

EDUCATION IN A DEMOCRACY

A Journal of the National Network for Educational Renewal

Activism & Civil Discourse

Volume 10 | October 2018



Editors

Rhonda B. Jeffries
University of South Carolina

Toby S. Jenkins
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IN A DEMOCRACY

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UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
College of Education

It is with great enthusiasm and excitement that I pen this welcome for the 2018 edition of the National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER) Journal and introduce the new editors here in the College of Education at the University of South Carolina.

For over 20 years, the College of Education and the university have been committed to the ideals of social justice and equity that reside at the heart of NNER's four fundamental beliefs. As we both reflect on our past and look to our future, we are committed to championing scholars and scholar-activists whose work, as Marilyn Cochrane Smith so aptly states, "...addresses the dynamics of oppression, privilege, and isms [and recognizes] that society is the product of historically rooted, institutionally sanctioned stratification along socially constructed group lines that include race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ability [among others] (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2009).

We are honored to assume stewardship for a journal that has focused attention for over three decades on theories, models and practices that embody the four core commitments of the Agenda for Education in a Democracy (AED) as well as policies and practices that run counter to that agenda by dehumanizing and demeaning both students and educators. Such work is more critical than ever before, and we are excited about the opportunity to contribute to this legacy.

The theme for the first publication, "Activism and Civil Discourse" resonates strongly with our faculty and students as an essential aspect of who we are as educators and scholars. I am heartened by the knowledge that, through the work of committed Network colleagues and collaborators, and important outlet such as the NNER Journal, we will continue to transform schools, universities, and communities.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jon E. Pedersen

Dean



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA

Greetings:

Thomas Jefferson said, the cornerstone of democracy rests on the foundation of an educated electorate. Our nation's Founders believed there was nothing more essential to self-government than an enlightened public. As Benjamin Franklin once noted, "The good Education of Youth has been esteemed by wise Men in all Ages, as the surest Foundation of the Happiness both of private Families and of Commonwealths." In fact, across America's 229-year experiment, nothing has contributed more to the strength of our democracy than public education.

As a community of educators, we, at the University of South Carolina, have a commitment to ensuring that everyone can attain the highest level of education for which they are capable. We also seek to foster the next generation of thinkers and leaders by providing the space to pursue understanding. Our faculty and staff share this space and profoundly enhance our academic impact.

The University of South Carolina is delighted that a new component of our impact is to serve as the host institution for the National Network for Educational Renewal's journal, *Education in a Democracy*. Journals and publications such as this create important opportunities to facilitate discussion, growth and academic inquiry among students, faculty and all contributors.

The theme for the 2018 edition, *Activism and Civil Discourse*, emphasizes the goal to find better ways to respect a multitude of voices about citizenship, education and community growth. At South Carolina, we are a university community devoted to collaboration and active citizenry across all educational and societal boundaries. In this collective pursuit, we are working to improve and protect the true guardian of democracy—the educated mind.

Sincerely,
Dr. Joan Gabel
Provost



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
College of Education

Editors' Introduction

Valuing Activism: Moving Beyond Theory to Action

Toby S. Jenkins & Rhonda B. Jeffries
University of South Carolina

The field of education needs activists. Over the past few years, our society has erupted in response to critical social events and issues. Communities feeling the need to be heard have taken to the streets, the web, the campus, and the school grounds to protest and participate in diverse forms of activism. Students across all levels of education have been one of the most engaged communities in social protest. From Black Lives Matter marches, Not My President Walkouts, Anti-Police Violence Die-ins, and campus mattress walks to protest sexual violence, student activism has once again surfaced as a critical issue.

In response, local communities, schools, colleges and universities have been challenged with determining how to support, teach, encourage, and model what contemporary civil discourse and social action might involve. While many administrative leaders are legitimately trying to determine the best way to simultaneously support students, address student needs, and keep campuses safe; there are still many institutions that are scrambling to find ways to dismantle campus protests. Why? Because school and university campuses are classically quiet. Loud, angry students screaming for change disrupt the calm tradition of school. And often, the administrative response is not to heal, educate, and change, but instead to put out the fire and quiet the noise.

Often educational institutions fail to take a strong stand by retreating into the safe house of neutrality, order, and academic freedom. But as visionary leaders, we must have difficult discussions and develop strategies for bold action. By bold action, we mean reaching for higher goals than simply supporting students. Our prime goal should be to develop a professional practice that brings to life the idea of democratic education. Undoubtedly, this involves building institutions that value

questioning, pushing, and critiquing as necessary elements of progress. In their 2016 Higher Education Today article “Embracing Student Activism,” Barnhardt and Reyes argued the ability to offer a space for critical thinking, democratic debate and engaged citizenship is actually what gives educational institutions, particularly colleges, their power:

Campuses derive their legitimacy in part on their commitment to developing excellence, integrity and a sense of community among their students. Student activism provides a space for institutions to be thoughtful about enacting those very commitments...

From the earliest historical accounts, campus-based activism has reflected grievances based in the political dynamics of the nation. In the process of student protest, those broad social grievances were projected and transferred into more precise, localized calls for transformation on campus. This pattern continued with the campus-based movements of the 1960s. In particular, the activism surrounding area and ethnic studies curricular offerings (depicted in books by Robert Rhoads, Fabio Rojas, and Mikaila Mariel Lemonik Arthur) were uniquely tied to larger social movements aimed at marginalized social identity groups, and represented a discrete effort to achieve structural changes in the academy (i.e., adopting new programs and majors). Recent campus unrest, then, may be a signal that universities remain deeply connected to social change, even at a time when society is renegotiating predominant understandings of social status, with race and ethnicity in the foreground (Barnhardt & Reyes, 2016, para. 4-6).

Most social justice scholars do not advocate for creating learning environments that skirt issues or that fail to directly confront and discuss sensitive issues of race, sexism, gender discrimination, class discrimination, or the many other various forms of oppression. Difficult dialogues must be had. Inclusion is not simply about being “allowed” to be present. More importantly, it is about being treated as an equal member of a community. And so, many students, faculty and staff continue to fight for greater and more nuanced approaches to educational inclusion. They fight by standing up on campus, sitting in at the president’s office, walking out of class, or lying down in the student union. And by taking these actions, contemporary students are inheriting a legacy of braveness given to them from a long history of resistance. Remembering our history of resistance reminds us just how much activism matters.

Historical Reflections

Fifty years ago, in 1968, college campuses across the globe exploded. Over 1000 students at Howard University took over the administration building with demands for the resignation of the university president, major curriculum changes, and dramatic changes in the university student judicial system (Associated Press, 1968). At Columbia University, a now infamous protest took place just a month after the protests at Howard. Students were protesting multiple issues including the university's controversial involvement with a Vietnam War weapons research think tank and various university policies that were viewed as exclusionary. The student occupation of multiple buildings on campus resulted in over 1000 police officers invading the campus to stop the protests. While the initial mass sit-ins were dispersed, student continued to engage various protests all semester and ultimately made it impossible for the university to operate (Associated Press, 1968). The protests at both of these universities were successful and resulted in campus change.

That same year, major protests at campuses of the University of Paris culminated in May 1968 with the administrators at the Nanterre campus making the decision to shut down and pursue disciplinary action against several key student leaders (Associated Press, 1968). Students at the Sorbonne campus immediately reacted with a series of strategy meetings and a march just four days later that included over 20,000 students, teachers and local citizens that resulted in a violent response by police. Police then fully occupied the university. Rather than retreating, the student protests grew larger the next day with high school students joining the group. On May 10, 1968, a day-long battle between police and protestors was broadcast live via radio and later televised all over the world.

Only seven days after the first March and with a now global audience of support, over one million people joined the students to March through the streets of Paris on May 13, 1968. The results of these protests prompted activism outside of higher education and across various aspects of French society, including workforce and social policies (Associated Press, 1968). These initial youth-centered protests grew to national proportions, shining a light on issues of democracy, social change, and French life.

This intersection of inequity, the ways that oppression in larger society is often mirrored in schools and colleges, was also a foundation of the student civil rights activism in the United States. College

and high school students understood that there were no boundaries between their oppression in larger society and their school life. Their lives as young students were severely impacted by what was happening in larger society—it impacted how they traveled to school, the type of school they attended, the resources in the school, and where they were allowed to go after school. Many young people took to lunch counters from Greensboro, NC to Jackson, MS. They participated in Freedom Rides, marches, meetings, and voting campaigns. Other U.S. students on the West Coast led occupations that resulted in the creation of new area studies within higher education. Students created meaningful change in almost every realm of education curriculum, policy, and law. Across the globe, students have continued this legacy of social action across several decades which have included leading the divestment in South African Apartheid, engaging in a “Velvet Revolution” in Czechoslovakia which crumbled the Communist Party, and protesting pro-democracy in Tiananmen Square. And the struggle continues for us all.

Synergetic Social Change

Indeed, we are ultimately in this together. Whether on a school or college campus, we are essentially a team of thinkers—a community of skillful agents. What we represent is opportunity for individual success that now strongly characterizes the purpose of education. More importantly, we represent the opportunity that develops when great minds, ethical spirits, and talented artisans gather in one place. We hold the potential to create—a democratic society, an open and accessible world, a better campus. We are the spaces where bright minds commune with seasoned thinkers, where young, energetic and optimistic scholars talk daily with experts who yield decades of experience. These are the spaces where magic can happen. And it must.

Critical to the evolution of educational and societal inclusion efforts, including the right to read and the right to be fully included in the campus culture and academic content of schools, are student, parent, teacher, and administrator activism. We must understand teachers and administrators as activists, for they are the ones that ultimately must take the action to change the curriculum, re-write lesson plans, and re-write policies. While it is incredibly hard to do the bold work of taking a critical self-examination of our own institutions, admit their faults, and engage the difficult process of change, it is a necessary act of progress. As Frederick Douglass (1857) stressed in his classic “West

India Emancipation” speech, there is no progress without struggle:

Let me give you a word of the philosophy of reform. The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims have been born of earnest struggle. The conflict has been exciting, agitating, all-absorbing, and for the time being, putting all other tumults to silence. It must do this or it does nothing. If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation are men who want crops without plowing up the ground; they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. (Douglass, 1857)

See more at: <http://www.blackpast.org/1857-frederick-douglass-if-there-no-struggle-there-no-progress#sthash.EXNXPCrp.dpuf/>.

These ideas have definitely remained true in the United States; historically, there has been no change in society without some form of action. Protest is an important cultural legacy and has been critical to changing our society for the better. Where you see progress towards inclusion, just look behind it and you will see some form of activism pushing it forward. We often hope to have comrades in the struggle—senior administrators who embrace struggle, university presidents who acknowledge vestiges of racism, faculty who honestly admit they need to improve—all radically pushing, challenging, and changing the system. But, the reality is that some institutions thrive in this cultural space and others simply do not. Agents are worn and battered in many educational institutions. Some senior leaders, as beneficiaries of the status quo, prefer the institution remain unchanged. At many schools, it is an extremely difficult task to change traditions of cultural imperialism. And so, we must dig deeper into our history of resistance and rediscover that brave spirit that moved an ancestor to burn the candle and risk death just to learn to read. The work of social justice is definitely not easy or safe, and we must be willing to take the risk by speaking truth to power.

In her article examining the educators’ role in helping students to learn through crisis, Patton (2008) noted that intense campus moments of disaster or human crisis should not be glossed over through an effort to return to business as usual:

Unfortunately, when conversations about human crises are ignored or rushed through, the learning process is stunted. Students lose a valuable opportunity to develop empathy and cultural competence. They also miss out on moments that would otherwise provide a platform

for making abstract concepts such as power and privilege more concrete and less invisible. Furthermore, students lose the chance to uncover deeply embedded assumptions and values that guide how they view themselves and others. Educators are responsible for maintaining a conversation that validates the relevance of these events and legitimizes the critical questions that students may ask when exploring them. (Patton, 2008, p. 11)

Research further stresses the incredible ways that students grow and develop as a result of their participation in campus activism:

Some campus leaders may view student activism as dreaded fires to be extinguished. However, research has shown that students engaged in activism reap educational benefits such as developing an inclination to continue their political participation well into mid-life and acquiring a greater sense of social responsibility and identity consciousness. (Cole & Stewart, 1996; Stewart, Settles, & Winter, 1998). (Barnhardt & Reyes, 2016, "First, campus activism has positive outcomes for students," para. 1)

Research in the education community recognizes the shortcomings of what are predominant theoretical models that result in much discussion and little action. The manuscripts included in this volume offer guidelines for more activist based pedagogy – teaching and learning – that might expand the fundamental goals of democracy.

Concerns of the Education Community

In this edition of the journal, educators committed to the pursuit of democracy in education provide critical examinations of struggles and successes around educational change. From broad policy issues to classroom instructional practice, these contributions challenge the status quo, encourage the risk of resistance, and offer guidelines for grasping opportunities to disrupt imbalances of power born in the educational system. In "Educational Organizations as Tools for Navigating New Professionalism," Susan D'Elia critiques the current state of professionalism in teacher education. Her examination of the roles and responsibilities of teachers having shifted toward a state of managerialism, bureaucracy, standardization, assessment, and performance review has limited the efficacy of teaching for social justice. High stakes testing is now the ultimate measure of job performance and teachers have limited or no time to collaborate with colleagues and design creative curriculum. These policy mandates that inflict undue stress on teacher time and talents impede their ability

to addresses the academic needs of students who need a fundamental shift in their schooling experience and this article suggests that teachers use university affiliations, professional organizations, and professional development communities as tools for navigating and resisting the current climate of teacher professionalism.

Mary L. Slade, Tammy J. Burnham & Tammy K. Waters contributed, “A Study of the Impact of Reflective Practice on Teachers to Meet the Needs of Impoverished Students,” which continues this volume’s exploration of teacher practice and the influence of colleges and universities on teachers utilizing a democratic ethos in the classroom. This article specifically notes the impact of pre-service teachers enrolled in a university course focused on effective levels of reflective teacher practices to achieve competence in equity pedagogies. An additional look into democratic instructional practices is found in “Participating in Democracy: Creating a Culture of Citizenship in Primary Classrooms” by Mindi Reicht Shapiro. This exploration of civic participation in early elementary grades classrooms examines the development of a culture of equity by teachers and administrators for young children. It is never too early to begin nurturing the responsibility of civic duty and egalitarianism in our P-12 classrooms and this article acknowledges the enablers and barriers to addressing these curricular goals amidst our contemporary political climate that dictates policy and practice in U.S. education.

Addressing the rights of every child in the U.S. to be educated is championed in “Building Bridges: Making Literacy and Democracy Accessible in a Curriculum for Students with Interrupted Formal Education.” Lisa Auslander and Magdalen Beiting utilize a qualitative research paradigm to examine optimal learning conditions for Students with Interrupted Education (SIFE). Successful cases of teachers using critical-thinking-based literacy curriculum framed around issues of power and citizenship are documented through classroom observations and interviews with teachers, administrators, and students. This democracy-based curriculum enabled SIFE students to grasp basic education skills that would otherwise be inaccessible because of literacy abilities as well as assisted students with the development of critical thinking skills offer students an entry way into life impacting social justice discussions around citizenship and immigration.

Coalition building for social justice is aptly outlined in “The Open Mic, the Closed Fist: Student Artists Cultivating Disruption through Resistance on Campus” by Crystal Endsley. She confirms the higher education setting as a space for the birth of social movements that spread

beyond campus, affecting public educational institutions and creative media venues. Specifically, campus open mic nights are reported as the locale where a plethora of diverse students come together to collectively resist racial and economic aggressions that currently proliferate among U.S. political leadership. With social media having replaced many traditional forms of communication and information dissemination, creative arts provide a powerful format for mobilizing thought and action among a new generation of social activists who are demanding social justice across athletic, entertainment, and educational fields.

Situated as a beacon of democratic thought among educational institutions, the National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER) is called upon to transform itself from theory into practice in “Our Obligations as Educators in A Democracy: Transforming the NNER Into an Activist Organization,” by Nicholas M. Michelli, Tina Jacobowitz, Deborah Greenblatt, Lisa Auslander, Stacey Campo, Sharon Hardy, and Audra Watson. Founded as a collaborative to implement a moral agenda for education in a democracy, this organization actively seeks to promote partnerships among public schools and universities to positively promote social justice through education. John Goodlad’s vision intended for tripartite collaboration among faculty and administrators of public schools and both education and arts and sciences faculty and administrators of universities to work together to fulfill the democratic mission of public schooling. This critique examines the NNER’s moral agenda, offering change strategies as guides to large scale reform, and specific recommendations to the moral agenda to reflect contemporary needs of schools and society. The authors’ collective research reviewing the efficacy of the NNER suggests that we have more goals to accomplish and that our objectives as an organization must remain relevant and actively engaged in promoting educational democracy through activism.

Ultimately, educators must wrestle with two important factors that are fundamental to activism: (1) Defining our role as change agents and (2) Developing a viable form of educative support for student activists. First, as indicated above, we must decide what type of scholar, educator, or administrator we will be in a society that continues to exclude and oppress. This includes not only deciding what your response will be to student activism, but also what role you are going to play in creating change. Where do you yield power in your educational setting and how do you use that power for social good? With regard to supporting students, we must come to view student protest as an

exciting opportunity for education. This is why we offer the term “educative support.” You can and must do the basics: provide a safe space for protests, listen honestly to student complaints, and make real efforts to address their issue. But are there ways to complicate the experience by using that protest moment as an opportunity to learn more about the history of the issue? Are you able to build on the students’ basic concerns by introducing even more important changes that might also need to be addressed in order to truly address the root of a problem? Can you bring in or develop from within an expert team to teach everyone about the issue and all of the problems that need to be addressed to create lasting change? There are many possibilities. Below, we explore just a few.

Practical Possibilities

There are several considerations for practice in order to craft an intentional and culturally valuable response to student activism:

1. Include thoughtful opportunities for students to reflect on the leadership lessons learned from their communities, families, and histories across all spaces of campus and not solely from ethnic studies classrooms. Student leadership offices, cultural centers, service learning departments, and residential education departments all should intentionally teach about activist leadership.
2. Thoughtfully incorporate the use of the cultural arts as a tool for students to engage leadership and activism (social action through poetry, performance, folk art, hip-hop culture).
3. Expand the canon of whom and what you teach. Stretch further than simply including the major and popular social leaders of color. Reach to also include more localized citizens and families. Critically explore the contemporary and historical social issues that have deeply impacted the lives of oppressed peoples. As an educational institution, take real and constant action against oppression, racism, classism, gender, and lifestyle discrimination in a concrete way, not simply in reaction to a hate crime.
4. Connect with community-based leaders in new and exciting ways. Truly embracing the opportunities present in public scholarship allows our “community work” to be local, regional, national, or global in nature. It also allows us to reframe our interactions with communities beyond a “service” orientation. We have a lot to learn from the community activists that have

mobilized and created community initiatives in response to movements like Black Lives Matter. They did not wait—they acted. We need to work in partnership with concerned citizens who are not afraid to act.

5. Put your money where your pen is: Rather than drafting a written institutional response, take action by critically evaluating resource allocation. Restructure budgets (financial resources), staff (human resources), and space (physical resources) to ensure that your institution can effectively address issues of inclusion. And hold the programs, departments or programs that you create accountable to perform well. As the research shared above affirmed, creating support services but not ensuring that they are properly working to serve students does not create a truly inclusive campus cultural environment.
6. Create a work environment in which faculty and staff are encouraged to support student activism. Rid your institution of a culture of fear.
7. Stop. Stop and acknowledge when incidents occur. Do not continue with business as usual. Take bold action, like interrupting the football game. Cancel classes. Do what is necessary to address threat, harm, and hate.
8. Respond to criminal offenses as hate crimes. Taking concrete action sends a message to students that their lives matter and to potential offenders that certain behavior will not be tolerated.
9. Provide safe reporting structures for students to report hate crimes and incidents (whether it is a report on peer, faculty, or staff offenders).
10. Require staff to participate in the same social justice training that many of us advocate for students. Institutions should make this a major and ongoing professional development requirement for staff not simply a 30-minute diversity session during new faculty and staff orientation. For faculty, incorporate a professional development requirement into tenure and promotion criteria. Is it okay for a faculty member to receive tenure at your school without a demonstrated commitment to social justice? Are they made to prove this commitment or involvement with same type of concrete evidence that they are required to provide for scholarship, teaching and service?
11. Applaud student activism as an important illustration of student leadership. Create campus change and activism awards. In one of the leadership courses that Toby teaches, she engages students in

an exercise where they act as a campus awards committee. Their charge is to select the “Spirit of Campus” award recipient. They select from an incredibly involved student government leader, a philanthropic sorority leader, and a student activist (who spent much of his college career protesting administration). The issue at hand is that though the first two leaders are beloved by administration, the student activist actually changed campus—his protests created new campus departments, staff positions, scholarships etc. The exercise challenges them to reframe what “school spirit” looks like and what type of student leader we award as “model” students.

