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Critical Hope as Vehicle for Equity: Examining Teachers' Paradigm and Pedagogy

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Abstract

This current study framed the concept of "critical hope" and examined how systemic oppression in society continuously perpetrates the "hope gap" in low-income students. We defined critical hope, in this study, as the optimistic way of viewing and acting on the world from a critically historically conscious, socially and culturally situated perspective with a personal belief that inevitable change will inspire a sense of community, advocacy, liberation, and justice (Strikwerda, 2019). This rich definition incorporates the elements of hope deduced from existing related foundational and empirical research literature (Freire, 1970; Freire, 1994; Freire, 1997, bell hooks, 2004; Edwards et al., 2007; Giroux, 2011; Noddings, 2017; Stitzlein, 2018; Massey, Vaughn, & Herbert, 2021).

This study revealed the manifestations of critical hope in teachers' paradigm that influence their pedagogy and classroom practices. Evidence of hope in teachers' interviews has been identified in: (1) teachers' vocabulary expressions and written directions that connect, connote, or imply valuing and trusting optimistic aspirations to succeed, (2) teachers' written tasks and assignments that prompt critical thinking and aspirations to be caring, and (3) teachers' lesson plans that may elicit a sense of community and humanizing practices. A qualitative methodological approach using narrative inquiry was selected to explore, identify, and understand the concept of hope as an equity solution by reconstructing, analyzing, and understanding the lived experiences of 10 teachers in the realm of practice with hope as the forum (Conle, 2001; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

By using hand-coding and NVivo as the mode of coding the narratives of teachers during the interviews, nine themes reflecting hope emerged: 1) building trust, high expectations and caring relationships; 2) goal oriented, willingness to act, and perseverance; 3) critical reflection, advocacy, citizenry, and empowerment; 4) valuing optimism; 5) confronting hopelessness; 6) personal commitment to ethical responsibility and accountability; 7) humanizing self-identity and sense of community; 8) consciousness of economic, social, cultural, and historical life barriers; and 9) inspiring motivation and engagement. Recommendations based on the findings of the current study are presented.

Keywords
Critical hope, hope gap, poverty, paradigm, engagement, social justice, equity

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Heidi Strikwerda, Ed.D. and Jose Lalas, Ph.D.

Introduction

Presumably, with all the talks about equity and social justice in the field of education, it is common knowledge and well-understood that equitable solutions are needed to provide all students, especially the historically underserved, equal opportunities for success (La Salle & Johnson, 2019; Lalas & Strikwerda, 2021). Providing equal opportunity implies "treating everyone the same, even if they are starting from very different places and, have very different needs" while equity refers to "making sure that everyone has what they need to prosper, even if that means treating differently situated individuals or communities different" (Caliendo, 2022, p. 19). Our current research paper attempts to inform educators that effective teaching involves a moral obligation to provide each student with an equitable education infused with hopeful possibilities (Strikwerda, 2021). To teach equitably all students, especially the underserved without hope, "is a frivolous illusion" (Freire, 1997, p. 8).

In reality, doing true equity work is a hard, unenviable task and can be a long, lonely, and thankless road especially when many people within society refuse to acknowledge that they themselves are, in fact, a part of a racialized unjust system (Wise, 2005; Gorski, 2019). Inequity is not the result of one person, or even a group of people, but rather, it is the result of everyone involved within that system and it is unhelpful and untrue to place the blame of educational inequities on one entity because school systems are complex and consist of many interacting elements and relationships (Blankstein & Noguera with Kelly, 2015; La Salle Avelar & Johnson, 2019). Thus, equity work must be systemic and is both the responsibility of one

person and of all people within that community (La Salle Avelar & Johnson, 2019; Westover, 2020).

While we acknowledge that it is not easy to provide the equitable pedagogical practices needed to combat the systemic oppression of students, it is even harder for those who have experienced success in the traditional educational system to recognize how these normalized practices continually lead to the disenfranchisement and marginalization of racial and ethnic minorities who are not privy to the privilege they themselves receive (Wise, 2005; Gorski, 2019; Lalas, Charest, Strikwerda, & Ordaz, 2019).

