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Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, Identity, Presence, and Intentionality: A Brief Review of Literature

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CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY, IDENTITY, PRESENCE, AND INTENTIONALITY: A BRIEF REVIEW OF LITERATURE

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Abstract

For too long, education has emphasized a systematized approach designed to maximize efficiency and standardization of curriculum and pedagogical design. Too often, educational practice framed in Anglo-European norms remain unchallenged and place students whose cultural identity does not align with the dominant norms at a disadvantage. In turn, curricula and pedagogies fail to acknowledge the role that culture and identity play in both teaching and learning. Critically oriented and culturally relevant pedagogies have the potential to foster critical thinking, identity development, and equity. This article examines how the tenets of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and identity development into educational practice can be utilized to empower practitioners to more informed, equitable, and impactful in their work with a diverse student population

Introduction

In its original format, a European based, narrowly constructed culture satisfied the purpose and needs of the colonial social structure and eased the possibility for control by a singular dominant culture (Young, 2009). Similarly, the education system was designed to include a constricted scope of curricula and outcomes for a student populace from privileged backgrounds (Larson & Murtadha, 2003). In turn, this design has resulted in curricula, pedagogies, and assessment techniques constructed under the premise that whiteness and middle socioeconomic standing is the norm to which learning is assessed (Schmeichel, 2012).

Although designed to reinforce the status quo, education is, as Hersh and Merrow (2006) indicated, a cornerstone of democracy. However, the idea that educational institutions are the primary driver of a well-informed and engaged society has been challenged over the years (Elia, 2017). In such, the problem facing the U.S. education system is finding ways to ensure that all students, especially students from minoritized social identities, are successful (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). For too long, education has emphasized a systemic approach focused on maximizing efficiency and standardizing teaching and assessment (Darling-Hammond, 2010) while viewing students whose cultural identity differs from the dominant Anglo-European norm as deficient or at a disadvantage (Schmeichel, 2012). In turn, most curricula and pedagogies fail to acknowledge the role that culture and identity play in both teaching and learning.

Data indicate that racial diversity continues to increase in the U.S. (Kaba, 2010; Parrado, 2011; Wilson, 2005). The more diverse society becomes, the more diverse the education system. These shifts have implications for schools and practitioners (Howard, 2003). However, there continues to be a lack of equity when it comes to what education is and is not. How do educational leaders and practitioners uphold the principles and potential of education to empower individuals to become critical thinkers, ethical leaders, and advocates for equity and justice?

Although this is not a cure-all solution, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) offers one solution-focused approach for practitioners to integrate into their teaching, research, and service.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Gloria Ladson-Billings, the scholar, considered the person responsible for conceptualizing culturally relevant pedagogy (Milner, 2011) described CRP as an instructional practice intent on empowering students to become more intellectually, emotionally, politically, and socially engaged and informed (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). The staple of CRP's emphasis on empowerment rests in its three central tenets that "(a) students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of their current social orders" (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 160). In turn, CRP fosters an environment intentionally designed to counter traditional deficit models of teaching and practice in which students' personal experiences and life lessons are often viewed as detriments to their ability to be successful in the classroom and beyond (Schmeichel, 2012). Instead of silencing or discrediting the students' lived experiences, CRP practitioners utilize personal narratives and home cultures as a platform for teaching and learning (Esposito & Swain, 2009). Further, as Groulx and Silva (2010) highlighted, CRP intentionally links academic curricula with students' experiences and backgrounds to foster equity in classroom teaching and learning.

Ultimately, the goal of CRP is to increase the engagement and success of students from culturally diverse and minoritized backgrounds (Howard, 2003). In doing so, CRP emphasizes a model of empowerment, engagement, and justice. Pedagogies that are culturally relevant challenge stigmatizing messaging embrace diversity, and use culture to promote a sense of identity, pride, and critical consciousness (Esposito & Swain, 2009) rather than minoritize students and their experiences. Irvine (2010) described CRP as a term describing what quality and impactful teaching looks like in the classroom. Also, Gay (2000) noted that CRP interjects cultural knowledge, lived experiences, and the student voice to validate and affirm students' lived experiences and to create relevancy in the classroom.

