nor untouched by the forces educators might hope student voice can be leveraged to dismantle. For critical educators, especially for classroom teachers whose professional lives are complicated by increasingly alienating duties and accountability structures, teaching and learning alongside students, who are developing their voices and, in turn, whose voices are developed by educators, is an ongoing and complex project with multidirectional investments and goals.

In considering the possibilities for achieving solidarity with students

through a consideration of student voice, the editors of *Pedagogies of With-ness* place their work in a COVID-19 context, which exposed social and educational inequities. They write that they hope to build student resilience through relationships in an ongoing moment where "with-ness is more important than ever" (Hogg, et al., 2021, p. xv). The first chapter, Christopher Lewis's "Who is Listening to Students?" points to meaningful social change made possible by "Generation Z's interconnectedness" in digital spaces and differentiate between "youth voice as tokenism" (p. 3) and youth voice as "dismantling the hierarchy of dialogic space between teachers and students" (p. 1). The volume builds on this notion of student voice by engaging interdisciplinary approaches to education, bringing together disability studies, indigenous epistemologies, critical race analysis, and school discipline scholarship to present multiple inroads towards a central contention: that "student voice, as an expression of critical consciousness, necessitates more than simply hearing. It compels us to move into action" (p. xix). This call to action is compelling in its insistence that educating for and with student voice is necessary to bring adults and young people into the same field, fighting for schooling experiences that serve and honor the lives of youth.

One of the introductory assertions of *Pedagogies of With-ness* is that student voice must be considered as a stakeholder in making social change. But what happens when teachers, school leaders, and other youth workers encounter youth voices who don't want change? Or youth voices that want changes for some at the expenses of others? What about student voice that is racist, misogynistic, or transphobic? When the introduction to this volume declares that "student voice is sacred" (xviii), the editors foreclose what could be generative reflections on what is complicated or fraught about cultivating student voice, especially when the desired ends (social and educational change, a destruction of teacher-student hierarchies, etc.) have been predetermined. This is an important consideration for scholars using this book as it relates to educational foundations, which is a field that has, in its historical and contemporary iterations, attended closely to a diversity of student voice and perspectives (Brockenbrough, 2016; Camangian & Stoval, 2022; Gerson, 2017; Erevelles, 2000; Meiners, 2010; Morris, 2016).

There are additional dangers to an uncritical assumption that student voice is inherently sacred. What does it mean to be sacred? Is something sacred protected from critique, from pushback, from change? Morna McDermott (2020) has clarified that youth voice emerges in relation to the "possible/imagined/desired voicings" that are "elicited, or made available, to you in pedagogical encounters" (p. 347). What students have to say is shaped by context, which includes the relationships and contexts present in the exchange of voice and ear. Another danger is the untroubled idea

that structural educational issues, embedded in racist histories, can be solved by the individuated act of listening. Discipline systems that disproportionately target Black youth, pedagogical relationships overly governed by neoliberal efficiency models, and curriculums that center Whiteness, heterosexuality, and other dominant ideologies and identities are systems of violence embedded into the foundations of U.S. public education. This is not to say that individuals and communities have no agency, and that relationships, resistance, and survivance (Vizenor, 2008)—the ongoing and active sustaining of Indigenous tradition, life, and ways of knowing within education (Hatch & Roziek, 2022, October 13-15)—is futile in the face of violent systems. The danger here is an unproblematized view of the teacher-as-savior. Listening might be an act of solidarity and it might offer healing, but the act of listening itself is embedded in a series of ongoing and co-constitutive relationships between adults, young people, and the structures and contexts that inform their attachments.

Finally, approaching student voice as inherently sacred can be harmful for students who need adult intervention in cultivating critical awareness of stories they may tell about themselves. One example of the potential harm this framing can cause is found in Delia Baskerville's chapter, "Truancy: Young People Walk Away From Negative School Factors," introduces the author's grounded theory study on youth who truant (YwT) in New Zealand schools.