In this paper, we put forth the stance that hope is needed to foster equitable solutions in addressing the disparity in student achievement and institute coherence in meeting the program and instructional needs of ALL students regardless of their social, cultural, and class identities (Lalas & Strikwerda, 2020). What does it mean to have critical hope drive equity work? Is hope a passive way of wishing for educational inequities to go away? Does it drive teachers' dispositions to serve students better and broaden their future possibilities? How do we, as educators, become agents of hope for those who are marginalized or the most vulnerable students in the school system? Similar to the achievement gap, wealth gap, and opportunity gap, does the hope gap among teachers exist? This study attempted to explore the notion of hope and hope gap that may be manifested in teachers' paradigm and pedagogy. We identified paradigmatic and pedagogical elements expressed and demonstrated by teachers that are applicable, relevant, and evident that can either create hope or perpetuate hopelessness in the classroom. We believe that hope is key in doing equity work, increases our commitment for equitable advocacy, and vigilantly demonstrates the notion that zip code does

not have to define or determine who students are and how they become (Fortner, Lalas, and Strikwerda, 2021).

Hope and Hope Theory: What Is It?

Hope is commonly used to define an emotion or a feeling pertaining to a desire that something will happen in the future and is based on one's circumstances. When one hopes, they desire with anticipation for something to be true. One does not hope for what they already have, but rather, they hope for something they wish they had. However, research shows that simply having a feeling of hope does not create hope. Hope must be accompanied with the action (Stitzlein, 2018; Massey et al., 2021; Lalas & Strikwerda, 2021). When one hopes and does not participate in the events to bring about needed change or place effort towards their desired goal, their optimistic feelings can shift quickly into hopelessness or despair. Consequently, an action-less person who does not put forth effort toward achieving their goals while remaining inside the struggle, often becomes avowedly hopeless (Freire, 1994, p. 2).

The hope theory is a research-based multidimensional construct consisting of goals, pathways, and agency and can be useful for making both positive and negative correlations for perceived capabilities to derive passageways towards goals in adults and children. Hope is defined by Edwards et al., (2007) as "a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful agency and pathways" (83). Agency, also known as "willpower," is the motivational component that propels people along their imagined routes to goals and reflects the perceived ability to initiate and sustain movement toward a goal (Lalas, Charest, Strikwerda, & Ordaz, 2019). When one sets a goal, a personal cognitive mechanism occurs making a prediction of their ability to succeed (Lopez, 2013). Agency looks at all the

options and considers if success is possible. When barriers arise, agency reflects a

determination to meet the desired goal, and depending on one's level of hope, the intellectual

process constitutes either positive representation in thoughts of "I can do this," or negative

representations in thoughts of "I can't do this" (Edwards et al., 2007).

In order for goals to be pursued, they need to be clearly defined and "sufficiently

important" to the individual. Additionally, one must perceive probable visual pathways

involving the capability of one or more routes to attain their goals. When barriers arise, these

imagined pathways provide flexibility in determining an alternative route towards success

(Edwards et al., 2007). Once goals are identified, hope acts as the cognitive willpower and way-

power to fulfill them (Stitzlein, 2018).

These separate and intertwined components of goals, agency, and pathways are learned

through individual experiences beginning in childhood, which inform and influence one's beliefs

pertaining to the attainment of success or of failure (Lalas & Strikwerda, 2021). According to

hope theory, "successful goal pursuits of high-hope individuals cast a positive emotional set

over the process in general. Likewise, individuals who lack hope may enter the thought

sequence with negative feelings toward goal pursuits" (Edwards et al., 2007, p. 84). This is

particularly true for our children who have experienced large amounts of trauma and failure as

"hope is a learned behaviour generated through action towards a desired goal and belief in

one's ability to obtain it" (Lalas, Charest, Strikwerda, & Ordaz, 2019, p. 24). According to Lucas

and colleagues (2019), "hope is one of the most powerful psychological predictors of success in

youth. It is what enables people to set valued goals, to see the means to achieve those goals,

and to find the drive to make those goals become a reality" (p. 199). Thus, it is vital for

educators to understand that hope needs to be cultivated, modeled, instilled, and breathed into the lives of our youth within their educational settings.