Creating a culturally inclusive environment is about doing the hard work and taking the difficult action of unconditionally loving students, supporting students, and providing truly adequate resources and spaces where they can be themselves without judgment or being made to feel that they are asking for too much.

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Educational Organizations as Tools for Navigating New Professionalism

Susan D'Elia
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Abstract

New professionalism has changed the roles and responsibilities of teachers. It has created a culture that prioritizes managerialism, bureaucracy, standardization, assessment and performance review. This shift has created tension and anxiety amongst teachers and has limited creativity and collaboration. As a result, a population of teachers continues to openly question, resist, or protest directives that do not align with their goals and values. This article examines how teachers use educational organizations such as university affiliations, professional organizations, and professional development communities as tools for navigating and resisting tenets of new professionalism.

A major restructuring of the public sector has created a new professionalism, which is categorized by the devaluing of collaboration and creativity and the increase in levels of managerialism, bureaucracy, standardization and assessment and performance review (Anderson & Cohen 2015). This shift has created a culture of performativity in which new professionalism is recreating teaching. The definition of the role, set of responsibilities, and evaluation methods are now different than they have ever been before. Current reforms have not just changed what educators do; they have changed who educators are (Ball, 2003). Performativity has created a culture of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons, and displays as means of incentive, control, and change (Ball 2003, 2015). In this article, I examine how teachers use educational organizations as tools for navigating and resisting tenets of new professionalism.

Currently, teachers are experiencing high levels of anxiety and stress (Ball, 2015). As mentioned above, the stakes are so high in schools that it creates an enormous sense of fear and anxiety. With such a large focus on data and performativity, teachers are afraid to take

risks due to fear of failure. In a discourse of competition, failure is amplified (Evetts, 2009). For teachers, failure could ultimately result in financial hardship or even grounds for removal from employment. According to Ball and Olmedo (2013), the results of this new culture of performativity include reduced fun in teaching and learning, increased stress and tensions in the teacher's personal life, and a dislike of the profession teachers once loved. Teachers also struggle to manage political business plans that contradict student needs and the balance of caring for themselves versus the duty to others. Ultimately, more time is now spent on documenting performativity than any other professional task within schools (Ball, 2003). Cohen (2014) contributes to this position by studying the role of school leaders in this model. He cites a tension between requirements of performativity and personal judgement. His research shows that school principals have become vendors and managers of school branding and competitive positioning. Gone are the days of the principal as master teacher. Public relations work with the community has taken over as the key responsibility for school leaders. Cohen's work also highlights that school leaders are becoming increasingly immersed in the competitive ethos of the school ranking system (Cohen, 2014). Ultimately, more time is now spent on documenting performativity than any other professional task within schools (Ball, 2003).

These experiences are consistent with Lyotard's (1984) notion of "the terrors of performativity." Lyotard suggests that these "terrors" have the potential to halt the production of new ideas. This is counterproductive to the goal of learning and extremely detrimental to future society. Zeichner (2010) suggests that Lyotard's prophecy may come true. He suggests that teacher education may be preparing teachers to assume limited roles as education "clerks," who are taught that they should not exercise their professional judgement. In this way, new professionalism has the ability to completely overhaul education, stripping power from teachers and school leaders and creating a marketized education factory.

Teacher Resistance

Ball and Olmedo (2012) address the importance of the "particular plight of the teacher who stands alone in their classroom or their staff common room, and sees something 'cracked,' something that to their colleagues is no more than the steady drone of the mundane and the normal, and finds it intolerable" (p. 85). Ball and Olmedo also identify subjectivity as a site of struggle and resistance. They believe it is when

an individual teacher can take an active role in her own self-definition as a “teaching subject,” and think in terms of what she does or does not want to be, that the individual will be able to “care for themselves” (p. 86). This form of care is where active modes of resistance are born.

The work of Gina Anderson (2008) has attempted to offer a framework for studying academic responses to new professionalism. She defines resistance as “the reflective awareness and rejection of hegemonic ideology” (p. 255). In her 2008 study, she identified four types of resistance enacted by university employees. These actions include: going public with opinions and reactions to new job roles and descriptions, refusal of practices that do not match up with academic values, avoidance of such rhetoric and action, and qualified compliance. Qualified compliance was used when avoidance was not possible. In this way, participants of Anderson’s study complied with demands of new professionalism, “but in a minimal, pragmatic or strategic way” (Anderson, 2008 p. 264). This last form of resistance was a last resort for study participants. These examples prove that new professionalism has not been met with silence and acceptance. It also shows that there is a systematic way that education professionals exhibit “care of self.”

The literature shows that educator resistance is a topic of growing interest (Anderson & Cohen, 2015; Herr, 2015; Ball, 2015; Nunez, Michie & Konkol, 2015). Neoliberalism is both out there -- in policy-- as well as in here -- in the identity and values of teachers. Although new professionalism has come from above, it has started to permeate the culture from within as well (Anderson & Cohen, 2015). For this reason, it has become obvious that resisting the tendencies of new professionalism by defending the old professionalism is not an effective strategy. Ball and Olmedo (2013) argue that teachers need to engage in critical thinking about the self and how the self is part of neoliberal market contexts. Likewise, Herr (2015) suggests that a close study of work environments can support the process of recognition of power through the analysis of everyday events. As literature continues to support teachers in this type of critical analysis, educators may begin to realize that they have the choice to refuse or recreate principles of NPM, instead of accepting new professionalism as the new normal.

Anderson and Cohen (2015) have furthered the conversation surrounding educator resistance of new professionalism. They call for the need to re-theorize resistance with the aim of being clear about what and who is being resisted and toward what end. They explore ways educators might address such challenges by categorizing

possibilities for individual and collective action that have appeared in literature on resistance. They identify the following categories, which they believe rarely, if ever, exist in isolation. They are: critical vigilance, counter-discourses, and counter-conduct and reappropriation. While each of these categories offers contributions to the vision of resistance, Anderson and Cohen identify a lack of strategy. They recognize a need within current resistance studies to “build new alliances of educators, students, parents, and communities” (p. 8). It is their belief that these alliances could serve as powerful vehicles for addressing diverse concerns such as high stakes testing, school closings, mayoral control, and the privatization of public schools and services. Anderson and Cohen make a notable contribution to the current vision of resistance, but do so in a broad and theoretical way. This leaves resistance research at a place that begs to ask the question, “What does this look like on the ground?”

In this article, I am drawing from research from a larger study on teacher resistance. In this article, I focus on a particular tool, which has helped teachers participate in everyday enactments of teacher resistance of new professionalism. First, I detail the lived experiences of three teachers, Casey, Joan and Jean, which highlight the changes that new professionalism has created in their day to day job responsibilities. Next, I show how involvement in educational organizations such as university affiliations, professional organizations, and professional development communities empower teacher resistance of new professionalism.

The Current Culture of Teaching

This article draws from data collected from the interviews of three secondary public school teachers in the greater New York City area. All three teachers complained of the increased amount of paperwork and accountability measures. They all felt that this work was unproductive and took time away from teaching. To this point, Jean, a high school teacher stated, “It’s literally about filling in boxes. I am already working to max capacity. I give everything to this job. I can’t do more work that has no purpose for teaching and learning.” As more and more accountability measures are demanded of teachers, time and energy put forth for reflecting, planning and providing student feedback diminishes.

Teachers have also voiced that a culture of competition has developed as a result of assessment measures. Teachers receive a score as a result from the combination of teacher practice ratings and student

achievement measures. Casey, a high school teacher, shared, “There has been weird competition amongst teachers. I hear teachers talk about it. I got this score, what did you get?” This culture of competition has decreased teacher collaboration. Jean furthered this point by stating, “Now I just try to take care of me.”

Teachers are also keenly aware of the punitive measures that may be taken against them if they do not follow the protocols of new professionalism. After speaking out against an administrator’s opinion, Joan, a middle school teacher, feared such action. “I know how this is going to play out. If he decides he can’t get over what I said, I may have to find another place to teach and that is not a comfortable thing. I know they might take my big, beautiful classroom away from me. They might harass me with lots of observations, bad ones maybe.” Today, standing up for one’s beliefs must be weighed against all one has at stake. This is a risk that not all teachers are willing to take.

However, there is a population of teachers who do feel the benefits outweigh the risks. In my work, I have found that teachers who participate in educational organizations outside of their classrooms have increased skills in their profession, increased knowledge within the field of education at large, and a higher sense of confidence to assert themselves in public contexts within their schools. This higher sense of confidence may allow teachers to resist tenets of new professionalism. Below, I identify some of the many roles classroom teachers play in educational organizations and show how these various roles foster confidence to speak truth to those in power.

Walking the Talk

Classroom teachers who work closely with university-based teacher education programs are uniquely positioned as both academics and practitioners. University affiliations offer teachers a space to merge theory and practice. Both Casey and Joan are adjunct professors at local universities. They both feel that teaching at the college level has many professional benefits, including keeping up to date with current education research, and thinking about teaching and learning in new ways. Joan teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in the Department of Education. Her courses include: Basic Methods of Teaching English, Methods of Teaching Reading, and Methods of Teaching Writing. “My syllabus is always evolving. This work keeps me current. It keeps me in it.” Casey teaches online graduate courses in education. She stated, “In teaching teachers, I have to be current. I am

frequently investigating the history of education and also the current reforms. By teaching college, I am constantly reading and learning.” Teaching at the college level has helped Joan and Casey to forge a deeper foundation of their own understanding of their profession, and has also helped to keep them up to date in current trends and policies.

Jean teaches in a high school that shares the town with a large state university. The close proximity offers various opportunities for Jean to be involved with the university and its students. Jean has mentored seven student teachers. In this way, she is able to influence a population of new teachers, as well as collaborate with young teachers with fresh ideas. “I love the creativity student teachers bring to lessons. There are a few lessons from each year that I’ve continued to use in my teaching.” Through university affiliation, Jean is able to view teaching through a different and more critical lens. “It’s actually more work to have a student teacher. I spend a lot more time planning and re-planning, and working on the concept of units and goals.” Having a student teacher share her classroom has motivated Jean to make sure her student teacher is receiving an authentic learning experience, as well as holding herself accountable for reflecting and improving on her own craft. This affiliation has also helped her to keep up with current trends that university-based teacher education students bring to her classroom. University affiliations and working with college students has positioned these teachers to “walk the talk.” They are not solely classroom practitioners, but also reflective thinkers and role models. These individuals have professional expertise which guides and influences future educators. This is a powerful role that not all teachers possess.

Professional Lives Outside of the Classroom

Professional Organizations offer teachers a space to connect with other professionals outside of their school buildings. This helps to broaden a teacher’s view of education, and foster new contexts for problem solving and resistance. As English teachers, both Casey and Joan are active within the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). The NCTE currently reports 35,000 members and subscribers in the United States and internationally. This membership is composed of teachers and supervisors of English programs ranging from elementary, middle, and secondary schools to faculty in college and university English departments, as well as teacher educators, local and state agency English specialists, and other professionals in directly related

fields. NCTE sponsors 120 regional, state, provincial, local, and student affiliates within the United States, Canada, and Asian countries (NCTE, 2018). Casey and Joan both attend the national conference each year, and frequently present their work. They receive educational journals associated with the council, and form professional connections with other English teachers through conference breakout groups and online forums. Joan has even served on the board of directors, overseeing council initiatives and offering input during the creation of the Common Core Curriculum Standards. Active involvement in a professional organization of this size has influenced Joan's decision making and leadership skills within her school. "I think because I was in a position of being in power on the board of NCTE that I learned a strict structure for initiating change. So when I said, this is what we are going to do, my colleagues and my principal listened."

Casey is also a member of the Mastery Collaborative of New York City. The goal of this organization is to shift the paradigm of grading and learning in NYC schools, so that all students can be successful (Mastery Collaborative, 2018). In this role, Casey collaborates with teachers from over forty schools within New York City. They meet in person at conferences and workshops, as well as online. For Casey, this organization has been a space for her to holistically view educational issues. Her work with the Mastery Collaborative has influenced her thinking around culturally responsive teaching and mastery based learning. "This work has recently become big for me. I now think about assessment as equity. How can I avoid failure experiences for my students? Many of my students have jobs after school, or take care of their families, or have a hard time after school. I now view it as my responsibility as a teacher to have my students master skills in the time that they are with me."

In the context of professional organizations, teachers are able to critically question issues of teaching and learning and power structures within the system. They are also spaces where teachers can connect with mentors and professionals who have the potential to introduce them to new ideas and practices. Joan shared, "Even in my first year of teaching, I had these people who were my mentors and they were like, you come with us, present with us, write with us. So from the beginning, I had this really rich outside professional life." Having a rich professional life outside of the classroom has helped these teachers to form a foundation of knowledge and confidence to speak truth to power.

Out of District Professional Development

As in-district professional development shifts towards a focus on raising test scores, teacher evaluations, and the like, teachers are now seeking meaningful professional development outside of their districts. Casey, Joan, and Jean all participate in professional development communities outside of their schools. Casey and Joan are both actively involved in the National Writing Project (NWP), while Jean participates in the organization Facing History and Ourselves.

The National Writing Project operates under the assumption that teacher leaders are change agents. In this way, in-service classroom teachers work to improve learning in schools and communities. Teacher leaders study and share effective practices that enhance youth writing and learning, work collaboratively with other educators, design resources, and take on new roles in affecting positive change (National Writing Project, 2018). Casey and Joan became involved in the Writing Project as teacher fellows, and subsequently took on various leadership roles within the organization. Casey currently co-facilitates a summer institute for high school teachers, while Joan currently co-facilitates an invitational leadership institute for teachers. The NWP has offered both women valuable professional development experiences, as well as opportunities to hone leadership skills.

Jean is particularly invested in the organization, Facing History and Ourselves, because she feels that it “offers various professional development opportunities in the form of webinars, workshops, courses and seminars in my content area.” The goal of this organization is to help students make connections between history and the moral choices they confront in their own lives. Professional development aims to train teachers to examine racism, prejudice, and antisemitism in their classrooms in order to promote the development of a more humane and informed citizenry (Facing History and Ourselves, 2018).

Professional development communities, such as those mentioned above, offer the space for inquiry and growth without the pressures and possible constraints of their own school buildings. Teachers have the space to ask questions and speak their minds without the fear of judgement from building colleagues or administrators. This may provide a more comfortable learning environment for teachers.

Organizing Power

As a culture of new professionalism has systematically been put in place in public education, it has also sought to take away power from teachers.

As mentioned above, teachers have very little time for creative and collaborative thinking. Likewise, the everyday tasks of educators have become increasingly administrative. In some cases, teachers fear taking risks or voicing their opinions because of the punitive measures that been taken against a population of teachers who do not conform and comply. Now, more than ever, it seems that teachers need to seek out spaces where they can take such risks. Educational organizations such as university affiliations, professional organizations, and professional development communities offer such spaces. The teachers who participate in educational organizations outside of their classrooms have increased skills in their profession, increased knowledge within the field of education at large, and a higher sense of confidence to assert themselves in public contexts within their schools. Educational organizations have the potential to function as tools for navigating and resisting tenets of new professionalism. As evidenced by the experiences of the teachers detailed above, these spaces can be transformative. They can further professional knowledge, foster leadership skills, and enhance curriculum. As new professionalism continues to strip teachers of autonomy, teacher participation in professional organizations will continue to become more and more essential.

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A Study of the Impact of Reflective Practice on Teachers to Meeting the Needs of Impoverished Students

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Abstract

Reflection is a high impact practice that develops teacher candidates' competence in making pedagogical changes that support the diverse social and academic needs of all students. (Sellars, 2012). Critical reflection requires educators to continually examine their own potential assumptions and bias in order to make the type of changes necessary to support all students (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Teachers hold the power to transform knowledge into action when they engage in reflective practice based on self-awareness in order to affect change for their students (Sellars, 2012). An observational study was conducted in order to determine the impact of reflective practice on teacher candidates enrolled in a course focused on developmental sciences in a context of poverty. The results of the study demonstrate what level of reflection is required to prepare teacher candidates to become self-aware and implement pedagogical changes on behalf of their diverse students.

Every preservice education program incorporates practice teaching through field-based practicum experiences. The most common occurrence is the student internship or student teaching experience. The high impact pedagogical practice that quality education preparation programs use to relate coursework to the field experiences is reflective practice (Brooke, 2012). Thus, preservice educators use reflective thinking in order to translate the knowledge and skills learned in the university classroom to the practice of teaching (Zeichner & Liston, 1996).

Reflective practice involves higher order thinking applied to real-world applications of knowledge and skills learned; thus, teacher competence results in a deeper level of transformative learning

(Lawrence-Wilkes, 2014). Therefore, the teacher candidate realizes one's own weaknesses and strengths, which facilitates growth and development (Zhao, 2012). Improved teaching skills can lead to increased student achievement (Dervent, 2015). It is important to note, however, that given that change can be resisted or even avoided, reflection requires that the educator not only possess the knowledge to change, but also the willingness to do so (Cuesta, Azcarate, & Cardenoso, 2016). One example of where such change is needed is the area of cultural competence or awareness of the sociocultural contexts of children's lives that impact learning, including poverty (Carrington & Selva, 2010).

Research on teacher education suggests that some educator preparation program components and practices do matter when it comes to cultural responsiveness and competency (Sleeter & Owuor, 2011), and that the most promising practices include reflective practice regarding issues of cultural competency applied in structured field experiences (Ingram & Walker, 2007). Most, if not all, educator preparation programs are committed to culturally competent educators who are able to understand and use multicultural knowledge regarding unique contexts of students' diverse lives to address the diverse needs of their students (Sleeter & Owuor, 2011). Gay (2010) defined culturally responsive teaching as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. It teaches to and through the strengths of these students" (p. 31). Unfortunately, too often, preservice teachers tend to leave teacher education programs with the same values they possess when they entered the program (Morine-Derschimer, 1989).

In summary, reflective practice can be transformative, allowing teacher candidates the opportunity to challenge assumptions and beliefs through the reflection process (Butin, 2003). Specifically, reflective practice encourages participants to make a more committed effort to effect change in their pedagogical practices and understanding of student cultures (Carrington & Selva, 2008). Therefore, understanding how teacher education programs can enable teacher candidates to teach students from different backgrounds should be a continued priority (Sleeter & Owuor, 2011). This study was conducted specifically to determine how the use of the high-impact pedagogy, such as reflective practice, impact teacher candidates' capacity to meet the needs of students of poverty.

Literature Review

Reflective practice facilitates the development of new knowledge, skills, and dispositions in teacher candidates by fostering critical contemplation of actions in a real-world environment (Schon, 1983). Specifically, reflective practice occurs when an individual or group engages in reflection before, during, and after applying what has been learned in a course to a field placement (Dewey, 1998). When accompanied by a practicum experience, what is taught during coursework enables teacher candidates to apply new knowledge to the world of practice through problem-solving, data-driven decision-making, and making changes in educational practice (Lawrence-Wilkes & Ashmore, 2014). Thus, the purpose of reflective practice in educator preparation programs is to empower teacher candidates to make the necessary changes in their twenty-first century classrooms in a way that impacts their diverse students' success.

John Dewey's definition of reflection depicts reflective thinking as an active, persistent, and careful consideration of a belief or supposed form of knowledge (Dewey, 1998). Thus, reflective practice emboldens the teacher to engage in life-long learning as he continues to learn from experience and bridge the gap between theory and practice (Kolb, 1984). It is the application of what is learned to the profession that leads to educational change as needed, such as that necessary to best serve the evolving social and academic needs of diverse students.

Reflective practice transpires at various levels of sophistication and complexity; therefore, it is a developmental process. Typically, teacher candidates move from the technical level of reflecting to a deeper contextual and deliberative level after only several weeks of practice (Dervent, 2015). Further, Dervent (2015) discovered that once participants of reflective practice are able to enter a more critical level of reflection, a comprehensive focus on specific changes is practiced in the classroom. For example, students determine alternative ways to meet the diverse social and academic needs of students in a context of poverty.

Similarly, transformative reflection allows the teacher candidate to challenge assumptions and beliefs that also lead to making appropriate changes in the classroom regarding students' diverse needs. For example, reflective practice can lead to a committed effort to effect change in pedagogical practices and understanding of student cultures (Carrington & Selva, 2010). Thus, teacher candidates examine their thoughts and feelings and move toward a plan of action to promote

improvement for teaching and learning (Crichton & Valdera, 2015). The notion of reflection and its connection to teaching competence moves the teacher to a deeper level of transformative learning (Lawrence-Wilkes, 2014), which instills a sense of professional autonomy that allows educators to serve as change-agents on behalf of their students.