> YwT experience prejudice in the classroom. They struggle to understand the work set by teachers and need help from their teachers to engage with learning. When teachers do not help them, YwT think it unreasonable. They find it unsettling to be neglected, labeled, minoritized and invisible in class. Resentment builds as some teachers attend to others, who YwT perceive to be unmotivated anyway. They also observe that inattention is a teacher choice. (p. 29)

As a former classroom teacher, I found this analysis myopically focused on the experiences of students without a consideration of what shapes those experiences—including student action and agency. Far from empowered shapers of social change, students in this study are construed as un-agential victims of neglectful teachers. Speaking from a U.S. sociohistorical and political perspective, student truancy follows patterns of social, political, and economic inequity, as well as feelings of exclusion and alienation mediated by race and class marginalization (Morris, 2016; Willis, 1977). On the other hand, blaming a teacher for students' difficulty following material–when those students are rarely at school–doubles down on student voice as whole, formed, and lacking a need for intervention. A more generative discussion of truancy would look beyond classrooms and school buildings and towards a more

structural, nuanced understanding of contributing factors to student agency, choice, and experience. For example, Erica Meiners' (2017) work on troubling the category of the "child" as unavailable to policed and surveilled communities of color helps us think about students as actors who are shaped by, and respond to, racial and economic politics.

Ndini Kitonga's chapter, "Angeles Workshop School: An Experiment in Student Voice," is a useful intervention into simplistic conceptions of student voice as necessarily an opening into political possibility. Kitonga describes her experience as a co-founder of a Grade 6-12 "microschool" of 25 students in Los Angeles, California. Founded with critical humanistic and Freirian values that aim to prepare students to address issues facing their own communities (Freire, 1970/2000), Angeles Workshop School aims to foster student choice "tempered by educators' recommendations of fundamental skills, content, concepts, and values" (p. 198). At AWS, students engage in collective decision-making about norms at school, and, following Dewey (1936/1970), are encouraged to look at both the outcome and the process of these conversations. "We also have ongoing conversations on how to engage in decision-making without imposing conformity culture on each other," Kitonga writes. "What we have found is that through the continual small exercises in 'democracy,' students begin to practice listening to each other's ideas as well as bravely presenting their own" (p. 204).

Further writing into the complexities of centering student voice, Kitonga describes a student who refused to engage in writing classes because they were boring. AWS encourages students to make decisions for themselves as long as they do not interfere with the lives of others. Speaking back to Baskerville's work, students may, for example, opt to skip class, but the activity they choose in lieu of class may not interfere with the learning of others. For teachers at AWS who believe the development of writing skills takes practice, and that building endurance for difficult tasks is a key component of education, this student's refusal to write tests the boundaries of this policy. "How can we listen to Jasper and suspend our own agendas as teachers while ensuring he receives everything he deserves as our student?" Kitonga asks. "We continue to struggle with this question in active dialogue with Jasper" (p. 206).

The above chapter may feel like a relief for educators who tire of hearing that they aren't doing enough—not listening enough—to their students. Kitonga's piece points to the complexity of deciding, as adults, what and how to listen, and how, as adults, to develop student voice in a way that benefits them as individuals and as community members. Of course, that community piece is critical, and may be easier to define in a school of 25 than in one of 3,000. If educators want students to use their voices to improve systems for their community, they will

likely need guidance in identifying and building a sense of what that community is–and this process and outcome will vary tremendously by student experiences of inclusion and exclusion as it is shaped by race, class, gender, and other sociopolitical factors.

Chapters in *Pedagogies of With-ness* that will be most valuable to readers do at least one of the following: center strengths and assets of students and communities; consider pedagogy and voice broadly and creatively; and/or complicate the process and outcome of listening and acting in solidarity with student voice. Michelle Flowers-Taylor's chapter, "Rooted and Rising: The Self-Liberation of African American Female Students," turns to autoethnography and narrative analysis to explore factors that help African American female students to develop positive academic identity. "I had grown tired of hearing about what was not working in education for young African American women and girls," Flowers-Taylor writes (p. 37). By centering student agency, decision-making, and thoughtfulness, and by writing into the complexity of space, place, and circumstance, this chapter provides a critical interruption to those that overlook the simultaneous and multidirectional players that populate assemblages of education.

"Rooted and Rising" stands out in this volume in that Flowers-Taylors accounts for space, place, and the specifics of race histories, literacies, and politics that shape the context for her study. This specification is critical in a volume that aims to highlight opportunities for action in solidarities with students; how can educators think through possibilities for action when structural bounds are left undefined? Locating arguments in a specific cultural and historical moment opens further possibilities for generating action than other works in this volume, like Katherine Lewis's "'The Unnecessary Gendering of Everything': Gender-Diverse Adults Speak Back to their K-12 Schools," in which adult nonbinary, genderfluid, gender non-conforming, agender, and trans students reflect on their schooling experiences twenty years ago using the language and values of the present.