Critical Hope and Other Types of Hope

Grounded in his seminal work on hope with diverse inner-city students, Duncan-Andrade (2009) conceptualizes critical hope from a socio-psychological perspective and describes three elements of educational practices that can build true hope in urban schools, namely, material hope, Socratic hope, and audacious hope. His use of "roses that grew from concrete" metaphor, captures how these three types of critical hope are significant in motivating and engaging the most historically underserved inner-city students to find their pathways to success. Material hope represents the important role of teachers in the lives of our most vulnerable students. Teachers, as purveyors of material hope, have the power to determine the most culturally and socially responsive resources and practices for their students. Their careful use of critical pedagogy in connecting their students' lives to their environment's harsh realities and using them as a motivating guide to teach for social justice connects the personal and material resources offered most effectively by teachers to the second type of critical hope – Socratic hope.

Employing the perspective of Socratic hope allows the teachers and the students to ask critical questions and examine the root causes of the society's problems and how they impact the many challenges students face, especially the students of color. Socratic hope provides the opportunity to put into practice what is being taught in carefully adopted academic standards. "To show the sermons rather than preach it" is the very essence of Socratic hope. Teachers in this mode of thinking view their students' failure as theirs.

Duncan-Andrade's audacious hope inspires teachers and students to examine inequalities based on social and cultural identities, understand inequities, and unite in solidarity with students who are traditionally sidelined and unrecognized. This mindset boldly rejects the ideology of racial dominance, entitlement, and privilege and the oppression of the marginalized others. Teachers adhering to audacious hope view the struggles of all students as their struggles and that "their pain is our pain." Similar to Freire's assertion (1998), the three types of critical hope presented by Duncan-Andrade imply that teaching is not just the transfer of knowledge from the teacher to the students; effective teaching is driven by hope and a deep caring relationship between the teacher and the students.

Additionally, Duncan-Andrade discusses the three forms of false hope found in educational practices and beliefs: hokey hope, mythical hope, and hope deferred, which have decimated hope for children in urban schools and have been "an assault on hope, particularly in our nation's urban centers . . . including disinvestment in schools and overinvestment in prisons." (Duncan-Andrade, 2009, p. 182).

Earlier, Freire (1994) discussed the pedagogy of hope from a social and critical consciousness point of view describing how hope is an ontological need for humanity and without hope it is impossible to engage in the struggle. Freire (1994) states, "We need critical hope the way a fish needs unpolluted water" (p. 2). Without hope one is not really living, but rather, one becomes an object to the dominating powers that influence the world. Freire believes that people must collectively and continually engage in the act of freeing themselves from oppressive practices within society and that hope is developed more effectively within a community. For Freire, "the struggle for hope is permanent, and it becomes intensified when

one realizes it is not a solitary struggle" (p. 59). The discourse of those involved in the struggle must be "hopeful, critically optimistic, and drenched in ethics" moving one towards action and liberation (Freire, 1997, p. 43).

More recently, Stitzlein (2018) discussed the differences between pragmatic hope and the individualistic attributes commonly taught in grit. She elaborated on the dire need to shift our educational focus away from grit, in general, and placed it onto the identified elements involved in cultivating hope in our youth, in particular, in order to transform the continual societal injustices they face. Grit, in Stitzlein's research, was defined as pursuing a goal while showing self-control and other traits such as resilience, tenacity, and other individual traits. In comparison, Stitzlein (2018) described hope as more "flexible, social, and political than grit as it is driven to action that improves one's life and those of other people" (p. 1). Stitzlein's approach to hope encompasses social and political contexts and provides a philosophical vision where, "hope brings together truth, inquiry, and meliorism into a way of being that overcomes paralyzing or destructive forces of pessimism and anger insofar as it is a disposition that unites proclivities, emotions, and intelligent reflection to motivate one to act to improve one's conditions'' (p.14). She discusses how these attributes of hope are essential in instilling in our youth to help them overcome factors that impede their academic achievement and must be part of the informed education they receive inside the classroom. Thus, similar to Duncan-Andrade (2009) and Paulo Freire (1997), Stitzlein (2018) sees hope as an essential component that moves one towards action and is developed within a community.

Inspired by the work of Duncan-Andrade, Freire, and other critical theorists, Strikwerda (2019) completed her dissertation on critical hope by examining how teachers' paradigm and

pedagogy manifested critical hope in low-income, trauma-sensitive middle school. She found evidence of critical hope related to Duncan-Andrade's material and audacious hope but broader in scope by way of *themes* that emerged from the authentic interview responses of teachers about their vocabulary expressions and written directions, written student tasks and assignments, and lesson plans manifesting optimism, trust, aspirations, high expectations, sense of community, humanizing practices, and other asset-based views of their students.