Methodology

Descriptive research was conducted in order to investigate the impact of reflective practice on educator preparation; in particular, research that explored the transformative nature of reflection and the relationship to building teaching competence. Specifically, an observational study was implemented in order to determine the impact of reflective practice on undergraduate teacher education candidates' competency in addressing the academic and socio-emotional needs of students learning in the context of poverty. The research was driven by the question of how reflective practice enhances students' understanding of developmental sciences within the context of poverty and leads to change in candidates' educational dispositions, skills, and knowledge related to addressing their students' diverse social-emotional and academic needs.

The undergraduate course, EDCO 200: Developmental Sciences and the Context of Poverty, is the first in a sequence of eight field-based courses developed to encompass many opportunities to utilize reflective practice in order to increase cognitive development and acquisition of course content. One of the course requirements is the completion of a case study focusing on a pre-K-12 student living in poverty. The accompanying field-based experience involves at least 21 hours of work in a school setting under the guidance of a mentor teacher. During a series of course-integrated field activities, teacher candidates examine the context of poverty and its influence on the student's physical, cognitive, language, and social-emotional development. Further, teacher candidates plan and implement evidence-based instructional strategies differentiated for students living in poverty. Teacher candidates complete an activity using one of the instructional strategies with their student each day they are in the school. These activities coincide with content specific topics taught during the lecture-based component of the course, including: cognitive development, student attention, language development, social relationships and moral development. One of the course objectives embraces the use of reflection to examine teacher candidates' educational practice as well as their own beliefs about poverty.

Participants

The study took place in a small liberal arts university in the southeastern portion of the United States. The undergraduate student enrollment is approximately 5,000 students. Most of the undergraduates are female (67%). The student body is ethnically diverse, including: 28.15% Black/African American, 2.2% Latino/Hispanic, and 1.41% Asian.

The study participants were enrolled in EDCO 200, Developmental Sciences and the Context of Poverty, during the Spring semester of the 2016-17 academic year. In total, 243 undergraduate students were enrolled in the multiple sections of the course. All students complete the course prior to making application to the College of Education. After attrition resulting from students changing their majors, failure to complete the assignments, and assignments that did not follow requisite reflection model; 186 students comprise the study sample. Most (79%) of the participants are female and all of the students are freshmen and sophomores. The participants represent more than 8 majors; however, most of the participants study early childhood or elementary education.

Data Collection

Faculty members across courses use a common model of reflection in order to guide practice in the sequence of field-based courses. The designated reflective model is based on three questions: What? So What? and Now What? (Rolfe, Freshwater, & Jasper, 2001). The model concentrates on experiencing an event and reflecting on it in order to promote new thoughts and actions for improvement. Therefore, students wrote approximately 3 pages of reflection responding to three prompts: (1) What? (summary of experience), (2) So what? (significance of the experience), and (3) Now what? (impact for the future) (Rolfe, et. al., 2001). The content of the blind copies of reflections were collected and analyzed by three researchers.

Blind copies of students' written reflections were analyzed by three raters, all faculty members and researchers. Inter-rater reliability was documented at 90%. Each written reflection was analyzed for efficacy, level of reflective thinking, and professional practice. Reflection efficacy was assessed based on the Schon (1983) concept of reflection which states that reflective practice must include references to the content of learning and a connection to personal experience. Thus, a content analysis produced evidence of the incidence of both in each reflection. The levels of reflective thinking in each reflection were assessed using

a four-category coding system (Harland, D. & Wondra, J., 2011; Kember, McKay, Sinclair, & Wong, 2008). Each level of reflection thinking is explained in Figure 1. Professional educator practice was assessed using the INTASC teaching standards (Figure 2) to conduct a content analysis of the reflections (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011).

Data Analysis

Reflection efficacy. Two essential aspects of reflective practice denote efficacy in the reflection process (Schon, 1983). First, reflections must identify course content, as the primary purpose of the pedagogical tool is to link what is learned in a course to the world of practice. Second, effective reflections consist of personal connections to the course content. Hence, the written reflections were analyzed for frequency of incidence of both references to course content as well as personal connections.

Levels of Reflection

The developmental levels of the written reflections were determined using a four-category scheme (Harland, D. & Wondra, J., 2011; Kember, McKay, Sinclair, & Wong, 2008). This instrument assesses the degree or level of reflection represented by the written assignment. At the lowest level, students may write habitual actions. Students exemplify this level when they practice knowledge and skills as directed by their instructor without any consideration of how or why they are doing so. At the next level, understanding, students' reflections represent underlying meaning but there is no reflective thought about their understanding. At the next highest level, reflection, students have accurate understanding and they reflect on personal experiences or practical applications. And at the highest level of reflection, critical reflection, students' writing implies the transformation of a perspective. Each level is awarded one point during the analysis to designate the level or degree of reflection. Therefore, at the lowest level, one point is awarded, while at the highest level, four points are awarded.

Professional Practice. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), through its Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC), has produced a set of teaching standards that address expectations for professional educational practice, or, what teachers should know, understand, and be able to do in a pre-K-12 setting (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011). In addition

to the core standards of teaching, the competencies or professional aspects of teaching denote what a teacher does during teaching (Danielson, 1996). In other words, Danielson provides a framework for teaching broken down into competencies that denote expertise in teaching. Thus, teaching is depicted by twenty-two competencies that are grouped into themes of teaching expectations: (1) planning and preparation, (2) the classroom environment, (3) instruction, and (4) professional responsibilities.

The standards for teacher candidates and the framework for professional practice are correlated (see Figure 1). Thus, in order to assess the degree to which teacher candidates' reflective practice incorporated the expectations for teaching practice, the written reflections were analyzed for frequency of occurrences of the collapsed categories of professional practice reflected in teaching standards and Danielson's framework.

Results

Reflection Efficacy

The written reflections on teaching include both criteria for effectiveness, references to course content, and personal experiences (see Table 1). Almost two-thirds (64%) of the reflections contained personal experiences or connections to the classroom experience. Approximately a third (34%) of the reflections specifically mentioned course content within the narrative. Often, teacher candidates' apply what they have learned in the course to their student, teacher, or classroom from the field experience. For example, students linked actions in the classroom to course content. "The teacher did more than encourage her students. She set a high bar for behavior and academics and expected each of her students to reach it. We discussed in class the importance of high expectations and support for students affected by poverty" (personal communication, 2017). Similar comments demonstrate the candidate's application of course content to their own prospective classroom. "We talked about Jensen's SHARE factors in class. However, seeing my teacher always keeping students engaged in class proved to me that I need to use engagement strategies and use relationship-building in my own classroom" (personal communication, 2017).

Levels of Reflection

The level, or sophistication, of written reflections are assessed (see Table 2). About 25% of the candidate's reflections are at the lowest level, or

habitual action level. This may be a result of reflections not being taught or rehearsed in the course. However, more than half (56%) of the teacher candidates' written reflections are at understanding level or level two. Very few teacher candidates wrote reflections at the higher levels of reflection (18% at level three and 1% at level four). Candidates' reflection was aligned more with understanding and acceptance of their new knowledge and skill sets. For example, one candidate writes, "I want to instill confidence within my students that they can do anything they set their mind to" (personal communication, 2017). The more rare critical reflection captures candidate's dissonance as they question their own beliefs and values about their future classrooms. "Thinking about my future classroom, I am worried about my adolescent students of poverty. Students should not feel unprepared for tests or all behind in their class work because they hold afterschool jobs or a lot of responsibility at home while their parents work multiple jobs" (personal communication, 2017).

Professional Practice

Overall, the teacher candidates' reflections contain evidence of all four components of professional practice as outlined in the framework for teaching (see Table 3). Most often (215 times), students reflected about the classroom environment. More than half of these instances (51%) refer to the creation of a climate of respect and rapport in the classroom. Another 29% of the students' references to the classroom climate focus on behavior management.

The reflections on teaching contain a similar amount of attention on planning and preparation, as well as professional responsibilities. Of the 159 incidences of comments regarding professional responsibility, most often reflections on teaching (61%) are noted. Most (53%) of the 149 incidences of the standard, planning and preparation, emphasize the demonstration of knowledge of students. The remaining 84% of the references to professional practice in the teaching reflections mention instruction. Almost 25% of the comments include the engagement of students in learning.

Discussion

The results of this study warrant the discussion of at least two primary areas of significance for educator preparation programs. First, evidence exists that reflective practice facilitates the development of teacher candidates' knowledge and dispositions related to working with

students in the context of poverty. Second, reflective practice directly impacts teacher candidates' competence in making pedagogical changes in the classroom on behalf of all of their diverse students' social and academic needs.

Empowering Teacher Candidates to Make Changes on Behalf of their Students

As teacher candidates progress through education preparation programs, developmental growth and enhanced knowledge and skills are expected. Therefore, it is important to ask whether or not reflective practice specifically at the higher-levels is essential to the application of what is learned in teacher preparation courses. In the specific instance of the course involved in this study, is it important for teacher candidates to reflect critically in order to be able to make the necessary changes in teaching and learning in the context of poverty?

Approximately one-fifth of teacher candidates participating in the study reflected critically. Clearly, these students talked about their own teaching and how they would act on behalf of their students to support students socially and facilitate their academic success. For example, an excerpt from a critical reflection states, "I want to teach my students more than just academic skills, but also life skills; I feel that the attention I give my future students will create a more comfortable classroom environment that will foster increased achievement and more positive interactions between myself and the students, as well as interactions between the students in my classroom; the lifelong learning process has been impacted positively. I will be able to notice the effects of poverty and know ways in which to work with students to overcome them" (personal communication, 2017). Thus, teacher education programs must cultivate a developmental mindset in the evolution of reflective practice for all teacher candidates, in order that reflection occur at the most critical levels. The expectation should be increased levels of reflective practice over time to support the outcome of transformative learning that ultimately leads to making change on behalf of students.

Reflective practice also may result in a changed personal belief systems and world views. Throughout the written reflections, teacher candidates make references to their beliefs and what in the classroom promoted personal changes. Although this information was not tabulated, anecdotally, comments that represent this type of student impact are interesting. For example, one student wrote, "As a result of working with my student, I saw poverty differently. I can connect this

to my future by not going in with a pre-bias and assume all students in poverty will look the same; this experience prepared me with a new attitude for preparing to teach and creating a positive learning environment in my classroom; I learned that not every case of poverty looks the same” (personal communication, 2017).

Reflective practice can empower teacher candidates to overcome apprehension and fear of performing in real-world settings, especially in the context of poverty. Anecdotally, students included references to pre-existing or newly formed fears and concern for the various aspects of teaching in classrooms with students of poverty. For example, one reflection entry included:

I learned that many students in poverty are going to seek attention in as many ways as possible because they do not receive as much as they want, and even though the students need attention, you have to make sure that you are not favoring one because you know how rough their background is; these students typically have more behavior issues, less focus, and more academic problems, which I thoroughly experienced, but the experience reminded me that people are people, no matter where they come from or what situation they are in (personal communication, 2017).

Preparing Educators to Address the Needs of Diverse Student Populations

Both increased cultural competence and awareness of personal bias prepare teacher candidates for a profession that includes an increasingly diverse population of students. It is equally important for teacher candidates to develop the knowledge and skills related to cultural competence as it is to become self-aware of bias and how to make changes in one’s own beliefs. In the context of poverty, cultural competence involves building a current knowledge-base and skill set that addresses the needs of target students during the planning, delivery, and assessment of teaching and learning. Thus, reflection promotes the translation of the course content to educational practice.

A third of the teacher candidates participating in the reflective practice captured in this study referenced one or more specific course topics in their initial reflections. Consequently, reflective practice associated with specific coursework can provide evidence of target competencies of particular relevance and importance. Specifically, candidates most often revealed having new knowledge and skills related to creating supportive classroom environments and engaging in differentiated

instructional planning to address the nature of poverty. For example, 215 incidences of noting the importance of creating appropriate classroom environments were recorded. Of those references, 115 reflections referenced creating an environment of respect and rapport for diverse students. Analogously, 149 incidences of describing how planning and preparation for target students is necessary were included in the reflections. Slightly more than 50% of those incidences included references to demonstrating knowledge of students' unique needs as requisite to appropriate instructional planning.

In addition to gaining relevant knowledge and skills, teacher candidates denoted their own self-awareness of bias in their reflective practice. Students' self-awareness contained in their reflections may result in building confidence and patience in working in the world of practice. The practice of reflection provides opportunities for firsthand experiences in real-world applications of knowledge and skills. In our study, 159 references were made to the professional responsibilities of educators in the written reflections. Further, 114 (61%) of these references speak directly to thinking about teaching from the firsthand experience of working with children of poverty. Thus, critical reflection about oneself as a professional lends itself to a self-awareness that promotes and supports growing in the profession.

Recommendations

Findings from this study typify the potential transformative power of reflective practice when used in the preparation of future educators. Critical levels of reflection promote specific changes in the classroom (Dervent, 2015), and lead to teaching competence that moves deeper into transformative learning (Lawrence-Wilkes & Ashmore, 2014). Unfortunately, many preservice teachers leave their programs of study with the same values and beliefs about teaching that they had when they entered (Morine-Dershimer, 1989). Thus, it befits educator preparation programs to implement pedagogies such as reflective practice that promote self-awareness and transform knowledge into action for graduates.

As teacher candidates progress through preparation programs, developmental growth and enhanced knowledge and skills are necessary. Therefore, assessments of change over time are critical to documenting program success. One method for assessing growth is through measuring reflection levels across coursework and field experiences. In this study, the level of reflection was assessed to ascertain an onset

measure. Later reflections can be compared to the initial measure to demonstrate change over time. The expectation for program success should be increased levels of reflective practice for teacher candidates across program experiences.

Additionally, the results of this study document the developmental nature of reflection for teacher candidates, as movement toward critical levels of reflection require practice (Dervent, 2015). For example, twenty-five percent of participants did not progress beyond the Habitual Action level of reflection, highlighting the need for instructional scaffolding to progress beyond reflective practice that is primarily thoughtless and formulaic. Advanced reflective practice develops overtime, and thus teacher preparation programs should emphasize reflection from the start, infusing reflective practice into all courses and providing the appropriate time and support for future educators to develop and exercise the metacognitive skills necessary for critical reflection (McNamara, 1990; Noffke & Brennan, 1988).

In summary, the research findings resulting from this study demonstrate how the high-impact pedagogy, reflective practice, has significant influence on teacher education preparation programs. Evidence exists of direct change in educational practice, as well as changes in beliefs and values that make way for pedagogical change. Given the nature of the course and related field work in this study, reflective practice facilitates the development of teacher candidates' knowledge and dispositions, which results in action taken on behalf of their students.

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Figure 1.
Levels of Reflection

Level of Reflection	Level Description
Reflection	At this level, students not only have accurate understanding, but also, they reflect on that understanding and are able to relate it to personal experiences, or they can make practical applications.
Critical Reflection	This highest level of reflection implies the transformation of a perspective. Assumptions. Something (new information, new experiences) disrupts that belief system, thereby forcing students to reconstruct or reform it.
Understanding	In this case, there is an attempt to understand the topic or concept. Although students may search for underlying meaning, at this level, there is still no reflection.
Habitual Action	“In professional practice, habitual action occurs when a procedure is followed without significant thought about it (p. 373).”

Note. Harland, D. & Wondra, J. (2011).

Figure 2.
Framework of Professional Practice for Teachers

Planning & Preparation	Classroom Environment	Instruction	Professional Responsibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content & Pedagogy Students Instructional Outcomes Resources Instruction Student Assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respect & Rapport Culture of Learning Classroom Procedures Student Behavior Management Physical Space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating with Students Questioning & Discussion Student Engagement Using Assessment in Instruction Flexibility & Responsiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflection on Teaching Accurate Records Family Partnerships Professional Community Developing Professionally Showing Professionalism

Note. Danielson, C. (1996).

Table 1.
Reflection Content

Reflection Components	<i>n</i>	Percent (N=186)
Course Content	63	34%
Personal Experiences	119	64%

Table 2.
Levels of Reflection

Level	<i>n</i>	Percent (N=186)
4	2	1%
3	34	18%
2	103	56%
1	47	25%

Table 3.
A Framework for Teaching Components of Professional Practice

Standard	Component of Professional Practice	Component <i>n</i>	Percent (N=186)	Standard <i>n</i>
Planning & Preparation	Demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy	22	12%	149
	Demonstrating knowledge of students	99	53%	
	Setting instructional outcomes	10	5%	
	Demonstrating knowledge of resources	9	5%	
	Designing coherent instruction	5	3%	
	Designing student assessments	4	2%	
Classroom Environment	Creating an environment of respect and rapport	109	51%	215
	Establishing a culture for learning	32	17%	
	Managing classroom procedures	17	9%	
	Managing student behavior	53	29%	
	Organizing physical space	4	2%	
Instruction	Communicating with students	13	7%	84
	Using questioning and discussion techniques	5	3%	
	Engaging students in learning	44	24%	
	Using assessment in instruction	9	5%	
	Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness	13	7%	
Professional Responsibilities	Reflection on teaching	114	61%	159
	Maintaining accurate records	0	0%	
	Partnerships with families	10	5%	
	Participating in a professional community	7	4%	
	Growing and developing professionally	5	3%	
	Showing professionalism	23	12%	

Participating in Democracy: Creating a Culture of Citizenship in Primary Classrooms

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Abstract

This study explores development of civic participation in children in primary grade classrooms. It examines how teachers and administrators create a culture of democratic participation that nurtures young children's developing civic competence and embodiment of the rules, rights and responsibilities of democratic citizenship; and how young children enact these rules, rights and responsibilities within the classroom. Obstacles and challenges faced by schools in achieving these goals within the current political and socioeconomic environment that frames education in the U.S. are also explored.

In order for a democratic society to thrive, its citizens must be actively engaged participants in the civic life of the community.

Hart (1992) states that a democratic society depends upon the sustained and meaningful civic participation of all people at all levels of decision-making. The question is: how do young children who are accorded neither the rights nor responsibilities of adolescents or adults—learn to become actively engaged participants in a democratic society?

The Participatory Democratic Classroom

As young children are not often given the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the very decisions that directly impact their lives, where do we begin when teaching the skills of civic awareness and engagement? What lessons will build the foundations and how do we introduce young children to complex ideas of how the world works—e.g., economics, politics, environmental sustainability and social justice—in developmentally appropriate ways? How do children learn what they need to know to become democratic citizens concerned with the welfare of others and capable of making decisions that recognize both the rights of individuals and the responsibilities of society?

A primary (K-2) classroom designed to function as a participatory democracy, while still recognizing the cognitive and social boundaries of young children, presents a unique opportunity for children, through engagement in everyday activities and interactions, to develop a sense of how to participate in a diverse community organized to address the needs of many (Dewey, 1937, 1939; Hancock, 2017; Payne, 2018). In such a classroom, children are accorded dignity and respect. Their opinions are valued, and they are given opportunities to participate in real decision-making. A high level of inquiry and analytical thinking is maintained, which enhances decision-making in all areas of the curriculum. Teachers encourage openness to diverse ideas and interpretations, as well as critical reflection of societal policies and problems. Differences in age, gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, and ability are viewed as enriching the learning community. The knowledge, attitudes, and values that minority students—those outside the traditional culture of power—bring with them into the classroom are given equal weight and importance (Beane & Apple, 1995).

However, within the U.S. educational system, power is not shared equally between teachers and students, teachers are not autonomous within their classrooms, and administrators do not get to choose how teachers and students are assessed. In addition to these limitations on autonomy and choice, young children are viewed developmentally as cognitively limited in understanding and ability and, therefore, not capable of taking part in important decisions regarding their welfare. Thus, school as a cultural institution presents an experience that can be profoundly disempowering for young children. When children's unique voices and perspectives are shut out of the educational context in which they are expected to learn, they may see themselves as less competent, less capable, or less worthy (Nieto, 1999). Alternatively, they may consciously reject the system that devalues them and choose not to participate in learning activities within that system (Kohl, 1994), thus reinforcing the status quo of the hierarchical power structure within the school and society at large (Willis, 1977). According to Delpit (2006), issues of power are continuously enacted within classrooms and are “a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have power” (p. 24). Although democratic practices are not inherent within the structure of either the U.S. educational system as a whole, nor of individual schools or classrooms, implementing such practices in a developmentally appropriate manner would seem to be an important means of providing children with opportunities to

experience democracy in action and to practice the values and skills of citizens in a democratic society.