Academic Success

The first tenet of CRP is an academic success. Originally, Ladson-Billings (2014) referred to academic success as "intellectual growth that students experience as a result of classroom instruction and learning experiences" (p. 75). However, as education has evolved, so too has the normative meaning of academic achievement. Acknowledged by Ladson-Billings (2006),

> I never dreamed that I would regret using this term. What I had in mind has nothing to do with the oppressive atmosphere of standardized tests; the wholesale retention of groups of students; scripted curricula; and the intimidation of students, teachers, and parents. Instead, what I envisioned is more accurately described as "student learning" – what it is that students know and can do as a result of pedagogical interactions with skilled teachers (p. 34)

In culturally relevant teaching, success in the classroom is all about student learning (Milner, 2011). Teachers who engage in culturally relevant teaching and pedagogies scaffold and clarify curricula, use student's experiences as strengths and starting points for instruction, foster supportive and cooperative learning environments, set high expectations for all students, and hold themselves personally responsible for their student's success (Morrison, Robins, & Rose, 2008). Teachers who are invested in the philosophy and practice of CRP, believe that all students, regardless of their background, are capable of academic excellence (Hyland, 2009).

Cultural Competence

The second principle of culturally relevant pedagogy is cultural competence. For Ladson-Billings (2006), cultural competence includes facilitating learning processes that empower students to see and honor their values and experiences while becoming more aware and informed about how to successfully access and navigate cultural contexts. CRP emphasizes the importance of fostering learning environments that situate practitioners, students, and others within the curriculum to examine how the world works, how to function within it, and how to have a positive impact on their respective communities (Milner, 2011). Morrison, Robins, and Rose (2008) described teaching cultural competence as supporting students' development of a "positive cultural identity" (p. 434).

Being a culturally competent educator entails having the ability and skills to teach students from cultural backgrounds different from their own (National Education Association, 2017). For many, such a concept may reflect "just good teaching" (Ladson-Billings, 2006). However, given that educational practice reflects values and cultural tenets of Eurocentric value (Lowery, 2013) and traditional education has viewed students from non-dominant cultures as deficient or disadvantaged rather than different (Schmeichel, 2012). It is within such a framework that the need for cultural competence, for practitioners and students, is highlighted. Because, as Aronson and Laughter (2016) noted, the classroom should be a space where students learn about and take pride in their own, and others' cultures. CRP argues that such learning should promote academic success without discrediting one's culture, lived experiences, and sense of self (Howard, 2003).

Sociopolitical Consciousness

The third and final tenet of CRP is sociopolitical consciousness. Sociopolitical consciousness refers to extending the classroom beyond the confines of the classroom to link academic curricula with real-world contexts (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Engaging students with teaching and pedagogies that are culturally relevant, empowers them to become aware of the nature of, and how society works (Milner, 2011). Sociopolitical consciousness promotes critical awareness that students can use to examine, deconstruct, and interrupt the status quo and inequities (Morrison et al., 2008).

CRP empowers student's critical consciousness (Morrison et al., 2008) by recognizing the linkages between culture, learning, and valuing student's cultural capital as a contributor to learning and success (Howard, 2003). For students to become conscious learners who are prepared to engage, examine and navigate sociopolitical cultures, teachers must integrate pedagogies that support the critique of social norms, practice, and behaviors (Schmeichel, 2012). It is through this willingness and commitment from teachers that CRP translates the theory of practice into critical discourse designed to unmask systems of oppression and pursue a more just society (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

CRP is a pedagogy of engagement and empowerment. At its core, CRP is grounded in the belief that learning is a social process mediated through personal experiences, cultural identities, and norms (Irvine, 2010). Emphasis is placed on the value of voice and the cultural experiences each brings with them to the classroom (Howard, 2003). By integrating the central tenets of academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995b), CRP promotes a learning environment that supports educational achievement, identity development, and the maintenance of student's cultural integrity (Milner, 2011). The next section provides a brief overview of culturally relevant pedagogy in practice.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Practice