Defining Critical Hope

The definition of critical hope in Strikwerda's dissertation (2019) and that we conveniently used in this paper is deduced from "powerful conclusions from a small set of abstract basic principles" (Gee, 2013, p. 52). It was conceptualized by reviewing the foundational and current literature on hope and critical theories. Freire (1994) discussed the pedagogy of hope from a social and critical consciousness point of view and presented critical hope as a "new language - that of possibility, open to hope" (37). This language of hope includes a critical consciousness where one actively participates in their struggle towards humanization where they are liberated from the dominating powers that objectify them. Duncan-Andrade (2009) added to Freire (1997) a foundational view of critical hope from a socio-psychological perspective and notably stated that hope is inequitably decimated along social class (Duncan-Andrade, 2009).

In this paper, critical hope has been defined as the "optimistic way of viewing and acting on the world from a critically historically conscious, socially and culturally situated perspective with a personal belief that inevitable change will inspire a sense of community, advocacy, liberation, and justice" (Strikwerda's dissertation, 2019). Figure 1 shows the evolving definition

of critical hope that was initially introduced by Freire (1994; 1997), built upon by Duncan-

Andrade (2009), and redefined by Strikwerda (2019).

Figure 1

Views of Critical Hope from Freire to Duncan-Andrade to Strikwerda's Dissertation

From Freire (1994;1997), to Duncan-Andrade (2008;2009), to Current Formulations of Critical
Hope Based Upon Research Strikwerda (2019)

Freire (1994; 1997)	Duncan-Andrade (2008; 2009)	Strikwerda (2019)
Critical Hope defined as a new reading of my world requires a "new language-that of possibility, open to hope" (Freire, 1997, p. 37). This language of hope includes a critical consciousness of the injustices in the world expressed with words of goodness and peace by those who are engaged in the struggle, and are in search of permanent possibilities that may alleviate the inequities of the oppressed (Freire, 1997).	Critical Hope defined by hooks (1994 as cited in Duncan-Andrade, 2008) "the world can be a place opposed to domination and oppression and that Critical education can trigger all people, privileged and oppressed, to act in ways that liberate ourselves and others" (p. 37).	Critical Hope is defined as the optimistic way of viewing and acting in the world from a critically, historically conscious, socially, and culturally situated perspective with a personal belief that inevitable change will inspire a sense of community, advocacy, liberation, and justice.

Methodology

This qualitative research used narrative inquiry as a method in capturing how teachers'

classroom paradigm and pedagogy in a middle school demonstrate their desire for their

students to be hopeful in their education and ultimate quest for success. It employed critical

theories in education such as Freire's (1974) education for critical consciousness, pedagogy of

hope (1994), and pedagogy of the heart (1997), hooks' pedagogy of hope (2003), and other

related critical theories (Brookfield, 2005; Murphy & Fleming, 2010; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2011;

Ladson- Billings & Tate, 1995; Saltman, 2018), and the hope theory (Edwards et al., 2007) as the

conceptual framework in order to establish a link between pedagogy, paradigm, and hope. The

research design allowed to gather the authentic voices and storytelling of teachers on how they

project hope in influencing students how "to set valued goals, to see the means to achieve those goals, and to find the drive to make those goals become a reality" (Lucas, 2019, p. 199).

This narrative inquiry sought answers to the following questions: (1) To what extent do the voices of teachers of low-income students reflect critical hope in their paradigm and pedagogy? (2) What themes emerged from the interviews of teachers about their language and behavior, instructional delivery, and lesson planning that reflect and imply the notion of critical hope? (3) What pedagogical and policy recommendations for educators can be made to reflect the manifestations of critical hope in teachers' paradigm and pedagogy?

Data Collection

Narrative inquiry allowed the in-depth analysis and understanding of the lived experiences of participating teachers through their storytelling and responses to interview questions (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Conle, 2001). As the questions were answered and stories were told and recalled from memory, themes emerged through the exploration and interpretation of these qualitative data sets of stories and interview responses (Conle, 2001). Conle (2001) describes that truth claims can be verified through theoretical discourse as narrative inquiry may assist in clarifying lived values and determining what may be good for a particular society or culture. She explains that narrative inquiry can serve to clarify lived experiences and be used as a method for change in a particular social context. The observation and interview research tools can be seen in Appendices A and B.