The Classroom as a Community of Practice

As noted by Stetsenko (2008), Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky viewed cognition as a dynamic and coordinated activity, a collaborative and ongoing process of transformation, wherein “active engagement with the world...represents the foundation and the core reality of development and learning, mind and knowledge...” (Stetsenko, 2008, p. 479). Lave and Wenger (1991) describe learning within a community of practice as a process of engagement with more experienced practitioners in authentic and meaningful activities with shared common goals. A participatory democratic classroom can be viewed as a community of practice within which children are learning to engage as active citizens.

As Matusov, Bell, and Rogoff (2002) note, schools “cultivate patterns of discourse” (p. 5) that institutionalize the values, beliefs, and traditions of society. Participation in the activities of school is, essentially, a process of enculturation. Through participation in communities of practice within the classroom, children learn how to engage with the social, political, economic, and cultural practices of the wider communities within which the classroom is embedded. Thus, when schools support a collaborative approach to teaching and learning—encouraging children to work together toward common goals, to listen to one another, to build upon each other’s ideas, to provide guidance when necessary, to be accountable to the learning community as a whole—children are learning important aspects of citizenship in a democratic society.

However, since the 1990s the civic mission of public elementary schools in the U.S. has been subjugated to the limited goals of increasingly rigid high-stakes tests and standardized curriculum (CIRCLE & Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2003; Levine, Lopez, & Marcelo, 2008). It can be argued that one influential factor was the publication in 1983 of *A Nation at Risk*, a report that broadly condemned the existing educational system and advocated “more rigorous and measureable standards” (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 25). The response at all levels of educational policy-making was a move toward standardization of both curriculum and testing and a narrow focus on reading and mathematics (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Levine et al., 2008; Meier, Kohn, Darling-Hammond, Sizer, & Wood, 2004). The broader goals

of education in a democratic society are left to history, government and civics classes in the middle schools and high schools (CIRCLE & Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2003; Levine et al., 2008); however, in doing so, our educational system ignores the importance of developmental context. If we truly care about increasing the civic awareness and engagement of young adults, we need to discover the roots of developing civic competencies in primary grade classrooms.

Guiding Questions of the Research

This study was designed to uncover those elements in a primary classroom that create a participatory democratic learning community that will support and advance a young child's developing sense of civic awareness and engagement, as well as the barriers to achieving such a learning community. The research had two interrelated goals: (1) to examine how teachers and administrators create a culture of democratic participation that nurtures and sustains young children's developing civic competence and embodiment of the rules, rights and responsibilities of democratic citizenship; and (2) to document how young children come to understand and embody these rules, rights, and responsibilities embedded within the daily functioning of the classroom. The study also explored the obstacles and challenges faced by teachers and administrators in these schools in their attempts to achieve these goals within the political and socioeconomic environment that frames education in the U.S.

Methodology

My methodological approach draws upon transformative theories of learning and development that posit the developing child as an actor within a world of embedded meanings. Each school—and each classroom—is viewed as a community of practice. The enactment of democratic principles in the classroom was the unit of analysis: ideology and practices of democratic learning communities, as well as how these principles and practices were embodied within the activities of teachers and children.

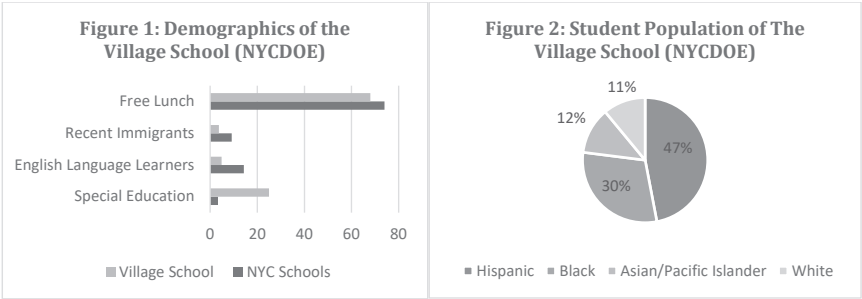
Stetsenko (2012) describes a post-objectivist approach to research, a transformative activist stance (TAS) that posits collaborative transformative practice as a primary force in human development and social dynamics. Research cannot be value neutral because we change the world we are investigating by the very act of our engagement, by the questions we ask, by “posing questions about how things are and by

envisioning them being otherwise and acting on these visions” (p. 194). My goal in undertaking this research was to explore the possibilities within primary classrooms of creating a culture of citizenship, even within the realities of the current educational environment, to seek out democratic principles embedded within the activities of children and adults in the classroom.

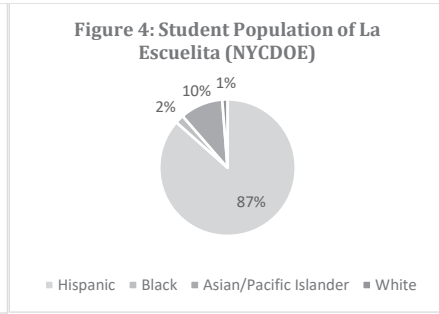
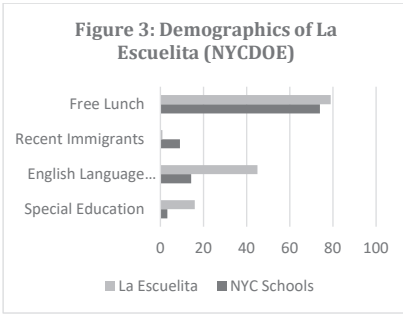
Participants

Participants were the students, teachers and administrators of two New York City public schools that serve socioeconomically and ethnically diverse urban populations in two different communities. Each school is dedicated to a democratic educational philosophy that emphasizes respect for the open flow of information and ideas, social justice, and equal opportunity for all children. I have changed the names of the schools and people included in the study. Thus, I will refer to the two schools as The Village School and La Escuelita del Corazón.

The Village School is an alternative school located in Manhattan that serves children from PreK-Grade 6 (See Figures 1 & 2). Modeled on successful progressive schools, it was the first parent-teacher collaborative school established in this lower east side community. The parent/school/community relationship is an essential component of the educational philosophy, while social action and community involvement shape and guide the curriculum.



La Escuelita del Corazón, located in Queens, serves children from PreK-Grade 2 (See Figures 3 & 4). Although a magnet school for the arts, La Escuelita is essentially a community school that draws 90% of its students from the surrounding neighborhood. School philosophy emphasizes a collaborative educational environment and introduces the concept of an educational family that is mutually responsible for children’s academic achievement.



Data Collection

Over a five-month period at each school, I conducted detailed observations of the daily activities in which teachers and children in five primary (K-2) classrooms engaged, as well as informal interviews and conversations with students, teachers, administrators, and parents within the school community. At the Village School I observed a first/second grade classroom with one teacher and one student teacher. At La Escuelita, I observed two kindergarten classes, one first-grade class, and one second-grade class. One kindergarten class was a bilingual/ICT class with two cooperating teachers and a paraprofessional. The other three classes were dual language classes with one teacher. Classrooms in both schools had a total of 21-25 students.

During the months that I spent in each of these schools as a researcher, I often spent early morning hours, lunch period, prep periods, and after-school hours with teachers, student teachers and paraprofessionals. I also spent considerable time with the principal, assistant principal, and curriculum specialists in both schools. During the time that I spent with them outside the classroom, these participants were very open in their conversations and often took particular care to explain or enlarge upon various issues. I learned from teachers in both schools that children were familiar with the concept of citizenship, which was a vital part of the schools' mission statements and curricula. The term "citizenship" was used regularly in both schools.

In each classroom, children quickly accepted me as a "participant observer" in the daily activities. Upon first entering each classroom, I explained my reason for being there and invited children to ask questions at any time. Children at all grade levels expressed interest in my note taking, which would often initiate a conversation, as children volunteered their interpretations of events I had observed and shared other experiences. The following questions provided the lens through which I observed daily classroom activities:

- How do teachers and students collaboratively transform a primary grade classroom in a school committed to creating a participatory democratic learning environment?
- How do participants define their roles within the school community?
- How does the school function within the broader community?
- What are the affordances and boundaries to achieving active democratic participation in a New York City public school classroom embedded within the current sociopolitical and economic systems?
- Does standardization of curriculum and assessment limit the goal of achieving active democratic participation?
- What is negotiable?
- What is not?
- How are the required elements of curriculum implemented?
- Do children have the opportunity to take ownership of their learning?
- What problem-solving strategies are available for children's use?
- How do administrators and teachers act to create a sense of community within the school and within each classroom?
- Is dialogue encouraged between students and teachers and among students?
- Do children initiate dialogue? What is the scope of the dialogue?
- Whose voices are encouraged? Whose voices are silenced?
- Are there opportunities for participation? Engagement? Decision-making?
- What cultural scaffolding is provided to help children become active participants?
- How do children deal with conflicts?
- Do they understand that people have different perspectives?
- What tools are children given to develop the ability to express their viewpoint?
- What conflict resolution strategies are available to children?
- How is space/time organized/utilized?
- Is there flexibility?
- Is there freedom of movement?
- Who is involved in deciding upon and implementing classroom rules?
- Do teachers follow the same rules as students?
- How is it decided whether a rule should be changed?
- What happens when classroom rules are broken?

- Is there a balance and connection between the rights of individuals and of the community?
- Do children have a sense that they can make a difference within the community?

Analyzing the Data

To analyze the data, I created an array of descriptors regarding the ideological framework that informs the practices of administrators and teachers in participatory democratic learning communities, how teachers and administrators enact these principles, and how these principles and practices are embodied within the activities of children. Taken together, these form the basis of the classroom culture within which children learn about citizenship.

Ideology: The first part of the equation

Ideology is defined as the underlying principles—intentions, expectations and aspirations—that shape and inform teacher practices within the broader mission of the school. Teachers should be able to articulate democratic principles in discussing their pedagogical beliefs and in reflecting upon observed practices in the classroom. These philosophical principles should include:

- Open discourse: Teachers understand that complex issues have more than one interpretation and all voices are given equal weight in the dialogue;
- Respect for the individual: Children are viewed as having a right to participate meaningfully in decisions that affect their lives;
- Inclusiveness: Children's differences are appreciated as a positive force and their achievements are recognized and valued;
- Concern for human rights: Children are encouraged to question existing institutions and power structures that reinforce inequities and to seek strategies for change.
- Teacher practices: How democratic principles are implemented. A focus on ideological principles can help to identify a schools' or teacher's commitment to democratic practice. But principles do not always translate into practice. In order to understand what children are learning about democratic participation and civic engagement in the classroom, it is also necessary to examine how teachers implement these democratic principles within the classroom. To understand how ideology translates into practice, I examined power structures and rules within the classroom;

whether teachers engaged children in authentic dialogue; how teachers organized and utilized the physical and temporal space; and how teachers and administrators negotiated constraints such as mandated curriculum, standardized assessment, and embedded evaluation systems. I observed how teachers used curriculum, literature, music, and role-play to encourage perspective-taking, and whether they modeled the skills needed for collaboration and participation.

- Enactment: How well does it work. How well do young children assimilate a sense of democratic participation and civic engagement within the classroom community and enact those principles in their day-to-day activities? What measures can we use to identify the beginnings of civic engagement in children whose understanding of the world is at the level of the tangible and material? Although it is important to provide children with ample opportunities to reflect upon their actions, young children often cannot clearly articulate abstract concepts such as democracy in explaining their actions. Therefore, I focused on how children enacted democratic principles and the extent to which they actively created their own unique views of citizenship. I examined whether they respected the rights of their classmates and whether they participated in creating and transforming the culture of the classroom community; whether they used classroom rules and practices with one another; and whether they ever questioned, resisted or subverted rules. I observed whether they included those who were different from themselves as equal members of the classroom community and whether they recognized their own abilities as individuals to make a difference.

Findings

Education is an inherently political activity (Beane & Apple, 1995). Public schools link generations, transmitting the cultural practices and power structures of the society within which they are embedded. Bourdieu (1974), Willis (1977), Delpit (2006) and Kozol (1991) have all described public schools as a conservative force, recreating and reinforcing social patterns of privilege and exclusion. Yet Freire (1970) maintained that public schools could be a force for positive transformation, empowering students to strive for social justice, while Dewey (1916) believed that public schools have the responsibility to nurture this vision of a just society.

I observed both conservative and transformative forces within each classroom as teachers and children co-constructed their communities of practice. What children knew and understood about democratic practice became evident by analyzing how they engaged within the classroom setting; what teachers and administrators perceived as democratic participation became evident by analyzing how they defined spatial and temporal affordances and boundaries and how they formulated and enforced rules. The day-to-day decisions of administrators, teachers, student teachers and paraprofessionals sometimes provided children with opportunities for action and decision-making, and at other times limited and controlled those choices. Collaborative workspaces, freedom to move about the classroom and choose where to work, open access to communal supplies, and accessibility and use of spaces outside the classroom were factors that influenced the sense of community and democratic citizenship in each school and each classroom.

Several interrelated themes emerged from the data. In each school and each classroom, these elements helped to create a participatory democratic learning community supportive of children’s civic engagement. Interwoven within these themes are core elements of democratic citizenship, from which a conceptual model of democratic practice emerged (See Figure 5) that can be implemented in primary classrooms to support children’s civic awareness and engagement.

Figure 5: Participatory Democratic Classroom Model

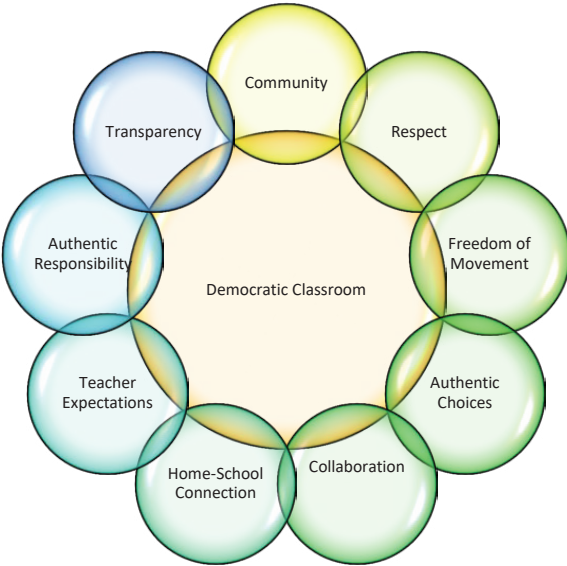


Table 1 presents a brief description of the themes that emerged from the data, while the following sections provide examples that elaborate on each theme. In selecting the events used to illustrate each of the elements that contribute to a democratic classroom culture, I chose examples that were representative of discourse, actions, and interactions that I observed many times throughout the months that I spent in each school and each classroom.

Table 1: Themes of a Participatory Democratic Classroom

Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children learn to balance individual rights and community needs • Teachers model compassion and empathy • Teachers encourage, model and scaffold collaborative effort • Children learn to negotiate shared spaces and supplies • Children take responsibility for each other and the group as a whole • Children are encouraged to value different perspectives
Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers model and scaffold active listening • Teachers encourage open discourse • Teachers create respect for personal and shared space • Teachers model and scaffold respect for differences of ability and support children’s accomplishments
Freedom of Movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have authentic choices about where to work and freedom to move about the classroom during lessons • The classroom affords a range of opportunities and work spaces • Lessons extend beyond the classroom walls, using hallways, outdoor spaces and the surrounding community as learning spaces • Materials are accessible and available to children at all times
Authentic Choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers share power with children, allowing children to participate meaningfully in decision-making that affects their lives • Children participate in setting individual goals for academic achievement and behavior
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants at all levels of the school hierarchy engage in collaboration, both formal and informal • Administrators and teachers discuss impacts of changing educational policy initiatives and plan together for implementation and compliance • Parents and students participate in school decision-making • Children engage in collaborative learning activities • Teachers welcome and actively mentor student observers and student teachers

Home-School Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and administrators welcome parents/guardians into the school community and into the classrooms to participate in a variety of ways • The school maintains strong ties to the community and is committed to meeting the needs of parents at all socioeconomic levels • Meetings are scheduled at times of the day when working parents can attend and interpreters are provided when necessary • Parents with young children who cannot arrange for babysitting are accommodated • The school offers adult education programs to help parents support their children: homework help, support for emergent readers, technology classes, and adult ESL classes
Teacher Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers view children as capable of choice, independence, responsibility and decision-making • Teachers give children opportunities to resolve their conflicts, with the teacher acting as facilitator • Teachers provide scaffolding and tools to help children learn how to make decisions, to collaborate and to solve real problems
Authentic Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have authentic responsibility within the classroom community and take these responsibilities seriously: class jobs, cleanup, classroom materials, conflict resolution, peer tutoring • Children take ownership of social responsibilities to maintain the physical space of the classroom and the school
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and administrators introduce transparency into the hierarchy of power and authority • Administrators attempt to provide authentic opportunities for parents, teachers and children to participate in decision making • Teachers view themselves as participants in the classroom community and hold themselves accountable to class rules • Teachers acknowledge their mistakes and are willing to change their decisions • Community rules and responsibilities are fully and clearly explained in developmentally appropriate language • Children participate in creating and implementing classroom rules and share in decisions about consequences when rules are broken • Teachers and students honestly examine instances of unequal application of rules and inconsistent teacher expectations • Children are encouraged to question existing power structures • There are times when children subvert the rules, choosing to honor community and collaboration

Community

At both schools, teachers engaged in daily interactions that helped children learn how to balance individual rights with the needs of the community, how to work cooperatively and help each other to succeed, how to negotiate shared spaces and supplies, and how to take responsibility for each other and for the community as a whole.

Robyn, the first/second grade teacher at The Village School, never removed a child from the meeting space because of behavioral issues. Instead, she used phrases such as “You are part of this community” and “We are responsible for one another” in attempting to mediate peaceful resolutions to conflicts. In one instance, when Max, a first-grader, pushed another child at the meeting space, Robyn allowed him to explain why and then directed everyone’s attention to the class rule about not hurting anyone’s body or feelings. Robyn told Max, “We care about you, that’s why we want you to learn the rules for getting along in school.” She then asked, “What can we do to help you so that you don’t feel angry about following the rules? You need to help us by letting us know what to do to help you.” This was typical of how Robyn engaged children’s cooperation and participation, creating a sense of community.

Teachers modeled and practiced compassion and empathy, and children learned to value and appreciate different perspectives and diverse abilities. I also noted many instances when children transformed the classroom environment by exhibiting compassion and empathy in their interactions with classmates. The following vignette from a kindergarten class at La Escuelita will illustrate:

Emiliano was a child with developmental delays. Most of the children in the class seemed protective of him. They also included him in their social groups and extended their friendship. At the meeting space one day, I noticed Karla gently stroking his back when he seemed a bit lost, not participating in the lesson. One morning when the children were called to gather at the meeting space, Emiliano did not move. He was standing in one spot and seemed a bit confused by the activity in the room. Alicia gently took his hand and led him to the meeting space. On another occasion, I observed three children who sat at the same table with Emiliano attempting to guide and scaffold him in writing his name. In fact, his classmates were often so eager to help Emiliano with his tasks that the teachers had to remind them to let him try by himself, so that he could learn.

Ms. Amaro and Ms. Carreno emphasized compassion and cooperation in their interactions with one another and with the students, as well as in explicit conversations throughout the day, using phrases such as “You can do this together. Help each other.” When working with Emiliano, the teachers differentiated his instruction while he sat with his tablemates. The children were used to seeing Emiliano receiving extra help and it is likely that this had an impact on their interactions with him.

Respect

Teachers also emphasized respect in creating a sense of community. Children learned to listen to the ideas and concerns of others, to value their right to opinions with which they may disagree, and to find ways to compromise. Children cared for shared space and supplies and were considerate of others who were also using that space and those supplies.

Classrooms at La Escuelita and The Village School provided accessibility and learning opportunities for all children, and children with special needs were included and supported in general education classrooms. Teachers and administrators demonstrated respect for individual differences and supported children’s accomplishments. Progress was measured against a child’s previous work, rather than in relation to a “normalized” standard.

Teachers also modeled patience in group lessons and explicitly articulated the concept that some people need more time to process information and understand, telling children “It’s okay, let his mind take its time” or “She’s thinking. Give her a chance.” Children at the meeting space engaged in lively discussions and, for the most part, did not talk over or interrupt each other. They listened to each other’s contributions, responding and elaborating on one another’s answers in a true dialogue.

Children were encouraged to take academic risks without fear of failure. Teachers were comfortable admitting mistakes and actively encouraged children not to be afraid to try, that we learn from our mistakes. During one lesson at The Village School, when Bhreyion responded incorrectly to a question, he nodded and said, “I made a mistake. Everybody makes mistakes.” He then tried again, this time giving the correct response.

Freedom of movement

Children at La Escuelita and The Village School had authentic choices about where to work and freedom to move about the classroom during lessons. Materials were accessible and available, and classrooms offered a range of opportunities and work spaces. During independent work, children could be found working at collaborative tables, at the meeting space, at the learning centers, or simply scattered in various corners of the room. Children moved easily and quietly about the room without disturbing their classmates.