CRP is a pedagogy of opposition to the status quo (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). By design, CRP promotes practice that fights against the deprivation of public education while explicitly supporting the needs of students from culturally minoritized backgrounds (p. 164). Focused intentionally on challenging norms of privilege and standardized modes of operations, Ladson-Billings situated CRP at the core of discussions about what needs changing in educational practice (Schmeichel, 2012). This is important because culturally relevant pedagogy can be a driver to challenge social injustice at micro and macro levels (Esposito & Swain, 2009) and serve as what Paris (2012) described as the foundation for a curriculum to engage pre-service teachers in critically aware and conscious practice (as cited by Durden & Truscott, 2013). However, the starting point for CRP to reach its potential is the rejection of deficit models of thinking toward students from culturally diverse backgrounds and identities (Howard, 2003) and the requirement of practitioners to translate the canons of CRP into action and practice.

CRP is a pedagogy of intentional action and goals. Ultimately, the quality and impact of a pedagogy of cultural relevance rest in the relevancy of the practitioner. Good intentions are not good enough when working to interject CRP into the culture of a school/institution. For example, a well-meaning, yet uninformed teacher may equate CRP with a martyr-based lens and fuse ethnic holidays, nuances of popular culture, or colloquial speech into their curriculum and language (Irvine, 2010). Although their intentions may be useful, this is not culturally relevant pedagogy or culturally responsive teaching. Instead, they are reflections of the dominant norms and further entrench Eurocentric values into teaching and learning. CRP is critical pedagogy. It transforms good intentions into intentionality and intentionally good practice. As Schmeichel (2012) averred, integrating culturally relevant pedagogy into practice requires practitioners to be critical, prepared, and willing to deconstruct systemic inequities to empower students and learning. In order to accomplish such a challenging task, practitioners must bring inclusive pedagogies and an investment in being aware of, and correcting, biases that may negatively impact students from minoritized backgrounds from being successful (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011).

CRP requires practitioners to be aware of their identity, the biases they bring with them to work, and the potential impact their practice has on students. While common attributes of practitioners who engage in culturally relevant teaching include an ethic of care, cultural competence, a critique of cultural norms and practice, and take personal responsibility for the success of their students (Esposito & Swain, 2009), the importance of personal identity awareness should not be underestimated. While referencing Tomlinson, (Lowery (2013) noted the imperativeness of practitioners understanding their culture and the multiple attributes of their identity because it affects what they learn, and how they learn.

To be effective and sustainable, schools and practitioners must authentically believe that all students can succeed and excel (Paris, 2012). This call requires practitioners to be courageous and to acknowledge that educational practices and philosophies that permeate schools have failed to appropriately or effectively educate students from backgrounds outside the dominant culture (Howard, 2003). Pedagogues and instructional strategies that are culturally relevant rely upon rationale that not only acknowledges the differences in experiences and realities between students from minoritized versus dominant socialized identities but are also intentional in efforts to utilize their different experiences as resources to empower students from systemically

disenfranchised backgrounds to be as successful and engaged as their peers from privileged backgrounds (Schmeichel, 2012). For CRP, those processes and practices include the following:

- A belief that education is a space to promote social justice and a classroom is a place for social change (Aronson & Laughter, 2015)
- All students are capable learners (Ladson-Billings, 1995a)
- Students' cultures and experiences are an asset and help students make sense of the world (Milner, 2011)
- Practitioners engaging in personal critical reflection exploring their identity, positionality, and impact on students and learning (Howard, 2003)

The United States has never been more diverse than it is now (Gause, 2017). Likewise, today's classrooms continue to diversify and reflect the trends of ever-changing and diversifying society (Howard, 2003). What does that mean for education and educational practitioners? How do educational practitioners fulfill the responsibility of education to both students and society? Research highlights that culturally relevant pedagogies are one piece to the puzzle. For, as Ladson-Billings (2006) noted, it does not benefit our democracy to have an uneducated or undereducated people within it (p. 176).