This qualitative study involved seven steps: (1) identification of teachers of students in a low-income middle school who are willing to share their experiences; (2) development of the interview questions that would draw out the lived experiences of teachers

related to paradigm, pedagogy, and hope; (3) development of the instrumentation including the formulation of the elements of critical hope as facilitators that influence teachers' paradigm and pedagogy, and its impact on student engagement; (4) actual interviewing of teachers; (5) collection and reading of the transcribed narratives from stories and interview responses of the participants; (6) description and analysis of the content of the teachers' stories and interview responses; and (7) reporting of findings and drawing out of conclusions emerging from the description and analysis.

Participants

Using purposive sampling, the selected participants are 10 classroom teachers with an average of 7.7 years of teaching experience across content areas of Science, History, Mathematics, English Language Development, and Special Education at a trauma-identified school site located in one of the highest crime neighborhoods in southern California. Purposive sampling ((Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016) was used to make sure that the participants are well informed about the purpose of the study and are experienced in teaching at a trauma-sensitive middle school. This trauma-sensitive school has employed teachers and staff who have undergone specific professional development related to adverse childhood experiences that may impact the behavior and academic performance of their students (Felter & Ayers, 2016). When the interviews of the 10 teachers were conducted from August 1, 2018 - June 7, 2019, there were over 3,500 crimes reported in a two- mile radius around the school. The teachers who were interviewed have been working in this trauma-sensitive school with low-income middle school students for several years and have awareness about the crime rate in the neighborhood and the impact it has on students.

Instrumentation and Interview Process

An Observation Matrix was created to record the evidence gathered only from the participants' storytelling and responses to oral interviews. The process of observation was conducted by listening, taking the actual notes, or transcribing all the field notes gathered, and recording them in the Observation Matrix. These gathered oral responses showed the manifestations of paradigm and pedagogy in teacher-participants' use of vocabulary expressions and written directions, written tasks and assignments, and lesson delivery. This tool can be seen in Appendix A. The set of Interview Questions can be seen in Appendix B.

Storytelling and Interview Responses

The participants were given the opportunity to tell their stories and were asked open-ended questions to explore and value their lived experiences (Seidman, 2006). The Seidman's three-tiered approach to interviews the participants was used, in intervals of 30-45 minutes, spaced three days apart (Seidman, 2006). All the interviews were done in-person. The first interview focused on the participant's background as a teacher. The second interview focused on the details and experiences as a teacher related to hope in a low-income school. The third interview focused on the reflection of the first two interviews and their interpretations and implications.

During all interviews, audiotaping of the participants was completed with the individualized consent and approval from participants to ensure accurate transcriptions of their voices and accuracy of the interview data that was collected and analyzed. If interviewees declined the audiotaping, their answers during the interviews were jotted down and read the answers back to the participants to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions. All interviewees

were assigned alphanumeric codes to ensure protection of the participants' identities during interviews and audiotaping. When discussing the findings and reporting data, only the alphanumeric codes were used.

Data Analysis

Data gathered from the interviews of 10 teachers included interview transcriptions and other related field notes from oral exchanges with the teacher-participants. The primary investigator and co-author of this research study transcribed the interviews and hand-coded the data from the interview documents and field notes from oral exchanges. The primary investigator transcribed the interviews, storytelling through open-ended questions, and organized the data. NVivo hand coding process was used and the themes that emerged were identified. The transcripts of the 10 interviews and story narrations were then uploaded into the NVivo software program for data analysis. After identifying the preliminary codes and the themes that emerged from the qualitative data, the co-author , did a peer-check of the codes, revisited that data gathered, and reviewed the themes that emerged from the conducted interviews and participants' storytelling to avoid bias and validated the accuracy of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The preliminary data analysis was, then, reviewed by the participants for its accuracy to complete the process.

Findings and Discussion

The primary investigator first transcribed each of the 30-45 minute interviews as the stories were being told and saved on a password-protected file with each of the teacher's alphanumeric code and marked as participant 1 Interview, Participant 2 Interview, Participant 3

Interview, and so on for each interview. Each transcribed interview was then given to each interviewed participant to check for credibility and to ensure that the transcriptions were accurate and reliable.