La Escuelita was designed as an early childhood school. Every classroom had a sink with a water fountain, as well as an individual bathroom or a bathroom shared with another classroom. Children did not need to ask permission to use the bathroom or to get a drink of water during whole group or independent lessons, which allowed greater freedom of movement and greater autonomy. In each classroom there was a system in place (such as a Stop/Go sign) that allowed children to easily determine whether the bathroom was free.

Lessons often extended beyond the classroom walls. The two first/second grade classes at The Village School engaged in collaborative learning activities in which children from both classes could be found working together in the hallways outside the classrooms or moving freely between the two classrooms when working on projects. Both schools also used the surrounding community as a classroom. Students from La Escuelita, a magnet school for the arts, performed at the high school next door and the community center across the street several times during the year. Students from The Village School helped maintain two community gardens and took weekly excursions to the neighborhood park throughout the year to study the natural environment.

Authentic Choices

Children from both schools were included in setting individual goals for academic achievement and behavior and in meaningful decision-making that had an impact on their lives. Administrators and teachers were confident in sharing power and trusted children's ability to make decisions and resolve problems, as noted in this example from the Village School:

One morning, Natalie and Willa approached Robyn, and Willa asked, "Can we find some time this afternoon for choice time?" She spoke about how hard the students were working and said that they

could use some “downtime.” When the children returned from lunch and settled into place for the afternoon meeting, Robyn opened the floor to discussion, referring to the afternoon schedule. “What do you think,” she asked, “Can we make some time this afternoon for choice time? Where can we make room in the schedule?” The students began to discuss ideas and offer suggestions. Robyn listened and moderated until they came to a consensus that they might take 20 minutes from their social studies block if everyone worked efficiently and stayed on task.

It was interesting to note that Willa asked, “Can we find some time,” implying equal status, rather than privileging responsibility for making the decision to Robyn. Children also participated in developing and implementing classroom rules, deciding upon consequences, and engaging in problem solving and conflict resolution. One incident that occurred during recess—an altercation that involved four students from Robyn’s class—illustrates important elements of a democratic classroom community:

When the students returned from recess, Robyn gathered the class at the meeting space and explained that each child would have an opportunity to tell his story without interruption while she documented it. When each child was finished, Robyn read his story back to him to check for accuracy and asked questions to clarify. The discussion lasted for 50 minutes and, throughout, no child interrupted or shouted out. Although it was clear that they were all upset, each child spoke calmly, and the others listened quietly and attentively. Robyn also spoke quietly and emphasized that they needed to understand, as a community, what had happened and to respond to it. The next morning the principal, Lara, met with the four children and they discussed what had happened. She asked them what they thought should be the consequences of their actions, and they decided together how to move forward. Robyn and Lara also spoke at greater length with the other students in the class, giving them the opportunity to share their reactions to the incident and their thoughts about what the consequences should be.

Collaboration

Lara and Ms. Gutierrez, the principals, respectively, at The Village School and La Escuelita, nurtured a culture of collaboration. They were willing to share ideas, materials and expertise, and to call upon teachers, parents and students to participate in decision-making. Both Lara and Ms. Gutierrez shared with their teachers the problems and constraints

they all faced as a result of the turbulent social and political landscape of public education in New York City. Educational policy initiatives at federal, state, and local levels were discussed in meetings where teachers and administrators planned together for implementation and compliance.

Teachers were invited to share their expertise at school-wide seminars and grade-level curriculum meetings. Ms. Gutierrez held meetings with teachers at each grade level to discuss the requirements of the formal teacher performance assessments mandated by the New York City Department of Education and, whenever possible, gave teachers an opportunity to provide input into the form of the assessment. Parents, teachers, students and administrators at The Village School all participated in biweekly Town Meetings, held in the multipurpose room and designed to explore issues, large and small, that were important to the school community.

Teachers at La Escuelita and the Village School were strongly committed to collaborating with colleagues and to mentoring pre-service teachers. During a conversation at the beginning of the school year, Ms. Amaro affirmed that community and collaboration were “the way of the school” at La Escuelita, not just for the children, but for the teachers as well. “We have each other’s backs,” she told me. Teachers planned together, co-taught, and shared ideas, supplies and pedagogical knowledge. This philosophy of collaboration was not “just words,” but enacted on a daily basis. Teachers actively mentored student teachers, engaging them in the day-to-day life of the classroom, sharing ideas and curriculum materials, providing guidance and feedback on lesson plans and opportunities to teach, and encouraging them to find their own voices in the classroom.

Teachers also afforded students opportunities to participate in decision-making at levels that were developmentally appropriate for each grade. They discussed the daily schedule, responded (within their ability to make changes) to students’ concerns and provided transparency into the hierarchy of the school curriculum. Teachers viewed students as capable of taking responsibility and encouraged them to share their expertise with one another in collaborative learning activities and during independent work. The following vignette is an example of authentic collaboration and community problem-solving at The Village School:

During one Town Meeting, two teachers raised a problem: noise from students entering and leaving the shared school bathrooms was

distracting for their students. After discussion, the school community decided to undertake a research project to determine the busiest times of use. Second-graders from both first/second grade classes worked together to gather data and present their analysis at the next Town Meeting. After they presented their analysis, the moderator opened the discussion to everyone at the meeting—teachers, students, parents and administrators—to explore possible solutions.

Home/School Connection

Parents and guardians participated in a variety of ways to support the goals of their school community, while each school was strongly committed to meeting the needs of parents at all socioeconomic levels. The parents and guardians with whom I spoke at both schools felt they were given real opportunities to participate in their children's education. For example, parents maintained a strong voice in the day-to-day decision making at The Village School, actively contributing their ideas and opinions at the biweekly Town Meetings.

Parents were often in the classroom, reading to children, working one-on-one with children who needed extra help, sharing their expertise with regard to a particular topic or lesson, and sometimes teaching lessons developed in collaboration with the teacher. When the students were learning about communities as part of the social studies curriculum, Robyn invited parents to come in to talk about their work or about community work in which they were active.

Teachers and administrators at La Escuelita maintained a strong commitment to teaching children—and their parents—how to achieve success within what Delpit (2006) calls the “culture of power.” The parent coordinator's office was welcoming and accessible, located just inside the main entrance of the school. Parent workshops were scheduled for morning, afternoon and evening to accommodate varied work schedules. Evening programs for parents—technology classes and adult ESL classes, as well as classes designed to teach parents how to assist their children in reading, writing and completing homework assignments—were well attended and informative. Parent participation at those meetings was lively, with many questions and comfortable discussions among parents, teachers and administrators.

Teacher Expectations

Teachers at The Village School and La Escuelita viewed children as competent, independent learners capable of assuming responsibility

and making choices. Children were full participants in the classroom community, empowered to express their thoughts and ideas and to develop their own viewpoints.

Teachers provided scaffolding and tools to help children learn how to make decisions, to collaborate with one another, and to solve real problems. Robyn continually reinforced that students had ownership of their actions and that it was within their power to change their behavior: “You have power over your day.” She told me that young children need a true and deeply-rooted understanding of rules, rights, and responsibilities in order to engage in meaningful and authentic learning. In Robyn’s classroom, community rules were organic, evolving through use, and subject to revision as needed. There were reasons and resolutions included with each rule.

Ms. Marquez, a second-grade teacher, actively fostered the children’s independent problem solving and conflict resolution. If students approached her with a dilemma, she would listen and then say, “Well. So, how are you going to solve the problem?” She encouraged the students to see other perspectives and to support their arguments. She facilitated but did not offer solutions; instead she empowered her students to find solutions. She listened actively, validated their different perspectives by reflecting back to them what they said and helped the children to come to a resolution that was mutually satisfactory. There was an atmosphere of trust in this classroom; trust between Ms. Marquez and the students and also students’ trust in one another.

In Ms. Ramirez’s first grade class, children spent several weeks exploring the question “What does cooperation mean for our community?” They read stories and discussed the ideas within the stories, making connections to their own lives to create meaningful constructs of cooperation. They then created a mural, which included thoughts such as “Cooperation means to be respectful to one another” and “Cooperation means helping each other and sharing and caring for each other.” Ms. Ramirez often referred to the ideas captured within this mural when talking with the children about classroom community.

Authentic Responsibility

Children had authentic responsibilities within the classroom community and took these responsibilities seriously: class jobs, cleanup, care of classroom materials, conflict resolution, and peer tutoring. Many class jobs included a high level of responsibility; for example, in Ms. Ramirez’s class, the care and maintenance of the laptop computer

cart and in Robyn's class, calling children to line up when it was time to leave the room. A sense of community responsibility, embodied by the children's maintenance of the supplies and materials of the classroom, was widespread in all of the classrooms. Children helped one another and their teachers without being asked and without drawing attention to their actions.

On various occasions, I observed different children clean up spills for which they were not responsible, pick up and replace projects that had fallen from where they were hung, and pitch in to help others when they had completed their own tasks. At the beginning of the school year, Robyn and the students worked together to clean and organize the extensive block area to prepare for future projects. Various groups were enthusiastically engaged in the tasks of counting, labeling, cleaning, and organizing blocks.

Transparency

Although public schools in the U.S. are inherently hierarchical, teachers and administrators at La Escuelita and The Village School introduced an element of transparency into the hierarchy of power and authority. Working within the limitations of the educational system, administrators attempted to provide authentic opportunities for parents, teachers, and children to participate in decision making. Teachers viewed themselves as participants in the classroom community, subject to the rules and willing to acknowledge their mistakes. Community rules and responsibilities were fully and clearly explained in developmentally appropriate language, and children were empowered to participate in creating and implementing rules, to re-examine and revise rules when necessary, and to share in decisions about consequences when rules were broken.

Children were encouraged to question existing power structures and teachers honestly examined instances of unequal application of rules and inconsistent teacher expectations. Robyn, for example, was open and forthright in discussing issues of power and hierarchy. She spoke with me about how confusing it was for the students when different teachers (substitutes, student teachers) had different rules for how to behave in their classroom. The students felt a sense of ownership and they resisted when another teacher with a more authoritarian style changed the rules and expectations. Often, the teacher would interpret their resistance as a challenge to authority and children were disciplined for, essentially, standing up for their rights.

Each time this happened, Robyn gathered the class at the meeting space and engaged children in dialogue, allowing them to express their frustrations and sense of injustice, and validating their right to question the hierarchical structure that created the inequities. Sean, a second-grader, explicitly referred to one substitute teacher's disciplinary style as "unjust." What was interesting was that the class as a whole would agree that the experience was unfair, rather than just those students who had been singled out for discipline.

There were also times when children subverted the rules, choosing to honor community and collaboration, as illustrated in the following vignette:

The second-grade students at The Village School were taking their first standardized reading comprehension test, a practice test aimed at preparing them for the high-stakes third grade ELA test the following year. The rules had been explained: there would be no helping and no collaboration. They opened their test booklets and began. Drew noticed that the girl across from him was not writing and seemed to be having trouble. He quietly pointed to the question and repeated it aloud to her, emphasizing the key words in the question that would help her to answer it correctly. She thought and then wrote her response. Across the room, Olivia had finished and handed in her test booklet. Willa, who was sitting across from her, finished writing a few minutes later and was about to hand in her test booklet. Olivia looked at Willa and quietly shook her head, "No." Willa turned to the front of the booklet. Again, Olivia shook her head "No" and pantomimed turning a page. Willa turned the pages and saw a final question that she had forgotten to answer on the last page of the booklet. Her eyes widened, and she proceeded to answer the question.

In both cases, Drew and Olivia knew that they were not following the test instructions. They were very quiet and surreptitious in their interventions, waiting until Robyn and Leslie were in another part of the room and would be unlikely to notice. Had I not been standing just there in both instances and observing, their actions might have gone completely unnoticed. They were deliberately subverting a rule with which they did not agree.

Neither Drew nor Olivia "cheated" by giving the other child the answer. They simply stepped in to lend a helping hand. They each made

a choice to help another student, despite the test instructions. For both Drew and Olivia, the obligation to help and take responsibility for others, to collaborate and share, was strongly ingrained in the culture of their classroom. They chose to honor this sense of citizenship, community and collaboration, rather than adhere to an imposed rule that did not make sense to them and that went against everything they had been taught up until this point.

A Final Word

As a society, we must recognize that democracy is not self-perpetuating; it must be nourished from generation to generation. Schools can either be a conservative force preserving the culture of power and the inequalities of the status quo or a medium for social change (Bourdieu, 1974; Delpit, 2006; Dewey, 1916). A society that supports the development of citizens educated in the affairs of state and prepared to participate at all levels of government must create schools that enact democratic values and practices for children at all grade levels, including the very youngest. As demonstrated over the school year in classrooms under the auspices of dedicated teachers, and administrators, even in an age of standardized curriculum and high-stakes testing, it is possible to achieve education for democracy, as envisioned by Dewey over one hundred years ago.

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Building Bridges:

Making Literacy and Democracy Accessible in a Curriculum for Students with Interrupted Formal Education

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Abstract

The following is a qualitative exploratory investigation into the potential impact of a critical-thinking-based literacy curriculum for Students with Interrupted Education (SIFE) with Developing Literacy. This initial research sought out examples of the power- and citizenship-based themes of the curriculum as viewed through classroom observations and interviews with teachers, administrators, and students. Creating a curriculum for SIFE that allows these students to access critical thinking and higher-order themes, such as power, identity, and citizenship, not only provided these students with access to an education they otherwise would not receive, but also gave students access to the discussion around complex issues such as citizenship and immigration.

Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) are a heterogeneous group of English Language Learners (ELLs) who have been in the U.S. for less than twelve months and who, upon initial enrollment in school, are two or more years below grade level in literacy in their home language due to interrupted schooling prior to arrival in the United States. These students frequently need pedagogical supports, curricula, and supportive environments to help them to make up the large gaps in their education (Custodio & O'Loughlin, 2017). SIFE with Developing Literacy (SDL) are those students who come to the United States at or below a second grade level in their home language; many are new to print. SIFE are an extremely at-risk population. According to one study, approximately 70% of these students will drop out without receiving their high school diploma (Fry, 2005).

Many SIFE have had several years' gap in their formal schooling due to their home country's limited attendance requirements, the need to work for their families, or some combination of political turmoil and refugee status (Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000). SIFE from Central America are frequently unaccompanied minors, meaning that they

do not live with parents, and they often come to the United States expecting to be able to work immediately to support themselves, and find that they are also legally required to attend school. Many SIFE are also undocumented immigrants, a factor which creates additional challenges. Even those who have applied for refugee or other legal status are still burdened by constant court appearances and meetings with immigration lawyers.

Pedagogy for SIFE with Developing Literacy

Due to the large gaps in their formal education, SIFE are most likely to be successful with targeted pedagogy and specific intervention from educators. In an ethnographic year-long classroom observation, Hos (2016) described various pedagogical choices that impact SIFE. Some of the most important things educators could do to assist these students are demonstrating flexibility and empathy, as well as placing pedagogical importance on routines and phonemic awareness for supporting student learning.

Dávila (2012) conducted a qualitative study examining qualities of newcomer SIFE and found that these students were frequently underserved within the high school context. The research shows that most of the decisions regarding this population's academics were chosen for them; the students had a very small role in choosing their academic trajectory or schooling. Along these lines, Dávila (2012) found that these students were kept in remedial tracks that contributed to student lack of motivation. As a result of these pedagogical choices, these settings frequently set students up to be unsuccessful and unable to graduate. The researcher suggests that these students need to have a place to discuss their experiences and to share their culture, as well as to be allowed to make decisions regarding their own education. The overall implication of these findings is that even students who are extremely motivated can become disillusioned and discouraged by being placed in a permanent remedial track. In addition, SIFE need to have a curriculum by which they can discuss meaningful topics while reading rich literature, not focusing solely on remedial skills, which can become demoralizing, particularly for older students.

Nykiel-Herbert (2010) also focused on examining newcomer SIFE students, more specifically on elementary school-age Iraqi refugees. This study reveals that the students were initially given educational materials that were developmentally and culturally inappropriate. Within this schooling system, the administration decided to create a

protected classroom for these students instead of having the students scattered throughout several mainstream classes where they simply sat in the back working on remedial texts and materials. Nykiel-Herbert (2010) found that these students gained strength and academic competency by being in a group where they could learn together and focus on their culture. The researcher found that allowing the students to learn in a culturally-relevant environment improved their academic outcomes, which led to long-term success.

Hickey (2015) also found that SIFE benefit from cultural and social support. This researcher suggests that helping SIFE is best done as a departmental effort that relies on action plans and cooperation among teachers. These students also need to be aware of the relevance of their education and how it relates to their daily life. Overall, the findings of Hickey and Nykiel-Herbert both suggest the importance of creating a protected classroom environment in which students are receiving age-appropriate, culturally-relevant materials that can support student success. Moreover, SIFE need classrooms in which they can be with peers who have similar backgrounds and can receive targeted language instruction.

Similarly, Menken (2013) detailed some of the current findings around how to support SIFE, especially those who have refugee status. In this review, she noted that one of the largest issues that high school SIFE experience is that they are placed in 9th grade when they arrive in the United States, despite lacking the academic skills necessary to be successful in a traditional 9th grade classroom. Menken (2013) also problematized traditional schooling for SIFE, particularly in language instruction, as most 9th grade curricula already assume that students have strong language skills when they enter high school. In 9th grade, there is not much support for students who struggle with basic language skills, much less complex academic language. These findings suggest that SIFE and SIFE with Developing Literacy (SDL) need additional support and a sheltered curriculum in which they can work on attaining both basic English language proficiency, as well as support with learning complex academic language.

Importance of L1 in Supporting L2 Learning

In addition to overall language learning findings, Menken (2013) also found that even when SIFE receive some language support, this is usually in the format of traditional ESL, focusing on learning English. However, these students also need support in strengthening their home

language skills in order to improve their English skills. There is an overall pattern of English language learning such that ELLs benefit from support in their first language to support their growth in their new language (Halasa & Al-Manaseer, 2012). Since SIFE have not received appropriate formal schooling in their home languages, they may not be aware of the grammar or language structures of their home language, which can also impact learning and comprehension of English as a second language.

As an example, Blom, Paradis, and Duncan (2012) found that children who had larger vocabularies in their first language had an easier time learning English vocabulary than those who had smaller vocabularies in their first language. Yamashita (2004) also found that student attitudes towards reading in their first language(s) (such as value, comfort, anxiety, and self-perception) transferred to their attitudes towards reading in their second language. Yamashita (2004) also found that students' positive perceptions of reading transferred to increased success in a second language reading class. Overall, these findings suggest that strengthening first language skills, as well as positive attitudes towards general schooling in the first language can improve success in second language learning.

Making ELL Education Democratic

In addition to encouraging language learning, it is also important to support ELLs in such a way that they are able to have an equivalent educational experience to “mainstream” students. ELLs should have an equal chance at long-term academic success and high school graduation, as well as college readiness. One way in which ELLs are marginalized is they are frequently “leveled” and placed on the lowest track, which can limit future opportunities; these students essentially have no access to advanced coursework or academic challenge once they are placed in a low-level course (Mcintyre-McCullough, 2016). In addition, Jiménez-Castellanos and García (2017) found that ELLs experience intersectionality regarding their language status, race, immigration status, socioeconomic status, religion, and culture. They described how important it is that educators and policymakers understand the context these students live in and also realize that ELLs dwell within a rich community. These students and their families need to feel that they are understood and that they have agency in their academic futures.

In relation to the description of ELL inequality, Soria and

Ginsberg (2016) described a school context that performed a series of equity audits to examine ELL performance relative to “mainstream” students. The researchers found that, in this study, while many ELLs had strong rates of attendance, they were earning twice as many low grades compared to “mainstream” students. They explain that seeing this difference helped the administration and teachers to be able to focus on inequality within the schooling context and better support ELLs. Trujillo and Woulfin (2014) also described a community-based educational equality program, and found that the intermediary program provided the teachers and administrators with training and information sessions. As a result, the teachers demonstrated an increased understanding of standards-based and democratic education. Trujillo and Woulfin (2014) caution that an over-attention to standards-based pedagogy can lead to a decrease in the democratic nature of education, and more needs to be done to support making education equitable such that all voices are heard. Currently, the standards-based educational system that relies on high-stakes educational testing contributes to a system of educational inequity that is already damaging ELLs’ chances of being able to succeed academically.

Purpose of the Study

This exploratory qualitative study sought to examine examples of teachers and students contributing to positive classroom culture in service of our team’s curriculum contracted by the New York State Education Department (NYSED), designed to provide SIFE with access to the English classroom. The construct of classroom culture is complex, and we examined a variety of different features, such as democratic classroom cultures, encouragement of first language use, differentiation for different kinds of learners, and encouragement of collaborative student work. We also looked for examples of teachers who encouraged their students’ direct participation in democratic education by fostering political discourse through discussion of current political issues and the rights of immigrants.