Research and Findings

Esposito and Swain (2009) conducted qualitative research studying seven (7) teachers in urban educational settings. Each teacher was identified as using culturally relevant pedagogies in their teaching and curriculum to integrate social justice into their classroom. Findings highlighted that by incorporating principles of culturally relevant pedagogies into the curriculum, teachers helped students use critical thinking to identify and unpack issues of social injustice and its impact on their lives.

Hyland (2009) used a hybrid methodology of action research to investigate culturally relevant pedagogy in the classroom. The study participant was a novice teacher who identified as White and whose students primarily identified as African American. Findings highlighted the importance of cultural competency and effectively engaging with students' home and community cultures. Results of the study also underscored the need to enhance pre-service teaching programs to emphasize the importance of, and ability to, utilize culturally relevant pedagogies into the classroom. As noted by the researcher, the case demonstrated that teacher training is not enough. A call for enhancing and extending opportunities to engage pre-service and novice level teachers in relevant and meaningful experiences need to be included in professional development experiences to allow educators to learn about pedagogies and skills to enhance their knowledge-base and ability to teach students from minoritized cultural backgrounds and identities.

Milner (2011) studied the implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy in a diverse and urban classroom setting. Specifically, the study examined the role of cultural congruence and cultural competence in fostering a supportive and engaging learning environment. Findings of the study indicated positive correlations between a teacher's building cultural competence to increase their ability to integrate culturally relevant pedagogy into practice. Results also indicated connections between increasing practitioner's cultural competence to augment student's positive sense of self, deepen student's knowledge of their cultural identity, and to increase the practitioner's awareness of personal identity as well as the multiple identities of their students.

Morrison et al. (2008) conducted a synthesis of research on culturally relevant pedagogy and classroom implementation. Collectively, the researchers examined 45 research studies on culturally relevant pedagogy in the classroom conducted between 1995 and 2008. The results of

the study included a synthesis of the three tenets of CRP (academic achievement; cultural competence; sociopolitical consciousness) and identified 12 themes linked to implementing CRP in the classroom. Those themes were: *modelling, scaffolding, and clarification of the challenging curriculum*; *using students' strengths as instructional starting points*; *investing and taking personal responsibility for students' success*; *creating and nurturing cooperative environments; high behavioral expectations*; *reshaping the prescribed curriculum*; *building on students' funds of knowledge*; *encouraging relationships between school and communities*; *critical literacy*; *engaging students in social justice work*; *making explicit the power dynamics of mainstream society;* and *sharing power in the classroom*. While results did allude to the potential complexity of integrating CRP in multi-cultural settings, researchers also highlighted that incorporating CRP into practice is necessary if educators want to be equitable in their ability to teach all students.

Identity

Identity is a constant presence in a person's life (Jones, Kim, & Skendall, 2012). Attributes and definitions of identity are fluid. For Campbell, (2010), identity refers to how individuals view themselves. Jehangir (2009) described identity as an examination of oneself, of others, and the continuous analysis of social and historical contexts that shape a person's sense of self and others. Hill and Thomas (2000) furthered the discussion and described identity as how one defines themselves within the contexts of social constructs, affiliations, and group memberships.

Erickson's work charted the path for researchers to explore processes and concepts of identity, identity development, and how individuals make sense of their sense of self and place within social contexts (Jones, Kim, & Skendall, 2012). Early investigations of identity explored the concept from a psychological context (Gillett-Karam, 2016a) and framed examinations within a homogenous set of cultural variables (Story & Walker, 2016). Researchers also conceptualized their research within a context that identity was fixed by the end of adolescence (p. 137). However, over time investigations transitioned to become a mainstay in social science research (Gillett-Karam, 2016a). Although concepts of identity continue to be explored, what identity is and consists of remains ambiguous (Jones, Kim, & Skendall, 2012). However, while definitions vary, a correlating attribute of many discussions and research is that identity development is a process that is informed through a standard set of attributes such as social norms, constructs, and interactions (Resnicow & Ross-Gaddy, 1997).