After the primary investigator transcribed the 10 interviews and organized the data by participant into password-protected files using alphanumeric codes, each interview transcript was read and the NVivo hand coding process was used while writing notes in the margin for unanswered questions or possible themes that may have emerged. The primary investigator then uploaded the 10 interviews into the NVivo software program and conducted a text and word query to determine the most common words and descriptions from all 10 interviews pertaining to the 10 interview questions that were asked. Evidently, Figure 2 shows the common words and descriptions that emerged in this initial coding process. During the interviews, the participants were asked to define hope, "What does hope mean to you?" The researcher then took all 10 participants' answers and put them into NVivo software to create a word wall of the Participants' definitions of hope.

The first overarching category of pertains to the notion of hope as it relates to teachers' language and behavior, instructional delivery, and lesson planning of hope. The second overarching category that emerged pertains to hopelessness as depicted in the teachers' language and behavior, instructional delivery, and lesson planning of hopelessness.

After reviewing the teachers' voices as reflected in this word wall, the word "something" appeared as the most frequently used word, implying that hope is very personal and is connected to a belief in something. Thus, critical hope reflects the voices of the teachers and

included a personal belief in the definition. Consequently, critical hope is defined as the optimistic way of viewing and acting on the world from a critically, historically conscious, socially and culturally situated perspective with a personal belief that inevitable change will inspire a sense of community, advocacy, liberation, and justice.

Figure 2

Words Related to Hope as Reflected by Teachers' Voices During the Interview

Themes and Categories The themes identified using hand coding by the primary investigator and confirmed by the co-author of this research study led to the discovery of the manifestations of both positions of hope and hopelessness in teachers' paradigm and pedagogy. Table 1 summarizes the indicators, textual evidence, themes of critical hope, and elements or attributes of critical hope shared by the 10 teachers as they relate to the manifestations of critical hope in teachers' paradigm and pedagogy.