Methods

Participants

This was a cross-case study of four different schools located in New York City and the surrounding area across the 2016–2018 school years. We observed and interviewed a total of 11 teachers, interviewed five

administrators, and observed over 150 students, 21 of whom we also interviewed in small focus groups. These students all attended Bridges English as a New Language (ENL) classrooms, and the students at one school attended Native Language Arts (NLA) classes that were developed using the Bridges curriculum as a model. The vast majority of these students were Spanish-speaking SIFE from Mexico, Central America, and South America, but several students were from the Middle East and Africa.

Curriculum

All of the schools involved in this study were using the ENL curriculum designed by Bridges to Academic Success, a group of developers and researchers funded by NYSED. This curriculum includes two courses: Stand-alone ENL and Integrated ENL/ELA. Together, these courses foster conceptual knowledge, academic language and literacy, and foundational skills for SDL. The Stand-alone ENL curriculum consists of four different centers: an independent reading center, an independent writing center, a foundational literacy center, and a teacher-led group reading and writing center. Each center is designed to support students with materials at their particular level of literacy, as measured by the Independent Reading Level Assessment (IRLA) (Hileman & Cline, 2014). The Integrated ENL/ELA curriculum is a language arts curriculum that includes language and content scaffolds, as well as instructional protocols and strategies to support language learners who may struggle with foundational literacy as a result of interrupted schooling in their home language. The curriculum consists of three units focusing on reading comprehension and writing skills as they relate to universal themes such as resources, power, and identity.

Instruments

A team of two observers went into all classrooms to observe teachers in practice using an instructional observation protocol based on elements from the curriculum and specific principles including use of home language literacy (García & Menken, 2015) and gradual release of responsibility (Fisher & Frey, 2014). This led to a total of 42 observations across the two school years. These observations lasted for the entire 45- or 90-minute period, depending on the length of the class in a given school.

All of the teachers and administrators were interviewed individually using a semi-structured interview protocol throughout the course of

the school year. The interview questions included probes about the strengths their students bring into their contexts, questions around non-cognitive support, such as counseling and support from families, and questions around immigration as it impacts students. Some of the students were also interviewed in small groups or in focus groups.

Qualitative Analysis

The data was collected and an initial system of codes was developed. This system was used to code the data and a second set of codes was generated iteratively from the qualitative data, which were the codes most used in the following analysis. This paper focuses on the theme of “creating and sustaining classroom culture”, which is the umbrella term for the following themes: supporting students struggling with home language, differentiation strategies, small group collaborative instruction, understanding political contexts, informal teacher counseling, and teacher empathy. We focus on teacher and administrator interviews and observation notes as the main corpus of source material.

Results

Supporting Home Language Development

All of the teachers we observed encouraged their students to use Spanish or their native language in all aspects of the learning process as a way of making the learning process more equitable for all students. The Bridges curriculum encourages teachers to allow their students to translate the key vocabulary of a new text before reading, which we saw frequently in our observations. In addition, Spanish and other home languages were clearly an integral part of the Bridges classrooms that we visited. All four of the schools had either a bilingual teacher, a teacher’s aide who spoke one or more of the students’ first languages, or both in most of the Bridges courses to support student success. In one of the classrooms we visited, the teacher was bilingual in Spanish and English, and the school was also able to provide two teacher’s aides who spoke Arabic and French and were able to support students from the Middle East and Haiti in their home languages. This was the most diverse representation of home language we witnessed across all four schools, and its use was a very intentional and part of the school’s culture. One of the administrators at this school noted:

When you think about, “How do you best teach students content

and English language development simultaneously?” one of the most important things to recognize is that translanguageing is happening. What do I mean by translanguageing? It means that the student is actually going to need to use their primary language to acquire the new language. General things that we do across the board for all students, regardless of their literacy levels in their home language when they enter our school, is allowing students to use their native language to acquire more English through interpretations, through various texts that are translated, through the dictionaries in English to their home language.

We also saw this same adherence to the importance of home language use in another one of the schools we visited; this school provided the students with a daily period of NLA in addition to the three periods of the Bridges curriculum. The administration at this school provided SIFE teachers with additional summer pay and time to create a NLA curriculum for SIFE based on the structure and themes of the original Bridges curriculum. These teachers were also given materials and training in using the Estructura para la Evaluación del nivel independiente de lectura (ENIL) (Sánchez, Hileman, & Cline, 2017), which is a Spanish system analogous to the IRLA, the reading level assessment the Bridges program uses to measure English reading growth and progress. This school also provided a Spanish-speaking teaching aide in each of the traditional Bridges classes to support first language growth and to facilitate use of both Spanish and English. Overall, all of the teachers and schools we observed encouraged the use of home language in the classroom and encouraged the use of dictionaries, Google Translate, talking with more knowledgeable peers and the teaching aide, where possible, and using teacher-translated classroom labels and anchor charts.

Differentiation Strategies

Another way that teachers tried to make the classroom more accessible and equitable is through the use of differentiation strategies for supporting students at their level. The Stand-alone ENL class has centers that have materials for all student levels of reading and writing ability in English, and these materials can be adjusted as the students learn. Some teachers we observed had homogenous reading level groups at each center and some teachers paired students who were lower-level readers with students who were slightly higher-level readers. For example, at the foundational literacy center of the Stand-alone ENL

class, two of the classes we observed included students quizzing each other on vocabulary words and encouraging each other to keep going. We observed all of the teachers in the Stand-alone ENL classrooms leading a guided reading center, in which the teacher picks a small group who are at a similar reading level and picks a “stretch text” to support student reading. In these cases, the guided reading centers focused on the skill of inferencing meaning from text.

We also observed differentiation strategies implemented in the NLA classroom. These teachers modeled their instructional materials after the Bridges curriculum. For example, in one of the teacher’s classrooms we observed:

Anna reminds her students to use their levelled basket to pick out their books when they’re finished. Groups vary in Spanish [reading] proficiency from a Kindergarten level all the way to 8th grade. Anna goes about passing out baskets to groups and tells me these are levelled books that exist in baskets for each group of students. She then tells me that this is a nonfiction unit, so all of the books are nonfiction, with the long-term writing goal that students will be able to write their own nonfiction papers.

The NLA teachers also saw the importance of providing materials for their students that were at their appropriate levels in Spanish. One of the classes spent significant time working in guided reading groups with Spanish language texts. The students within the NLA class were a blend of SDL and emerging ELLs, so these teachers had to differentiate for students who were new to print and students who were approaching 8th grade reading comprehension in their home language.

Student Collaborative Instruction

An additional way in which these classrooms demonstrated equitable education was by encouraging students to work collaboratively so that they could support each other in their English language learning as well as home language learning in the NLA classroom. In all of the classes we observed, students worked together to develop their literacy and general language learning. We saw students doing different kinds of activities together: students working on “turn and talks,” supporting each other with worksheets, helping each other to translate words, proofreading each other’s writing, supporting each other with translations during class share outs and discussions, and working together on collaborative chart-making. All of the teachers we observed felt comfortable allowing their students to work in groups and to support each other. The most

powerful evidence for the success of collaboration as supporting the students came from the students themselves . All names have been changed to provide anonymity:

Marco: I also like the groups, someone knows something, they understand and can explain it to the others in the group.

Jose: I feel that other students in the classroom help me to learn more and we learn together. And we all work together.

Jaime: When I don't know something, I know there is someone in the room I can ask for help.

Lara: I like that we're in groups and that now we're learning a lot because we work together. Each group has something to do. Sometimes I work with the teacher, sometimes I read, sometimes I look at the board for the words I need to translate. This helps me a lot, the books do, too.

Overall, the students recognized that collaboration was supporting them to be better learners. They all mentioned ways they use others as a resource for learning. For example, if a student didn't know the answer to a question or a certain word, he or she was able to find someone else in the class who could support them. The teachers also described ways that students in each class created a learning community in which they tried to support each other to be successful.

Understanding Political Contexts: The Rights of Citizens and Immigrants

Within the classrooms we observed, the teachers were very encouraging of their students' discussions of current political issues, such as the rights of citizens, the deportation of immigrants, and the recent school shootings. These teachers all believed that part of their job was to help their students to understand the political context of the United States as well as to be more aware of the culture of their new home. For example, one teacher found that it was very important to dispel some of the myths around the rights of police to deport immigrants:

Teacher: So... can I arrest Wendy if I don't like her?

Student 1: No, it's unjust.

Student 2: You really have to have a reason to arrest her.

Teacher: I have a really good question. If you are just walking on 5th Avenue and a police officer comes up to and tries to arrest you, can they arrest you?

Student: No, because you aren't doing anything wrong.

Teacher: Can police deport you if they take you from the street?

Students: No!

Teacher: That's right, police cannot. Police are not ICE. Only ICE can deport you.

This teacher later spoke to us about this lesson and said that she had realized that many of her students were scared of the police and thought that the police were here to deport them. She realized that, along with the curriculum about human rights, she could make the lessons more relatable by tying them to the students' daily experiences.

In addition to this lesson, the NLA teachers we observed were especially concerned with teaching their students about the rights of citizens as they related to the rights of immigrants. These teachers believed that it was important for their students to understand that they had rights as immigrants, despite the current anti-immigrant political climate. In one lesson we observed, we saw one of the NLA teachers helping her students to create concept maps around the rights of immigrants versus citizens:

Teacher: What's a citizen?

Student 1: A person from the United States.

Student 2: A person who has the right to live here.

Teacher: What's an immigrant?

Student 3: A person who moves here from another place.

Student 4: An immigrant is someone who isn't born in this country.

Student 5: They might have a visa or citizenship.

Teacher: What we're going to do is work in groups. Each group will have a chapter and they will each read it as a group. They will then create a map of the rights of citizens and immigrants.

We also observed classroom artifacts around current political events. One of the classrooms we observed required that students research information about the Parkland school shootings. The students had created a chart paper with annotation around these news articles. Another teacher also reported that students were confused when the school allowed a walkout protesting gun violence, but wanted to learn more, which led to a set of lessons around school shootings and violence.

Summary and Discussion

Overall, these classrooms were rich environments for SIFE to be able to learn and grow. These teachers and administrators all discussed the

importance of making education accessible to SIFE with developing literacy so that these students can have a chance at an equitable education and a deeper understanding of their new country's culture. In our classroom observations, many of the teachers were consistently working to maintain positive classroom culture and positive environments for learning. The teachers we observed all worked consistently to make their classroom a joyful and comfortable place where the students could learn.

The teachers, administrators, and students also mentioned the importance of classroom culture and some of its features throughout their interviews. Teachers created classrooms that respected their students' home languages and cultures by encouraging them to speak in their home languages and to work collaboratively with students who share their language or cultural experiences. These teachers and administrators also believed that education for SIFE should be equitable to that of "mainstream" students. This was evident in that classrooms employed differentiation and encouraged important classroom discussions around political contexts and human rights. The students were encouraged to have agency in their own educational trajectories by being agents in the classroom through active collaboration and discussion. This study provided an opportunity to re-envision classrooms as democratic spaces for all students, particularly ELLs and SIFE, by not only providing access to the curriculum but also transforming the curriculum and the classroom into places where students feel welcome and can participate meaningfully.

Limitations and Further Research

This was a very small sample of students across only four different schools in one geographical urban region. The vast majority of the SDL in this sample were Spanish-speaking from Mexico, Central America, and South America. There are refugee SIFE from many backgrounds who were not represented within our sample. One further direction for this research is to examine schools with different populations of SDL, particularly additional schools with multilingual populations. Another next step would be to collect quantitative data around specific student literacy growth in order to triangulate the experiences of the teachers and students as they relate to measurable educational outcomes. Finally, it would provide insight into the lives of students to follow a cohort of SIFE throughout their high school journeys to examine the ways in which the students adjust to American schooling.

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The Open Mic, the Closed Fist:

Student Artists Cultivating Disruption through Resistance on Campus

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Abstract

This article positions emerging student poets as the catalysts for social change on undergraduate campus through an analysis of their spoken word poetry performed at an open mic program. These performances at campus open mics function as acts of resistance when taken as a new theoretical intervention I call “cultivated disruption” utilizing cultural production to issue five strategies for challenging campus community responsibility.

In an era of socio-political uncertainty gripped by racial aggression, undergraduate students are grappling with concepts about education, freedom, and citizenship in unexpected ways. Fear remains a mobilizing force for much of the youth activism that our nation has witnessed in recent months, but this fear and the accompanying hot rage isn't anything new for my students. On the campus of my Hispanic Serving Institution in New York City, that goliath-sized fear is being confronted by students of color who are a mash-up of working class, undocumented, veterans, and future law enforcement; students who are talking back, loudly, with clenched fists raised. Resistance has mutated and become embodied as students orchestrate protests and die-ins, but disruption also occurs in more nuanced ways. Poetry performances at campus open mics function as acts of precision for student activism, resisting in alternative and artistic ways, utilizing culture to challenge their administrations. Campus open mics can be utilized to respond to the call issued by the godmother of language, Toni Morrison (2015) when she writes “This is precisely the time when artists go to work. There is no time for despair, no place for self-pity, no need for silence, no room for fear. We speak, we write, we do language” (np). Familiar with Morrison's words or not, student artists are creating resistance by demanding the serious

work of inclusion on campuses whose numbers and marketing already boast diversity.

Student artists are taking the lead in establishing coalitions and implementing programs that eliminate political neutrality. This article investigates how student artists' strategies for contemporary justice are practiced as they slice through a cross-section of the identity categories called up through performance. The power that objectifies and inscribes meaning, importance, and certain characteristics of humanity to one body and not to another is represented most powerfully in performative spaces (Quaye & Harper, 2014). Students are locating this power in even the smallest details of their collegiate lives and exercising its strength in the name of social justice and equity. My analysis introduces a new methodology named "cultivating disruption", which encompasses and is embedded within student artist development. Cultivating disruption is intended as a framework in this instance to analyze the components of an effective campus open mic program, student feedback, and ultimately offers suggestions for implementing institutional support for students who are emerging as artists with their fists raised.

Outsiders Within: "I Thought Getting Here was Enough"

As a tenure track faculty member, my collegiate service typically takes the shape of creative and cultural programming that is student-centered (see T. Jenkins, 2008 for helpful insight on cultural center structure and programmatic impacts). Student attendance was low at some of the traditional annual cultural events and there was simmering uneasiness because of the change in national leadership, concerns about state and local government support for our students and a sense of suspicion about who was siding with whom politically. Meanwhile, my classes were jam-packed with students who were all working (most of them at full-time jobs), enrolled as full-time students, caring for family members, and living at or below the poverty line. My students are here under no illusions; as Marcus, a sophomore, reminds us, "we are here to get the paper [diploma] so we can get that paper [cash]" (personal communication, April 2017). The practical economic mindset focused almost entirely on "enduring" school in order to enter the workforce at a higher pay grade is not uncommon, and yet most of the students who graduate are not earning the same amounts as their White counterparts with equivalent degrees. Another unique characteristic that has been carefully considered is that this is a commuter campus and most students live in a different borough which means their commute on

the city's transportation system is less than reliable and quite lengthy. These circumstances forge a steel trap that enforces routine and keeps expectations and a sense of hope "reasonable" given the odds some of our students surmount. Marcus was echoed by Shaquana, a senior, who admitted she was under no pretense about her degree but that it was a lesson she had to learn once she was enrolled. "My freshman year, I thought getting here was enough...but I found out real quick that wasn't the case" (field notes, April 2017). Demands on their time is by far the realest factor in how students of color who are working class can participate in campus life or extracurricular programming.

There has been a wave of empirical evidence that supports the claims that students who are engaged in high impact programs while enrolled as undergraduates are more likely to complete their degree programs on time and with higher academic scores than their peers who miss out (Kuh, 2008; Quaye & Harper, 2014). It is difficult reconciling the demands on students' time and my own desires, because I am ultimately fully invested in their holistic success, and not just in them passing my courses. I have seen the lasting impact effective cultural programming can have on college student development. We must remember that, historically, "empowering pedagogical spaces of education do not take place only in formal, traditional academic settings of campus and classrooms," especially for students of color (Douglas & Peck 2013, p. 69). Bearing these competing discourses in mind, as well as the undercurrent of budget cut-backs and academic pushback from colleagues who considered my cultural work unnecessary and frivolous, I reached down and did what we always do—made something out of nothing.

Dr. Shockley's (2011) work on impactful pedagogy provides a thorough analysis of exactly this experience had by teachers, and investigates the ways a combination of "emotions and knowledge" results in "an investment in the well-being and development of students" (p. 1031). However, my personal investment was not enough. I was seeking ways to connect with the institution's resources without compromising a critique of the institutional system. I wanted the students to excel inside the classroom, and successfully navigate the racist and sexist matrix of oppression working to further oppress and brutalize them outside (Collins, 1991). The urgency I felt was real; how might I support them in resisting the intense fear with which they are coping?

The stains of this fear seeped into class discussions, the atmosphere

on campus, and the content of the papers I found myself grading. Like Shaquana said, “Getting here”, whether that “here” means the physical location of a college campus, or “here” as in the less tangible but no less real space of living as an undergraduate student enrolled in a degree program with access to more social capital, “here” is not enough. “Here” presents its own set of systemic contradictions insisting on students’ ability to bootstrap their way to success while withholding the support for them to actually achieve their goals. From this realization, I began to work closely with student organizations and leaders to create a campus space for us to perform.

The Campus Open Mic as the Third Space: Cultivating Disruption

Award-winning actress Anna Deveare Smith’s (1996) performance work on theater stages has been framed as a tool of creativity and connection. Smith’s one-woman shows demonstrate performance as a means of actualizing a space for the sort of navigation and negotiation of identity and social position that is required of my students who occupy so many dichotomous positions. “Her performance materializes the space of difference between self and other that makes negotiation and modulation of identity both necessary and possible” and creating a third space that is safe enough to explore and interrogate difference is critical for students who are in the process of developing (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 62). When performance is situated this way, the open mic program hosted on a campus becomes an opportunity for students to experiment with transitions, re-orderings, remixes of identity and revisions of historical moments all while in dialogue with one another and their institutions. While Smith is a professional actress, and not a poet, she is a good example for the amateur student artists because of her process. Smith centers social issues at the core of her artistic work and utilizes performance to explore those issues in community with her audience.

Because of Smith’s examples using real-life situations and current events, I knew that I could introduce similar historical and current events such as the Black Lives Matter movement and the outrageous murders of Black children in contemporary times to engage my students in their analysis through performance. My students were seeking ways to understand these traumatic events and more. I wanted to lead them towards similar performance practices that would achieve Smith’s “third space” through contextualization of their own experiences. I also knew that because of the recently intensifying national emotion as well as the

students' personal vulnerabilities, I was going to have to take special care. As such, I developed the theory of "cultivating disruption."

Cultivating disruption takes up the challenge of creating and preparing students to engage in counter-narrative remixing by putting students themselves in temporarily uncomfortable positions to cause a disruption, a brief sense of displacement. This temporary disruption creates an interruption in business as usual and then leverages that moment of internal chaos, disorder, and spontaneity for vulnerability. When a student experiences cultivated disruption, their internal ingrained emotional or physical responses are derailed, which means their groomed responses or reactions are dislodged. In this moment, the student experiences an out of the ordinary vulnerability, a sense of rawness and openness that can produce a new perspective or response to an idea.

Cultivating disruption requires a tender, carefully coached, prepared for and nurtured experience. The students are not simply thrust into a vulnerable state with no structure to support them through such an experience. On the contrary, cultivated disruption only occurs when the student has been prepared by engaging in a disciplined creative practice regularly so that when the disruption occurs, the student is encouraged to produce an artistic response. Cultivating disruption is risky for the student and dangerous work for the faculty, especially given the political pressures and demands of normative behavior from institutional administration and outcomes assessments. Countering the routines of traditional classroom expectations is not easy, particularly when students are accustomed, trained, and rewarded by the public school system for participating in regurgitating information with little analysis or critical thought.