Each chapter of *Pedagogies of With-ness* concludes with reflection questions for consideration, inviting readers to reflect on what possibilities might emerge within their own teaching practices. These questions, developed by the editors, offer starting points for educators to consider "What reflective practices could help you think about students' identity development?" (p. 46). These questions don't always prompt readers to consider the power dynamics that exist between themselves and their students beyond the limits of the classroom. For example, a question following Flowers-Taylor's chapter asks "What can you do to create sacred space for minoritized students?" (p. 46). This question misses the opportunity to acknowledge dynamics of race, class, gender, and other

positionalities shape teacher-student relationships and instructional choices. Michelle Flowers-Taylor is a Black woman writing explicitly about creating sacred spaces for her Black female students. Her work is drawn from personal, political, and professional experiences as a Black woman, and the particulars of the relationships she has built with Black female students in teaching and in research. A question that asks "what can you do?" without also pushing readers to consider their own positionalities, and the positionalities of their students, denies the significance of race and gender that are central to the author's project, and flattens the specificity, and the political urgency, of her work.

Critical Geographies

The volume is organized into three sections: The Identify and Voice Gallery, the Pedagogy Gallery, and the Youth-Adult Partnerships Gallery. The editors have envisioned the sections as galleries for readers to browse at their wills, pausing where they feel drawn and skimming where they don't. In his foreword, Kevin Kumashiro explains that museum galleries can either overdetermine what visitors should pay attention to, or they can allow visitors space to explore and make their own meanings. This metaphor is promising for offering a different mode in which readers can engage with scholarship, as an invitation to look, browse, pause, and consider once they have moved on from the "space." However, the promise of the spatial metaphor is deflated without an acknowledgement of how material gallery spaces come to be, and how visitors and/or "readers" of galleries might grapple with those histories. Kumashiro doesn't mention the long and violent project of galleries as showcases of past and ongoing cultural plunder (Zakaria, 2017), or locate his own youthful discomfort with gallery spaces in histories of one cultural production made possible by the destruction of another. The absence of this critique within the spatial metaphor of the gallery highlights the volume's tentative engagement with history, geography, and context, which dampens its calls for action and change making. Attending to the absence of this critique within the spatial metaphor of the gallery is important, not only because it highlights the volume's tentative engagement with history and with geography, but because it also dampens the very calls made in this text for action and change. With its "gallery walk" layout, *Pedagogies of With-ness* might be expected to attend carefully to issues of space and place. The extended spatial metaphor, unfortunately, highlights the ways in which this volume is weakened by its weakened treatment of political and educational geographies.

Critical geography in education insists that space and place matter

materially, not just metaphorically, and that spaces leak, and spaces speak (Helfenbein 2011), as their own curricula that "express ideologies, affective forces, and power relations, and are ontological processes filled with living politics that shape who we are as subjects" (Helfenbein 2021, p. 7). While critical geography might not be the project of the editors and contributors, a nod to geography without bringing it forward flattens the possibility for "global solidarity" in action. A consideration of why educational experience is unfolding a certain way–to uphold or diminish existing hierarchies, to recirculate, reify, or react to power relations–is stunted without a consideration of when and where it is happening, and how the space and time has been constructed by decisions about the material mattering of place. Critical geography, writes Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2022), offers "ways to contemplate and document the vibrant dialectics of objective and subjective conditions that, if properly paid attention to, help reveal both opportunities for and impediments to human liberation" (p. 92). Steamrolling the specifics of place and space forecloses possibilities for the kind of liberatory action the editors of *Pedagogies of With-ness* call for.

Roughly half of the chapters are written about the U.S., and the other half are written about New Zealand; there is never an explanation about why these two places are paired in the same volume. Editors could have spoken to shared historical reverberations of colonization, indigenous struggle and resistance, and ongoing participation in global trade relations. They could also have attended to the vast differences between these two locations, notably in the form and structure of schooling. Not only do schools in New Zealand publicly fund Maori-language and content education (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2022), they also widely offer restorative justice models (Drewery, 2016) within the context of a justice system that does the same (New Zealand Ministry of Justice, 2022). In addition, the landscape, and thus economies of the United States and New Zealand differ vastly, as do histories of school policy, zoning, housing, and urban, suburban, and rural development. Without a substantive acknowledgement of these material (and thus cultural) differences, the opportunity to leverage the works from New Zealand contexts is lost for U.S. readers and scholars.