Why is it essential for educators to be aware of what identity is and how it is formed? First, identities are reflections of cultural backgrounds (Turniansky, Tuval, Mansur, Barak, & Gidron, 2009). For students from minoritized cultural backgrounds, their educational experiences often tell stories that devalues them, discredits their efforts, deletes their history, and mutes their voices (ASHE, 2003a). In turn, students from dominant socialized cultures are supported as they see themselves in curriculum, media, and are represented throughout their educational journey (pp. 92-93). It is imperative for practitioners to know and remember that students are different (ASHE, 2003b). Rather than reinforcing the status quo and further subjugating students from historically oppressed backgrounds, culturally relevant practitioners integrate a critical lens (Schmeichel, 2012) to acknowledge and challenge the forces that allow educational inequities to continue (p. 227). As Kaufman (2014) indicated, the stakes are high. Therefore, practitioners must recognize and embrace their role in engaging students in environments that include identity development in teaching and learning (p. 38).

Also, to embrace their role in empowering students to become aware of how and why processes linked to identity development, culturally relevant practitioners need to incorporate culture and identity into curricula. As Creswell (2009) highlighted, we all have a story to tell. Further, life happens in a series of narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Therefore, it makes sense to integrate students' stories, culture, and sense of identity into their educational experiences. However, as noted by CRP scholars such as Ladson-Billings (2014), Slattery (2006), Howard (2003), and others, traditional modes of teaching, curriculum, and assessment have served students from diverse background inequitably. When linking pedagogical design with instructional strategies and identity, practitioners must remember, as Alexander's (2008) discussed, narratives framed within the perspective of the dominant culture; educators need to be knowledgeable of how dominant ideologies influence their assessment, engagement, and responses to stories and the storyteller.

Although an individual's sense of identity shares a standard set of qualifiers (Resnicow & Ross-Gaddy, 1997), identity development is a unique and individual process that is based on choices that align or lack congruence between old and new learning and beliefs (ASHE, 2003b). In such, one's sense of identity is fluid – a process – and changes as social roles, groups, and trends change (Campbell, 2010). Further, it is not until the knowledge of various traits become acquainted with motivation and emotions that the processes of identity take shape and become meaningful (Corenblum & Armstrong, 2012).

Student identities are complex and cannot be linked to any group attribute (Gillett-Karam, 2016b). In an era of standardized curriculum and assessment, education is focused on what students are learning (Kaufman, 2014). Although essential, what is missing from the current state of educational practice is attention to whom students are becoming (p. 39). Practitioners who engage in culturally relevant pedagogies and practice focus on the whole student. As Ladson-Billings (1995a) noted, culturally relevant practitioners take student development personal and intertwine an emphasis on student's cultural identity into the curriculum to cultivate learning. Rather than follow today's standardized curriculum to a tee, culturally relevant practitioners ask themselves what they are doing to impact student development and learning (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Such practice embodies a more comprehensive and engaged approach to educational practice. For a culturally relevant practice to be implemented, practitioners must be informed about identity and the processes that guide a student's sense of self. Noted by Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011), practitioners must be aware of their students' sense of identity, their identity, and how those multiple identities intersect with and impact students.

For Ladson-Billings (2006), it is not enough for practitioners to think about their students. In order to be culturally relevant and successful, practitioners need to be mindful of how they think about their students (p. 164). For practitioners, this includes being mindful of their identity (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Such awareness is vital because as ASHE (2003b) purported, educators must be aware of their own culture first before they can be aware of the multiple identities and cultures of their students. Further, for educators, who they are as a person cannot, and should not, be excluded from their professional practice and identity (Turniansky et al. 2009). Instead, educators should embrace and utilize their cultural identity and experiences as a strength to inform their professional practice (p. 46).