Performance work and spoken word poetry offers students and faculty the chance to experience what it feels like "being in motion across the porous boundaries between self and other in ways that reconfigure" (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 65). Reconfiguring and remixing the dialogues of dominant discourses is integral social justice praxis. Emerging student artists and activists have to be permitted the time, space, and safety in which to identify issues, sort out and audition possible solutions, and the opportunity to start from scratch if their plans do not work. The open mic then, is an expansion of the work of cultivating disruption, a rupture which started in the lesson plan, was widened in the classroom, and finally gapes open by extending an invitation to the audience members who attend the open mic

on campus. Such a movement across boundaries and through labels or social categories which dictate so much of our students' lives can produce newly reconstituted boundaries and porous borders. In this process, social power relations that are used to reinforce heteronormative social conditions and expectations are exposed and exercised through embodied performance in order to render them visible and more readily identifiable. Through the act of performance, as the audience and student artist call these relations up, their experiences as deficit-ridden victims can be realigned into empowering narratives for imagining new political resistances. When a student performs at an open mic on their campus, they are sacrificing their own comfortable boundaries in order to open up a third space that permits entry by the audience if they are also willing to re-mix the boundaries. The remix occurs when the audience and student artist performing at the open mic agree that the existing boundaries, whether related to identity, birthplace, religious practice, economic class or background, are falsely constructed and need to be reformed. Ushering our entrance into this third space is the performance of spoken word poetry.

“In Other Words”: Spoken Word Poetry and Performing Justice

This year, when the featured poet, Tony Keith, Jr., arrived to our classroom, the students expressed curiosity and admitted to being slightly intimidated. Only about one quarter of them were familiar with spoken word poetry, so when Tony advised them that we were going to write and then perform, there were nervous titters and quick glances around the room. Tony's own poetic introduction and warm and energetic demeanor quickly set them at ease and he dove straight into the material for the writing session.

The prompt was simple enough. Students were to respond in poetic format to the prompt “My voice is...” What Tony could not have predicted is that his writing workshop was taking place right after a heated class discussion on how David Walker's (1830/1995) “Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World” could be operationalized in conversation with the assigned text *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (Douglass, 1846). Our latest debate included topics such as the power of the enslaved to exercise voice, the role of education in liberation, and how audience motivated authorship. Tony's focus on the power of voice and how the students enacted and chose to utilize their voices could not have been a better topic. The students had plenty to say. An excerpt from Danielle, a first-

year student, reads

...My voice is used to defy and belittle the enemy
For they will never get the best of me.
My voice is strong like a queen.
Wise like a servant
But it will never speak lies like the serpent
My voice is me.

In these few lines, Danielle first weaponizes and then personifies her voice, transforming the utility and the impact of her voice. We are to understand that her voice is rebellious, opposing the “enemy”, which we can assume is the status quo, and the social norm she is upheld to. Danielle’s tone is confident, asserting that they (her enemy) will never best her; she will not surrender in this war. Danielle positions her reader with the clear understanding that she is engaged in battle, she is at odds, and yet she makes the best use of her voice as her primary weapon to wage against her adversaries. She is facing multiple oppositional forces—her enemy is plural. Finally, Danielle’s voice becomes the center subject of the poem as she shifts her attention to what her voice is able to do. It is commanding, with the authority and high honor which would be paid to a queen. Simultaneously, Danielle’s voice characterizes humility as a wise and experienced servant, finding both power and knowledge in lowly places of servitude. Danielle understands that while the ability to command and demand in such a way that insists on consequences if not heeded, her activism, her resistance is rooted in concepts of service, humbling herself to a position of learning, at the feet of a master who is not named in her lyrics. Danielle’s voice is powerful, yet not too haughty to give to others, always remembering the treasure found only through sacrifice. Lastly, Danielle surprises her readers, and maybe herself, by identifying entirely as her voice. She embodies all aspects of the turmoil and power simultaneously called up within her poem. Danielle inhabits these positions which appear contradictory and at the same time transforms them into a new, fluid reconstruction of her own identity. Danielle’s piece utilized the performance of spoken word poetry to create a third space for her and her classmates (who were her audience) to meet and reconfigure concepts of voice and identity. Through this writing exercise, Danielle has participated in a cultivated disruption. Performing her poem with the class as her audience breaches the traditional identity labels to which Danielle typically subscribes, creating fissures in the structures that fortify the limitations placed on

her by an oppressive society.

I include Danielle as the first example of an emerging student artist and activist in this article for several reasons. First, she is new to campus, and to college, and incredibly shy and quiet in class. Danielle rarely volunteered to participate in class discussions in spite of her excellent scores on assignments and clear grasp of Africana concepts. Danielle's choice to engage of her own volition and to express herself in such a personal and yet public way illuminates how she understands herself as a potential agent for social change. We see this play out in how she operationalizes the writing exercise as first an individual experience—one against “them”, a threatening enemy. By the conclusion of her poem, Danielle has come to realize that her voice, her self, is the most effective way for her to operationalize social justice, translating classroom theory to practice through performance.

In addition, prior to Tony's visit and his effective facilitation of this exercise, Danielle had never performed anything artistic in front of an audience. This poem and her performance of it marks significant growth and a remarkable shift in how Danielle viewed herself and continues to engage in student life beyond the classroom walls. After Tony's visit in February, Danielle began to seek out opportunities to become more actively involved in the various student organizations on campus, often requesting information on how to participate from me.

Danielle's experience performing awakened and emboldened her to approach her own identity from a position of empowerment rather than a passive and disconnected student. Writing and performing her poem was the springboard for Danielle to view herself as more than just a student who was frustrated with the status quo: Danielle now embraced the position of a “doer” and action taker and one who was capable of implementing and addressing oppression. She never thought she was capable of performing, and yet she did so with greater ease than she imagined—what else had she been missing out on? Danielle also began to volunteer for a multitude of other cultural programs I was responsible for executing in collaboration with key centers of student support on campus. Although those programs did not directly relate to spoken word and performance, the commonality among them was their shared theme of “creating justice.”

I argue that the disruption Danielle experienced because of this in class writing and performance was cultivated and tendered with careful intentionality, therefore she felt jolted, but still curious and safe enough to pursue performing for the first time. Danielle's outcome from this

cultivated disruption caused her to reflect on her own ability from a different perspective. Cultivated disruption allows for exactly this unpredictable set of circumstances, creating a space for rough drafts, new poems, and first-time student artists.

At the conclusion of the class period, I invited the students to attend the open mic entitled *In Other Words* that would take place during our institutionally held community hour. Under the sweet sway of potential extra credit and the temptation of free food, some of the students who had just completed the writing workshop with Tony chose to attend the open mic. One of the first student artists to the mic was a student I have worked with in several capacities. Asharah is a senior, an Africana Studies minor, and for about two years has become increasingly visible as a student leader on campus. Asharah is bright intellectually but remains quiet during class discussion. I was shocked to find her name on the list for the open mic. Asharah approached the microphone, and read the following piece:

My voice is
A little Malcolm
A lot of Crenshaw
And the whole of Brooklyn
It's soft but powerful
Low but smooth
Respectful with attitude
My voice is as black as day
And as bright as moonlight
It's not always sharp
Not always clear
But, my voice is what the world needs to hear
You may not want to listen
May not agree with my diction
But, my vernacular is spectacular
So, do yourself a favor and open your ears
I've spent years quiet, silent, watching
Now that may be bad
But, my voice has been resting
Wait no more
Hear my roar
The sounds of black excellence
Power of women
The intersections of identity

And the swagger of the ghetto...

My voice projects from those who were battered by shackles and chains

Those who even when it's sunny it rains

Black Lives Matter

Your lives matter

My life matters

My voice may crack

But, trust me

It will not shatter

I may trip but I will not fall I may limp but I will not crawl

My voice is my power

My mind and my spirit

Thank you all,

For coming together to hear it.

(Personal communication, February 2017)

As she finished, Asharah was met with resounding applause and shouts from her peers, who were not shy about vocalizing their support of her piece in the midst of her performance of it. Asharah's performance stands out in particular ways because of the positions she holds on campus and the content of her poem. Asharah was critical in the founding of a brand-new student organization on campus named the Black Student Union (BSU). The BSU was founded two years earlier despite facing extreme pushback from the student affairs administration as they worked to follow the procedures required to form this group. There are a number of ethnic and culturally centered student organizations which support students of African descent already in existence and thriving on campus. These groups include specific ethnic identities such as the Haitian American Student Association, and broader geographically based identities such as the African Student Association. Their memberships are diverse and their budgets are reasonably endowed. Asharah (who is also a general member in these and several other student organizations) shared that the administration blocked their formation of BSU because they were concerned that it was "divisive" and that the mission of the group the students it proposed to serve were already being met through the existing clubs. Asharah and the rest of the founding students, who make up most of her current Executive Board for BSU, were frustrated. They felt the obstacles were in place because the students organizing BSU were

because of their involvement of recent protests held on campus. Finally, the school authorities conceded and the BSU was formed. The next issue they faced and their most challenging hurdle yet remains that of developing a budget. Newer student organizations or those with smaller memberships receive less financial support than larger or more well-established student organizations.

I share this insight about Asharah's current role as a student leader to concretely situate her poem beyond her personal reflections and to focus on the contextual experiences she has faced as an Honors student and McNair Scholar who has compiled a course of study that is intentionally Afrocentric and activist. In spite of her stellar academic record, and regardless of her fluency in the processes and procedures governing student organizations and student life, Asharah faced challenges specifically because of her leadership role in the legitimizing of the Black Student Union and ultimately the part she played in the mobilization of Black students on campus. Asharah's activism made her vulnerable in unexpected ways and while she excels academically, she could not have anticipated backlash from administration who are concerned about politics on campus. The in-class writing workshop with Tony and her subsequent performance provided an outlet for this deep critical thinker to express herself for her peers, and within earshot of the very offices that attempted to dissuade her. Given these circumstances, what was the function of Asharah's rousing poem, and powerful performance? Her poem offers her audience a fresh approach to understanding how cultivating disruption lends itself as a useful praxis for student artists' and activists' engagement with resistance.

Asharah's first lines immediately situate us at her intersectional identity as she calls up Malcolm X, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and the borough of Brooklyn, New York, and the explicit political turmoil over ownership of that specific geographic location signifies given the recent gentrification battles in her local neighborhood. Malcolm X's unapologetic activism and Kimberlé Crenshaw's Black feminist theory rooted in the practice of law have been central in shaping Asharah's burgeoning scholarship. Her choice to carry her borough of Brooklyn on her back along with her to school instantly clues us in—Asharah is proud of her people, fearless, and ready to bring her community with her through the halls of academia. Indeed, Asharah continues to situate herself further into the landscape of the city and the stereotypes of Black girls where she comes from by reminding her audience that her "diction" and her "not always clear" voice is perhaps not intended

to be legible to every single person who feels entitled to understand her; instead, Asharah has agency over her own voice, raising it “loud” and at precisely the time she chooses because now is when “the world needs to hear.” Asharah’s voice positions her as a teacher now, and she re-inserts herself into community with those participating in the Black struggle.

While there are many strands of useful and insightful literary analyses that could be applied to this performance, I focus on the lines that Asharah clearly articulates her voice as the source of her “power.” Asharah’s experience with cultivating disruption is manifest in her deliberate choice to perform. Her willingness to stand up for her beliefs was evident because of her record of service and leadership on campus. Beyond that, her intentionality when she chose to write about and then share the complications that arise and sometimes jeopardize student leaders when they challenge the status quo on campus is most remarkable.

Asharah’s grades and flawless reputation among faculty did not shield her from reprisals when she was trying to work through the confusing resistance she and her friends faced from campus leadership when they were trying to establish BSU. Yet she persisted beyond the formation of BSU to continue building coalitions with other equally controversial student organizations formed and run by students of color. Asharah pursues justice not only for herself but for her community—first prioritizing Black women, then Black people and people of color. When Asharah performed at the open mic, her praxis of cultivating disruption allowed her an opportunity to literally “talk back” in a safe space on the very campus that was complicating her struggle. The open mic operated as a third space for Asharah because she explicitly called her audience into accountability, all while inviting them to join ranks with her as she locates herself on the side of resistance.

At the conclusion of *In Other Words*, Emily, another shy first year student, approached me after the open mic event and said this was her first time witnessing poetry like this. Emily described how shocked she was that “everyone who performed said something relatable...that’s its own kind of beautiful” (personal interview, February 2017). Emily was surprised to find a source of connection in an audience where she only knew one other person. While Emily did not perform anything at the open mic, she remarked on how impactful it was to bear witness to the other students’ work. Witnessing the performances of her peers was enough to drive Emily a bit out of her own shell and draw her towards

the light of passion these students shared.

The open mic is supremely effective when it is implemented as a tool for cultivating disruption, and even more so when intentional scaffolding of support in the classroom occurs during the semester. Emerging student artists and activists require us to prepare the stage for them and them for the stage. Students are waiting to stretch forth their arms raised high, fists clenched tight, and voices raised loud.

We Gotta Make Some Changes: Recommendations for Consideration

The clenched fist is the universal symbol of fighting the powers that be, resistance and supporting each other for people of color worldwide. Like the five digits that comprise that raised clenched fist, my students in their own words offered up five recommendations that are practical advice for administration. I outline their suggestions below with brief ideas on implementation.

1. Interdisciplinary Means Inclusive

Most major curricular overhauls require a massive course of action. The large expectation of this recommendation is also the reason why it would be incredibly effective. There are many institutions which claim to promote deep critical thinking in their curriculums because they provide a liberal arts education, and yet there is a severe lack of actual interdisciplinary and inclusion of critical studies on race and gender. Inclusion is more than “a seat at the table” and instead requires interaction, listening, and reciprocity. While there has been a trend in this direction nationally, it takes years for approvals and application to trickle to the classroom from the top down. The students I spoke with said that learning about race and history shouldn’t be an elective; it should be a requirement for all students. A pedagogical commitment to inclusion might look like including privilege and power-checking during class discussions and following up with students of color particularly on predominantly white classes or campuses. Racial and gendered disparities have always existed in educational spaces and those inequities will persist unless we start somewhere subversive or explicit, with resistance.

2. Teach Scholars/Writers of Color

Course content can be a touchy subject to broach with faculty, especially when they are already facing serious time constraints, an undercurrent of paranoia that seems so particular to academia, and very little positive reinforcement. One way to address and

incorporate culturally sustaining pedagogy is to be intentional about including scholars, experts, and authors of color on syllabi. In other words, there is absolutely no excuse for whitewashed syllabi no matter what subject is being taught. Including Dr. King's I Have a Dream speech during Black History Month is never enough. Dig deeper and your students will meet you there.

3. Support Student Organizations

Asharah's tale of struggle and triumph forming BSU is at the root of this recommendation. The administration can certainly do their part providing ample support for cultural styles of leadership, training and development for student leaders and upholding fair procedures for student clubs and organizations. However, support means doing more than simply allocating resources. Faculty members play a critical role through encouraging participation for membership and can also assist in terms of advertising student organizations. In addition, I have found that student organizations are often eager to partner and collaborate with faculty who are willing to groom ideas for relevant and course related programming with student leaders. These relationships often bud and grow into a wide network of support which benefits both teacher and student.

4. Experiential Learning

I was shocked to learn in my interview with Asharah that in all of her four years, only two of her courses that she could easily recall required students to participate in either an out of classroom activity on campus or an off campus community event. Learning does not occur solely in the traditional classroom setting and oftentimes college level students are in desperate need of practical reinforcements that emphasize the scholarly theoretical underpinnings that construct daily lived experiences. Requiring students to participate in out of classroom experiences is another way that faculty can ensure their students, particularly at a commuter campus, have an opportunity to make important social and "real world" links to pedagogical goals and learning outcomes. If many of your students are challenged when it comes to the time they can spend out of class attending events or participating, then consider bringing the speaker or workshop to your class. Consider partnering with another faculty member in a different department if yours is unable to support hosting a guest speaker for your class. Involve experts on your campus who may

not have a Ph.D. or hold a faculty position, but might be able to lead your students in learning about relevant topics connected to your courses.

5. Support Mentorship

Find ways to offer support to faculty who mentor students, especially junior faculty who are also women of color. Unpaid emotional labor takes a real toll on tenure-track folks who are “relatable” to students and there is simply no way around the very real needs of our first-generation students of color. Mentoring is taxing and yet rewarding, but often in ways that are not counted by the tenure and promotion system or tangibly materialized. In other words, there is no check being signed for the mentor of the year. In fact, mentorship is systemically discouraged by a university system that refuses to acknowledge this mental and emotional labor undertaken by women. However, the results for student mentees who benefit from the time and energy poured into them by faculty mentors are beyond measure. It’s a politic of survival but it is not sustainable.

Final Reflections

Taken together, these five recommendations from students offer practical ways to incorporate and build in support for campus open mics. The theory of cultivating disruption situates student artists and their poetic performances as energetic enactments of resistance and emerging leadership. The student artists who choose to participate in open mics enjoy a public outlet for their creative expression, and appreciate the program more deeply when it is couched within a class-related experience that offers space to unpack and analyze the poetic content as well as their experience attending or performing.

Cultivating disruption on campus requires collaboration and coordination on behalf of faculty and students, who all play different roles in resistance. In addition to the many identity categories our students are assigned, they are ultimately and also brave. It takes courage to simply show up sometimes, and it takes boldness to confront fear. The open mic program, the third space that is made available when we cultivate disruption, provides a way in which students can access the power they need to resist oppression and injustices on their college campuses. The poetry highlighted in this article demonstrates that power has to be developed from within first before it can be connected to the community. Cultivating disruption can be used

as a theoretical framework for each element of an effective campus open mic program, as well as for understanding student feedback, and finally for implementing the recommendations made by the students for increasing institutional support.

Our students are speaking truth to power through their performance of spoken word poetry at the campus open mic. Their pursuit of social justice is unrelenting; their fists up, their voices are raised. The only question is, are you coming along?

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Our Obligations as Educators in a Democracy:

Transforming the NNER into an Activist Organization

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Abstract

The authors of this article are five Ph.D. graduates from an NNER institution and two faculty members from two NNER institutions. We have met every week for the past three years contemplating our obligations as educators who are concerned about the future of American public education. American public education is in more serious jeopardy than at any time in our memories, and perhaps history, as efforts to undermine its existence and purpose abound. University-based teacher education is also under siege, with challenges being made by expanding agencies who have the authority to certify teachers, including charter schools. The role of program accreditation and the locus of accreditation are again under challenge and measurement of learning outcomes as a value-added measure is an increasingly difficult requirement. We believe, and argue here, that it is imperative for education to include: becoming critical participants in a democratic and socially just society, demanding equity for all students, educating for quality of life, and becoming public activists for change. This obligation falls to individuals and organizations concerned about the current state of education and who support a different discourse about education, such as the National Network for Educational Renewal, to take a public, activist role to promote civil discourse that supersedes the dominant discourse about education.

The National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER) was founded by John Goodlad and his colleagues in 1992 to implement a moral agenda for education in a democracy. The overarching goal

of the NNER was to promote partnerships among public schools and universities that had teacher education programs (Goodlad, 1994). His vision was that all those responsible for the preparation of teachers – faculty and administrators of public schools and both education and arts and sciences faculty and administrators of universities – could work together to fulfill the democratic mission of public schooling (Goodlad, 1994). In this paper, we examine what we see as necessary for the National Network for Educational Renewal to become more of an activist organization seeking change. To do this we examine the NNER's moral agenda – the Agenda for Education in a Democracy - as it stands, we examine change strategies as guides to large scale change, and we propose specific changes to the moral agenda to reflect our current thinking and to have a wider impact on schools and society.

The authors of this article came together around a shared passion: to make explicit the public purposes of education in a democracy and to suggest ways to achieve these purposes. Our group consists of two faculty members from two NNER institutions and five Ph.D. graduates of the City University of New York Graduate Center, all of whom have been active in the NNER. One has been a dean at two NNER settings, one of which was Montclair State University, a setting that was one of the original eight admitted to the NNER at its inception. He also served as first Chair of the Governing Council which is the NNER policymaking body, as well as the Executive Committee, which can act on important matters between Governing Council meetings. The second faculty member served as first director of The Agenda for Education in a Democracy at Montclair State University, the body that managed the NNER activities at Montclair, and Chairperson of one of the largest departments at the university. In 1992, she participated in the first cohort of the Leadership Associates, led by John Goodlad and subsequently lead Leadership Associate meetings nationally and locally.

The other authors, all former students of the dean, regularly attend and present at NNER meetings. They represent a faculty member at Bronx Community College, an administrator in CUNY's central office, a program officer at the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, the director of a funded project at CUNY working in schools, and an employee of Children's Aid who works with community schools in New York City. The five members of the team at The Graduate Center started as a support group for students writing dissertations and articles and has met virtually every week for the past three years. When those in the

group finished their Ph.D.'s they continued meeting, contemplating our obligations as educators who are concerned about the future of American public education and committed to promoting the role of education in a democracy. As a result of these activities and work experiences, as well as a deep review of relevant literature, we conclude that the NNER needs to reexamine its agenda and become more of an activist group in order to survive as an organization that exists to enhance public education in the United States.