One chapter that does acknowledge the complexities of space and place is "Into the Future by, with, and for Indigenous Youth: Rangatahi Maori Leading Youth Conversations" by Huia Tomlins-Jahnke, Joanna Kidman, and Adreanne Ormond, carefully considers the specifics of place and time for the Maori youth at the article's center. "Indegenous peoples share similar experiences of colonial and imperial violence, terror, devastation, and oppression," write the authors.

> We also share similar understandings about our relationship to the cosmos as familial, which suggests worldviews that are compatible and in harmony. Despite this, we cannot assume that the experiences of Maori youth in this study necessarily align with those of indigenous youth elsewhere… What we found that may resonate with indigenous communities across the world, however, was that by enlisting the help [of an indigenous youth leader] we were able to…learn how young people might deal with indigenous aspirations in an era of scarcity and austerity. (p. 76)

While this passage does acknowledge how the findings of one study may not easily map onto the context of another, attending to the specifics of how location and history have shaped the experiences of indigenous communities would invite further opportunities for scholars and youth workers to consider action for their own work with young people, particularly young indigenous people as they are centered in this piece.

Nonetheless, this piece is one of the strongest of the collection. The authors reflect on how one youth worker, Pat, engaged Maori youth through traditional Maori epistemologies and pedagogies, and guides readers through the skillset Pat possessed in addition to his own Maori identity and cultural knowledge:

> Pat had the ability to listen, to hear, to observe, and then to interpret how Rangatahi [Maori youth] communicated with each other and with others outside their groups…Pat's ability to communicate in and recognize both 'youth talk' and body language as well as a particular brand of Maori humor heightened his sensitivity to the rhythm and flow of rangatahi dispositions and frame of mind at any given time. This was particularly apparent after meals, when rangathai were most lethargic…Typically in schools, we would have insisted activities start as planned, 'rounding everyone up' with a no-nonsense, 'ready or not' approach. In contrast, Pat patiently watched, listened, and observed the rangatahi, joining in from time to time as they expended restless energy by kicking a ball, strumming a ukelele…until they were ready to engage. (p. 74)

I quote this passage at length because I was struck by the vibrant description of Pat's work, and the humble, curious tone of the writer. I was also grateful for the opportunity to consider more deeply the subtleties of what is assumed to be necessary—uses of time, tone, and communication—in schools where I have worked. This chapter is powerful because in attending to specifics of time, place, culture, and communication, it opens further opportunities for readers to connect and reflect than chapters that work in generalities.

Finally, I was moved by another chapter that deals with the specifics of place, Erin McCloskey's "Applying Gentleness Against the Force: The Dojo as a Site of Liberation for Autistic People." McCloskey describes a

judo studio in the United State that serves as an "alternative world" to the oppressive demands of school spaces. She explains that the typical behavioral intervention plans (BIPs) that are designed to support autistic students in schools by describing inappropriate behaviors and attendant consequences. Following Freire (1920/2000), McCloskey writes, "This system of changing behaviors is oppressive because it constructs Autistic students as people whose actions and thinking needs to be controlled. The implementation of a scripted plan to change one's behavior is akin to the banking style of education" (p. 167). Alternatively, at the dojo, Autistic students are supported through teachings that highlight bodily and emotional awareness of the self and others. Critically, a teacher at the dojo, Sensei Scott, doesn't correct a new student's wiggling, giggling, or hand-flapping, but rather finds meaning in it. Like Pat, Scott follows not just what students are communicating, but how they are communicating. He honors student voices by listening to them on their terms, not on his.

Overall, *Pedagogies of With-ness* would have been strengthened by attention to specifics: the context and geographies of the youth and adults it describes, but also the limitations and possibilities of how youth voice has been imagined. Even a brief mention of the myriad projects scholars, educators, and youth workers have assigned to student voice would be a helpful acknowledgement of the evacuation of meaning from the phrase, and a way to re-instill some specifics to what student voice might mean, and what it can do. The best chapters of *Pedagogies of With-ness* attend to the specifics of place, politics, and people. These chapters hone in on stories that consider contextualized challenges and opportunities; in doing so, they invite readers to expand our consideration of our own work with young people, and the ways in which we might rethink what it means to listen, and to act. As Wilson Gilmore (2022) tells us, "at the end of the day, freedom is a place" (p. 93). The chapters that acknowledge the agency of students, and the particular spaces that shape educational realities, might help readers, educators, and scholars get to that place.

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