Similarly, a student's identity – their story and lived experiences – should be considered an asset to the learning environment (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). By valuing cultural identities and personal narratives, practitioners are in positions to foster learning environments designed to

promote a positive identity while crediting students culture in the classroom (Esposito & Swain, 2009). Linking CRP with a practice that emphasizes processes of identity development primes educators to ask themselves; whom they are contributing to the success or underachievement of students, especially of students from different cultural backgrounds (Howard, 2003). By integrating a critical lens to evaluate pedagogies, curriculum, and identity, practitioners are better prepared to fulfill their responsibility to students (ASHE, 2003b) and empower students to engage and promote a culture of learning and success (p. 3).

Identity and Presence

Ideals, definitions, and attributes of presence are permeable and transferrable depending on discipline, context, and lens of thinking (Hufford, 2014). For this discussion, presentations will focus on identity (i.e., who I am; whom I am becoming), thinking and learning, and morality (i.e., right versus wrong; good versus bad). The importance of practitioners knowing about presence is amplified when educational content and context are developed within a framework emphasizing identity development, awareness of thought processing, and morality.

Why is it important for educational practitioners to be aware and knowledgeable of presence? As Hufford (2014) noted, the integration of presence into pedagogical design and practice affords opportunities for education to become critical, empowering, and transformative. In their research on pedagogy, practice, and presence Britzmon and Pitt (2001) noted that teachers who lack an awareness of biases (known or unknown) lack an awareness of how their lenses; their ways of thinking and knowing – impact their practice. Katz (2006) furthered the discussion by highlighting that a person who lacks awareness of whom they are and becoming is not able to effect change. For educators, the integration of presence into practice requires what Hufford (2014) described as "a meeting, but not a merging, of identities" (p. 12). The integration of a *meeting* versus a *merging* of identities fosters a sense of authentic and personalized engagement between practitioners and students. Further, as Walker (2014) reported, knowledge of self plays a critical role in augmenting learning and reflexive thinking, which can serve as an impetus for furthering one's awareness of personal biases.

An increased understanding of self-awareness enhances a person's awareness of their emotions - their inter and intrapersonal skills - and internalized attributes of their identity (Gardner, 2006). In turn, as Rosenberg (2010) reported, a greater sense of self increases one's sense of certainty about their feelings, decision-making, behaviors. For practitioners, the more they embrace presence as a critical component to both pedagogies and curriculum, the more they enhance their ability to engage, educate, and empower students. As Hufford (2014) noted,

> A classroom in which presence is sought and welcomed values an inclusive, dialectical cacophony of voices. Intellectual, even emotional, cacophony – open challenges, questions, actively opposing views, and dynamic interchanges may take up classroom decorum, but may also be a prelude to intellectual reflection and personal growth (p. 14).

Teacher education programs are faced with a demanding challenge to prepare competent and highly motivated teaches and professionally competent teacher education graduates. (Tang, Cheng, & Cheng, 2014). What this looks like and includes requires a different way of thinking and doing than in previous years. Presence – being aware of a sense of self and others – is more critical now than ever before. For practitioners, this means becoming aware of biases and prejudices that impact student learning and success. However, like Richards, Brown, and Forde (2007) highlighted, teachers, are often resistant to the idea that they might have prejudicial feelings or value-driven thought processes towards individual students or groups. A core

attribute of presence is awareness of self and the socialization processes that impact one's sense of becoming. Highlighted by Tang, Cheng, & Cheng (2014), an awareness of self includes mindfulness of one's philosophies of teaching and learning and what those look like and result in the classroom. For teachers who embrace the idea and importance of presence in pedagogy; become aware of their biases and prejudices; and work intentionally to incorporate an equitable approach to their practice, they help to cultivate environments of trust, empathy, and success (Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2007).

Identity and Intentionality

To be intentional is to be purposeful and strategic. Intentionality furthers the discussion and inserts an emphasis on acts of being intentional. According to Lowery (2013), intentionality is "the reflective act of rigorously conscious attention that an observer employs to purposefully apprehend the essential meaning of that which is observed" (p. 40). For this paper, intentionality is described as the actions an individual take to increase their awareness and understanding of their identity, space, and place within society.