We believe that, in general, American public education is in more serious jeopardy than at any time in our memories, and perhaps in history, as efforts to undermine its existence and purpose abound. Proposals for charter schools and funded school choice, including religious schools, are emerging at all levels, led by the Secretary of Education and the President. University-based teacher education is also under siege, with several challenges being made. In one case, a private university with a focus on certifying charter schools has appeared and is accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). In another instance, which was overturned by the Board of Regents after serious lobbying by NY teacher educators, was an effort to have the Charter School Board for the State University of New York (SUNY) assert their right to certify beginning teachers in their charter schools. Along with certification, the role of program accreditation and the locus of accreditation are again under challenge as yet another accrediting body emerges. Additionally, pressure for measurement of learning outcomes as a value-added measure is becoming an increasingly difficult requirement in certification.

We argue here that it is time for those of us who pursue a view of education that includes preparing students to become critical participants in a democratic and socially just society, demanding equity for all students, educating for quality of life, and becoming public activists for change, to take action. This obligation falls to all public educators and organizations concerned about education today and who support a different discourse about education. The NNER must take a public, activist role to promote civil discourse that goes beyond the dominant discourse about education if it is to remain relevant in today's current educational climate.

We contend that public education as it now stands is not, for the most part, achieving the ends we need in a democratic society. In fact, its role in a democracy is not even part of the dominant discourse on education. Hence, we are changing one of the driving questions from

“Why do we educate in a democracy?” to “Why should we educate in a democracy?” These are very different questions. One asks for more of a description of what we do, while the other asks what needs to change. One could lead to a description of educational goals, while the other leads us to reimagining education. Our goal, then, is to help the public, educators, policy makers, and other stakeholders rethink and reimagine education—its purposes and hoped for outcomes.

To be clear, we fully endorse the mission, which includes the moral imperative of the NNER outlined on the NNER web page and elsewhere. These are:

1. Foster in the nation’s young the skills, dispositions and knowledge necessary for effective participation in a political democracy.
2. Ensure that the young have access to those understandings and skills required for satisfying and responsible lives.
3. Develop educators who nurture the learning and well-being of every student.
4. Ensure educators’ competence in and commitment to serving as stewards of schools. (National Network for Education Renewal, 2018)

However, we are convinced that they do not go far enough for our times and need to be interpreted differently. In addition, we must recognize how much of a minority we are in the view of education we represent. These are not the purposes most policy makers or even many educators and parents would espouse. These are not the foci of teacher education in most programs. One would have to conclude that, despite changes suggested in Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the purpose still seems to be preparing students to pass tests designed by others. We have looked at state plans for implementing ESSA, both submitted and accepted, and find the pressure for testing to remain strong. In fact, it might appear to some that the pressure is lessened since the department moved from “strong evidence” which was based on test scores to evidence decided upon by states. We see the changes giving more discretion to the state and US Department of Education.

As a specific example, in The Federal Register, the department abandons the criterion of “strong theory” and substitutes “demonstrates a rationale.” (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Then, instead of requiring that quasi-experimental designs meet the department’s standards for use, the change allows them to be considered “promising evidence” with no other criteria specified. The combination of these factors is what led us to the conclusion that we must become much

more vigilant and have more opportunity to challenge state positions when they claim state positions are required by ESSA. Therefore, the NNER must be active on the state and national scene, as we propose and promote change, and begin the dialogue with all those who need to be involved. We argue that this change will give us much more power as an organization, especially with the state.

This is a very different large-scale change strategy than we as an organization have ever been engaged in. To help in that process, we have adopted and adapted the theoretical stances regarding the change process in democracy of Michael Fullan, Peter Senge, and George Lakoff, along with John Goodlad's to guide this work. We also include the theories and ideas of Maxine Greene with her focus on enhancing the quality of life.

Overall Strategy

Historically, the NNER was focused on developing and nurturing school/university partnerships following the guiding principles of the Agenda for Education in a Democracy. Over the years, we incorporated more work on social justice, diversity and inclusion. Members enjoyed having colleagues all around the country with whom they could share their challenges and successes related to their settings. Actions related to public school advocacy and the implementation of our moral agenda were carried out primarily by the individual settings. We believe that given the current attack on public education both on the national and state levels, the NNER must become more political and take on the role of an activist organization. The purpose of this article is to propose several strategies to achieve this.

One reflection of the state of American education is the dominant discourse that characterizes the work of public schools. We think it is fair to say that the discourse is largely negative – claims are made that schools are failing and teachers are failing, especially for children in poverty. The solutions posited by those who make these claims is that education should focus on career and college readiness. While we agree that these goals are important, we see them as limited, not nearly achieving what is really needed in education. (One concern is that these goals can lead to early tracking of students deemed unsuitable for college.) We believe that education should focus on important life changing goals that go beyond career and college readiness. We need to reimagine education and get to why we should be educating in a democracy.

We believe that one of the central roles of education in a democracy is to analyze and confront the ways in which we treat one another, not only in our personal interactions, but also in the ways we view and treat groups different from ourselves. Schools and teachers must address the deep-seated perspectives that lead to xenophobia, homophobia, racism, classism gender discrimination and more. Inappropriate behaviors should not be tolerated in a democracy and we must intervene to seek change.

While most teachers learn about classroom management that deals with common behavioral problems, they are often not prepared to confront those behaviors that are rooted in discrimination towards others. So we ask, what should educators do when they confront such behaviors among their students that are rooted in racism and other forms of discrimination? How can we ensure that teachers themselves have examined their own prejudices and behaviors towards students and colleagues different from themselves? How do we prepare teachers to work with parents and their communities around issues of discrimination?

Toward these ends, we have undertaken professional development in schools, at colleges, at conferences, with the explicit goal of examining what education should accomplish. We assert that learning to recognize and deal with discrimination should not be left to individuals, but must be overtly and intentionally integrated into the school curriculum. Such work should not be left to teachers alone, but must include parents, students, colleagues, policy makers and the public in general.

As a result of our meetings and discussions, we decided to write a comprehensive book about education in a democracy, entitled *Reimagining American Education to Serve All our Children: Why should we educate in a democracy?* The book will address the roles and responsibilities of all those involved in preparing teachers for public schools. It is our intention to lay out in this comprehensive book the theories, ideas, motivations, and goals that, in our view, belong in public education in a political and social democracy. We have signed a contract with Routledge, with an agreement to release the book in time for the 2020 elections. We hope to bring our perspective to presidential and local politics and use the book to guide discussions in a variety of venues.

Finally, we have committed to working with community groups, students and K-12 faculty, to encourage them to be involved in politics

and use their moral beliefs about education as a guide to seeking out, selecting and supporting candidates consistent with our moral agenda. Several of us are deeply involved in local politics to promote and support candidates for local and national elections, including the election of one of us to the county committee of a political party to help shape the agenda at that level.

We must also note that many of the policy makers we must influence are not elected. These include members of state boards and local boards in many communities. They are beholden to elected officials, whose policy positions we must examine. Our hope is to inform both educators and students that they have power to influence policy makers, through voting and political activity. But in order to accomplish this, they must be informed and knowledgeable about the issues. We hope to provide guidance in this regard in our book.

Strategies for Change Based on Theory

We are proposing working towards large scale change, and to do so requires that we examine the models for achieving change that are most useful. We will summarize a few of these models and key elements to illustrate how they can be used and how we use them.

First, Peter Senge, who is often identified as a “systems scientist”, puts forward some critical ideas. His best-known work is *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (Senge, 1990). He followed this with an adaptation for educators and parents, *Schools that Learn: A Fifth Discipline Fieldbook for Educators Parents and Everyone Who Cares about Education* (Senge, 2000). The work the NNER engages in is full of contentious concepts—ideas that are very complex and have different meanings for different individuals (Gallie, 1956).

Senge gives us an important key for our work, especially for dealing with contested concepts—the idea of a shared vision. Organizations that seek change must have a shared vision; members must come to a consensus about the key concepts relevant to their goals. For the NNER this means taking the time to reach consensus within the “tripartite,” the three groups most involved in teacher preparation. The tripartite includes faculty and administrators from the public schools and university-based faculty and administrators from both the arts and sciences and education. It is unfortunate that over the past few years the number of arts and science faculty participating in the NNER has decreased considerably. Because these individuals play such an

important role in preparing teachers, it is critically important for them to be brought back into the conversation. It is our hope that the current threats to democracy affecting all of us in this current political climate will serve as an impetus for individuals from the arts and science to become involved in revising our shared vision for educating in and for democracy.

Another important idea that has to be considered in change of this kind comes from George Lakoff, a linguist who studies metaphors, especially political metaphors and their meanings. Lakoff concludes that the difficult concepts we work with often have multiple meanings depending on our “world view.” In his work, he has examined how conservatives and liberals view the world differently. In politics, we often see things as right or wrong—right if they are our views, and wrong if someone disagrees with them. Lakoff helps us understand that there is sometimes legitimacy in the alternative views of these difficult, contested concepts. His work allows for an understanding of the differences in worldview of conservatives and liberals and helps understand their positions on various issues, including education, abortion, and welfare (Lakoff, 2002; 2017). Understanding Lakoff’s work, especially at the policy level, provides perspectives on why change is sometimes so hard. Worldviews are deeply ingrained and difficult to change. But even if we cannot change them completely, it helps us to avoid saying there are simple “right” and “wrong” answers to hard questions. Usually the other side is as certain they are right as we are. Of course, in examining alternative worldviews, we should not compromise our own moral commitments. In this case, we can’t accept a worldview that is abhorrent to democracy.

Michael Fullan has emerged as one of the most important experts on change and the issues that impede it or enhance the possibilities of success. Among other things, Fullan examines the drivers of change that are used, both effective drivers and ineffective drivers. The ineffective drivers sound very much like what happens in education generally. For example, he sees, as ineffective drivers:

1. Accountability: using test results and teacher appraisal to reward or punish teachers and schools as opposed to capacity building.
2. Individual teacher and leadership quality: focusing on individual rather than group solutions.
3. Technology: investing in and assuming the digital world will carry the day to enhance learning rather than teacher abilities.
4. Fragmented strategies vs. integrated strategies: rather than

developing integrated and systemic strategies. (Fullan, 1993)

As change agents, according to Fullan, we must be clear about our moral imperative—what do we think is most important in improving education in and for democracy? Then we have to ask how closely our moral imperative is linked to the moral imperative currently driving education. For the NNER, the moral imperative has been clear and is encapsulated in the four moral dimensions of our mission delineated above. Next, we have to decide what we will accept as evidence that we are making progress towards our moral imperative. We know that in the process of this very hard work, we may have to change some aspects of our moral imperative because we discover different meanings. We must be willing to do this and track evidence of progress. We will suggest some changes to the NNER moral imperative.

Finally, we turn to Maxine Greene, one of our most important philosophers of aesthetics and morality. Greene, in her book *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change*, gives us important guiding principles for our work on change. For example:

1. Students must understand the deep connection to, and responsibility for, not only their own individual experience but also for other human beings who share this world.
2. Freedom does not mean absence of responsibility. One can only be free when one accepts responsibility for his/her experience in the world.
3. Knowledge is anything that helps us to know ourselves and the world in which we live.
4. Knowledge comes from beliefs that have been subjected to reflection.
5. The ultimate purpose of education is to help students and their teachers create meaning in their lives. Teachers should challenge the taken for granted and the given.
6. And, in line with Dewey's (1966) views, democracy is a way of life, not just a way of governing. (Greene, 1995)

Why should we educate in a democracy?

These theories of change, along with our consideration of the politics of education, the work of John Goodlad and the NNER, has led us to an expanded view of the answer as to why we should educate in a democracy. It is expanded when compared with the four moral imperatives of the mission of the NNER and suggests a need for

broader moral imperatives. Here are the principles we have developed, propose, and work towards in everything the NNER does:

1. Our conception of knowledge: Providing access to and understanding of knowledge to all students, including the sources of knowledge, the disciplinary bases for knowledge, and the ability to think critically about knowledge. A major difference here is that we need to think differently about “knowledge”. One key element, just to provide an illustration, is helping students understand that knowledge is the product of human beings. Some “higher authority” does not give it to us, nor does it exist in a vacuum—it is a function of society. Students must realize that they have that ability to “create” knowledge—explanations for phenomena, solving complex problems, analyzing social contexts and more. We argue that knowing this is an empowering condition for students.
2. Jean Anyon’s work suggests that the wealthier a district, the more likely it is that teachers believe and expect that students can create knowledge (Anyon, 1979). Furthermore, we will argue and demonstrate that knowledge is not fixed but shifts as new understandings emerge. It also means approaching knowledge from a critical perspective. We expand on the meaning of critical thinking in all classrooms. We use the United Nations goals for sustainability as examples of “knowledge” running counter to current practices and to illustrate what education to enhance the quality of life might look like. The goals can give guidance to curriculum. They include working towards no poverty, zero hunger, good health, peace, and justice, among others. Imagine if our children understood what is behind each of these (United Nations, 2018.)
3. Our conception of preparing for college and career: Enabling students to take advantage of life’s chances as they move forward, including developing imagination that will enable their access to broader life choices. A key difference from the traditional view of preparing for college and career, that is, to acquire existing knowledge, is viewing education as providing access to life’s possibilities. There is a critical difference in our thinking. It is one thing to provide access to life’s possibilities, and it is a very different thing to know how to take advantage of them. The education process must involve developing children’s awareness of what these possibilities are. As the philosopher Maxine Greene (2001) posited, “We cannot become what we cannot imagine” (p. 47). We must

study how education can foster and extend imagination—an area where there is significant new research including the work of Eric Lieu and Scott Noppe-Brandon (2009). Our work with imagination must consider Greene’s argument by helping students understand and know the options they have in life. Students in poverty may never be familiar with or learn how to pursue professional careers, such as becoming lawyers or doctors. Without this knowledge, they cannot imagine such possibilities.

4. Our conception of education for quality of life: We must assure that education includes elements beyond knowledge to enable effective career and college choices. Education must also enable a rich and rewarding quality of personal life for ourselves and others. For example:
 - The visual arts and music must be sustained in the curriculum as important academic subjects, designed to enhance imagination.
 - Physical education and health education, which are often minimized, are equally important for a healthy democratic society and should be given adequate space in the curriculum.
5. While this also relates to our next point about democracy and social justice, we must work assiduously to address discrimination and repression by learning about the sources of bias across a broad spectrum—racism, xenophobia, sexism, and more. Educators must be equipped to respond to bias when they see it and become upstanders rather than bystanders. We know from our experience how inspiring and attractive it is to educators to engage in efforts to combat these conditions.
6. Our conception of the role of education in sustaining democracy and social justice: It is essential that students are prepared to live in, and contribute to, a socially just democratic society as critical participants. To do this, we must engage in a careful consideration of what democracy and social justice can mean for education. As noted, both are clearly contentious concepts and require work towards a shared vision. In considering democracy, we engage in what it means to act in a democratic way with our fellow human beings. Dewey (1966) argued, and so do we, that democracy is as much about human interaction as it is about government. We need to show how every teacher can extend the ability of students to listen, show empathy, argue for positions, give valid reasons for their positions, and be open to compromise. This means

that everyone can act as a member of a democratic society and citizenship status for such a role is irrelevant. It is worth quoting directly from Dewey (1966): A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity. (Dewey, 1966, p.87) Removing barriers of race and class are explicit in how Dewey defines democracy.

7. For social justice, an even more difficult and contentious idea, we try to use the idea of social justice as living one's life of non-repression and nondiscrimination in all forms. It is imperative that before teaching this to others, teachers must develop sensitivity to the presence of these repressive and discriminatory factors in themselves so that they can be self-correcting. Only then will they be able to model and teach these attitudes and values to their students. As stated earlier, direct attention to inappropriate behavior stemming from repression and discrimination must be an intentional part of the curriculum. The political scientist Amy Guttmann (1987) has written about the ideas of "nonrepression and nondiscrimination" as cornerstones of a socially just democratic society and system of education (Guttmann, 1987, p. 14).

Finally, we want to reinforce the idea that this work towards democracy and social justice as we conceive it is something in which every teacher can and should engage. It is not the sole responsibility of social studies teachers.

Conclusions and Recommendations

How do we put this all together? We must analyze our change efforts in the context of what we know about large scale change to maximize our impact. This means we have to be clear among ourselves regarding our moral imperative and we must work toward a shared vision of all the contentious concepts we support. We must understand that to support democratic life we must adopt Dewey, Guttmann and Greene's ideas about democracy. Following Lakoff, we must be aware that worldviews are powerful internal mechanisms. Given this, we must

avoid suggesting that we are “right” and everyone else is “wrong,” even if we believe that is the case! Essentially, that means having respect for all views that do not violate our moral perspective, and we must speak out when they do.

The NNER should develop materials and support for use in local settings to enable the skills and knowledge we require. Specifically, these relate to:

1. Developing skill in engaging in democratic discussion that includes listening with care, having empathy, providing reasons for positions stated, fostering input from all, being open to compromise, having a willingness to self-correct, and assessing outcomes of discussions. This approach can be the basis for critical thinking and applied broadly to democracy both as a way of life and in making life decisions, including those related to voting and the conduct of government (Lipman, 2003).
2. Engaging in discussions about the critical concepts. What are the ideas that should be discussed? How do we engage in democratic discussions? What do we do when ideas conflicting with our moral perspectives are introduced?
3. Developing understanding of what a “shared vision” is and keeping it open as new individuals, settings and organizations join groups. A shared vision cannot be imposed on a group as it changes. Additional discussion is always required when the group changes or when individuals find their perspective to be changing. We encourage the NNER to revisit its mission every few years. This is not only for new members but for those who have been members for a long time. We all need to revisit and revitalize our thinking about what the NNER stands for.
4. Examining the new research on imagination to incorporate it as a systematic goal to expand the life choices students have.
5. Understanding change and the ideas of the leading theorists of change, especially regarding engaging in change in a democratic society. This includes opening ideas for change in education that may not be on the agenda of some of the groups with whom we work, such as fostering imagination, thinking about quality of life broadly defined, and other ideas that go beyond “career and college readiness.”
6. Considering the process of influencing policymakers. How do we get involved in working with policymakers? What can be expected? What are the known methods that work? We need to encourage as many members of NNER settings to become

politically and socially active.

7. Demonstrate political activity ourselves and share experiences with others. If we are to influence policy makers, our colleagues must see themselves as “constituents” who stand as the best chance for positive influence. Bring back the journalism group initiated by Dick Clark years ago, so that members can feel confident in writing op ed pieces and letters to editors of local and national newspapers.
8. To the extent possible, and the possibilities vary by state, have discussions with high school students reaching voting age to encourage them to register to vote. Help them to consider the issues. This is not always possible. We know of one large, wealthy school district, which will remain nameless, that virtually prohibits discussion of current issues for fear of offending board members or the public. We think that is becoming more common than we might guess, and it needs to be confronted.
9. Of course, we must encourage all educators to register to vote if they have not done so.
10. We must be sensitive to the issues that are increasingly affecting students, including school climate and gun safety. We have to consider the contexts in which we work to decide how best to do this. Currently, we are confronted with a Secretary of Education who, in her confirmation hearing, asserted that we keep guns in schools to protect against grizzly bears who might encroach on school property. This is one example of what we are up against in the current political climate. (Carroll, 2017) We must be cognizant of new ideas and new approaches as they emerge, for example, those of Chris Edmin on urban education. Edmin is a graduate of The Ph.D. Program in Urban Education at CUNY, and has been widely recognized for his work on reality pedagogy, an approach to using knowledge of students and using their reality for planning instruction (Edmin, 2017).

Besides our work, there is other hopeful work. Education Deans for Justice and Equity (EDJE) is a group of Deans that takes strong public positions on equity. The NNER is affiliated with EDJE. There are also examples of college programs closely tied to helping teachers work closely with communities at the University of Washington and Ball State University (Cochran-Smith, 2018). The University of New Mexico has made great strides in its work with local communities

as well. Finally, in New York, the New York Coalition of Radical Educators (NYCore), a grassroots organization, holds regular meetings with teachers to discuss needed social change, consonant with our view of what education in a democracy should look like.

If the NNER is to remain relevant as an educational organization designed to promote democracy and social justice, we need to become an activist group in ways we have written about in this article. Our small group collaboration, such as this article, exemplifies the requirements for change presented by Robinson and Aronica (2015) in their book, *Creative Schools*. We offer a critique, vision, and theory of change and believe that our combined voices can make real change possible. We hope this article will instigate further conversation of additional actions we can take as an organization that align with our mission. It will not be easy, but if we do not seize this opportunity, we will not be fulfilling our moral imperative so thoughtfully created and promoted by John Goodlad and enhanced and expanded upon by the many individuals involved in the organization over the past thirty years. We have a moral obligation to make our work and voices heard, and the time for our input has never been more critical.

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