Why is intentionality important for educational practitioners, and how can integrating intentionality into practice augment both teaching and learning? First, as noted by Lowery (2013), intentionality requires action. For practitioners to engage in intentionality, one action that is required is that act of being reflexive. Grenier (2016) described self-reflexivity as seeking to increase one's awareness about positions, roles, and space and how personal activities impact each. Nagata (2004) furthered the discussion by linking attributes of presence with identity and awareness. For Nagata, self-reflexivity includes "having an ongoing conversation with one's self about what one is experiencing as one is experiencing it. To be self-reflexive is to engage in this meta-level of feeling and thought while being in the moment" (pp. 140-141).

By integrating attributes of reflexivity into the curriculum, practitioners may foster learning environments focused on examining how personal identity, position, and role impact the context and outcomes of learning (Grenier, 2016). For educational practitioners, such practice embodies values of accountability, an awareness of biases, and a recognition that ideals of knowledge – what is right and wrong – are socially constructed, potentially changing, and varied from person to person (Sinacore, Blaisure, Justin, Healy, & Brawer, 1999). To be intentional is to embrace the values of personal awareness and accountability. As Sinacore et al. (1999) highlighted, teachers, demonstrate intentionality when they acknowledge and discuss how their personal experiences and learning influence their perspectives, decision-making processes, and teaching. Intentional, reflexive practitioners dare to be present at the moment and to open themselves up to the community (Hufford, 2014). It recognizes that at times, one is the knower, and at other times, they are the learner (Sinacore et al., 1999). Intentionality fosters space to integrate personal experiences, voice, and learning into teaching and learning. For Nagata (2004), such practice promotes self-expression and the construction, deconstruction, and possibly reconstruction of knowledge. It is to "engage the world of ideas, concepts, and feelings, both cognitive and affective, and to find ways to articulate one's place in that world" (p. 40). Collectively, by integrating intentionality into practice and curriculum, practitioners foster a culture of empowerment, identity development, and critical thinking. Educational spaces that embrace intentionality are ones that focus on learning about one's whole self (Nagata, 2004); personalize teaching and learning (Sinacore et al., 1999); and challenge hegemony through critical questioning, learning about self and others, and being present (Hufford, 2014).

Conclusion

Critically oriented and culturally relevant pedagogies have the potential to foster critical thinking, identity development, and equity. As Lowery, Gautam, Walker, and Mays (2013) purported, such pedagogies and practice are necessary to create space for values of justice and equity to develop. The purpose of this paper was to highlight tools and a framework for educational practice that has the potential to transform teaching and learning. In doing so, they need to incorporate culturally relevant pedagogies and practice into today's classrooms was highlighted.

The landscape of classrooms in the U.S. are changing. They are becoming more and more diverse (Kaba, 2010; Parrado, 2011; Wilson, 2005). What does this mean for the education and the practitioners working within the system? In order to fulfill its responsibility to students, communities, and society, educational practice must keep up with the changing trends and diversification of society. CRP offers one way to promote equity (Esposito & Swain, 2009) and promote critical thinking and consciousness among practitioners (Paris, 2012). Being critical in design and implementation, CRP helps transform practitioners from having good intentions to being intentional, and as a result, being good.

By linking CRP with curricula focused on identity, presence, and intentionality, practitioners promote learning that is engaging, empowering, and personal. And, in doing so, practitioners foster learning spaces that promote a growing sense of self and of others (Howard, 2003; Brown-Jeffy and Cooper, 2011) and promote ideals of presence and democracy (Hufford, 2014), social justice (Aronson & Laughter, 2015), and equitable, holistic student success (Ladson-Billings, 2014). The stakes are high (Kaufman, 2014). The time for CRP to become a framing principle of educational practice is now. By not doing so will continue to have negative impacts on teaching, learning, and ultimately, as Ladson-Billings (2006) highlighted, our democracy.

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