Table 1

Manifestations of Hope in Teachers' Paradigm and Pedagogy

Manifestations of Hope in Teachers' Paradigm and Pedagogy

Indicators	Evidence	Themes of Critical Hope	Elements of Critical Hope
Paradigm of Hope	Asset based	Valuing Optimism	Optimism
	Faith	Valuing Optimism	Optimism
	Growth mindset	Valuing Optimism	Agency
	Positive Mindset/Optimism/Possibilitites	Valuing Optimism	Optimism
Language and Behavior of Hope	Building Relationships/ Trust/Authentic/Buy In/Acceptance/Stability	Confronting Hopelessness	Humanizing Practices
	Teacher Roles: Councelor, Disciplinarian, Mentor, Role Model	Confronting Hopelessness	Humanizing Practices
	Visable -Teacher involvement/Investment	Confronting Hopelessness	Social And Historical Consciousness
	Modeling Behavior/Demonstartion/Models of Excellence from the Community	Confronting Hopelessness	Social And Historical Consciousness
	Citizenry/Respect	Critical Reflection, Advocacy, Citizenry, and Empowerment	Critical Citizenry
	Community Involvement/Community Service	Critical Reflection, Advocacy, Citizenry, and Empowerment	Critical Citizenry
	Grit/Perseverance	Goal Oriented, Willingness to Act, and Persevere	Agency
	Goals/Purpose/Visualize	Goal Oriented, Willingness to Act, and Persevere	Goal Directed Thinking
	Self-Realization/Identity Development/Recognition	Humanizing Self-Identity and Sense of Community	Humanizing Practices
	Safe-Comfortable Environment/Lower Effective Filter/Conditions for Learning	Humanizing Self-Identity and Sense of Community	Sense of Community
	Parent Involvement/High Expectations at Home	Humanizing Self-Identity and Sense of Community	Social & Cultural Capital
	Fun/ humor	Humanizing Self-Identity and Sense of Community	Social & Cultural Capital
	Inspiration/Motivation/Engagement	Inspiring Motivation and Engagement	Engagement
	Accountability/Work Ethic/Professional Accountability	Personal Commitment to Ethical Responsibility	Ethics
	Relentless/Pushing/Consistently Reinforcing/Challenge/Whatever it Takes	Personal Commitment to Ethical Responsibility	Ethics
	Positive Adult Attitude/New Start Each Day	Valuing Optimism	Optimism
	Driven: What drives you? What is your why for teaching?	Personal Commitment to Ethical Responsibility	Ethics
Instructional Delivery of Hope	Hopeful Climate/SEL/PBIS	Valuing Optimism	Sense of Community
	Focused on Learning/Student Centered/Teacher as a Facilitator	Building Trust, High Expectations, and Caring Relationships	Caring Relationships
	Culture of Goal Setting/Cycle of Goals/Futuristic Thinking/College Going Culture	Goal Oriented, Willingness to Act, and Persevere	Goal Directed Thinking
	Believe/True believer/Competency	Inspiring Motivation and Engagement	Engagement
	Culturally Relevant	Confronting Hopelessness	Social And Historical Consciousness
	Criticality/Evidence Based/Analytical Thinking/Problem Posing	Critical Reflection, Advocacy, Citizenry, and Empowerment	Criticality
	Independent Learners/Students have body of knowledge	Critical Reflection, Advocacy, Citizenry, and Empowerment	Criticality
	Possitive feedback	Critical Reflection, Advocacy, Citizenry, and Empowerment	Criticality
	Autonomy/Student Choice	Inspiring Motivation and Engagement	Engagement
	Meaningfulness/Connection to Future Aspirations/Student Interest/Relevancy	Inspiring Motivation and Engagement	Engagement
Instructional Planning of Hope	Survey Student Needs	Building Trust, High Expectations, and Caring Relationships	Caring Relationships
	Discovery/Research Projects/Experiential Learning/Creativity	Critical Reflection, Advocacy, Citizenry, and Empowerment	Criticality
	Conferences/Field Trips for Empowerment	Critical Reflection, Advocacy, Citizenry, and Empowerment	Social And Historical Consciousness
	Reachable Assignments/Managable/Obtainable	Goal Oriented, Willingness to Act, and Persevere	Goal Directed Thinking
	Exposure to College/Tools for College	Goal Oriented, Willingness to Act, and Persevere	Navigating Pathways
	Job skills Learn how to fill out an application/resume/letter of rec	Goal Oriented, Willingness to Act, and Persevere	Navigating Pathways
	Meditation	Humanizing Self-Identity and Sense of Community	Humanizing Practices
	Collaboration /Discourse	Humanizing Self-Identity and Sense of Community	Humanizing Practices
	High Expectations/No-Opt-Out	Building Trust, High Expectations, and Caring Relationships	Caring Relationships
	Structure/Consistency/Routine/Organized	Building Trust, High Expectations, and Caring Relationships	Caring Relationships
	Developing Social and Historical Consciousness	Confronting Hopelessness	Social And Historical Consciousness
	Individualized/Different Modalities/Adjustments/Adaptations	Humanizing Self-Identity and Sense of Community	Humanizing Practices
	Real Topics/Real Life Connections	Inspiring Motivation and Engagement	Humanizing Practices
	Sense of Community/Common Goals/Support System	Humanizing Self-Identity and Sense of Community	Sense of Community
	Intentionality	Personal Commitment to Ethical Responsibility	Agency
	Exposuure to Real World/Relevancy	Inspiring Motivation and Engagement	Social & Cultural Capital

The interviews of all 10 Participants demonstrated the themes as manifestations of Critical Hope in teachers' paradigm and pedagogy. Through teachers' storytelling and oral responses to interview questions, the data collected either exhibited "evident" or "not evident" of critical hope in teachers' behavior and use of language in the classroom, instructional

delivery, and instructional planning. Overall, the themes that emerged from the analysis of the data gathered are the following:

1. **Building Trust and Caring Relationships:** It is important to note that all 10 Participants discussed building trust and caring relationships as the foundation for teaching. Without trust and an established relationship with the students, the teachers noted that no learning would occur. In addition, they all emphasized the role of setting high expectations with care for student success.

2. **Setting High Expectation and Willingness to Act:** This was discussed as an important aspect pertaining to hope. Teachers understood that hope was more than just belief in something, but that hope is connected to action and cycles of goal pursuits, the importance of setting a goal, and completing a goal. In addition, the teachers understood that failure is a part of the goal cycle and they addressed the need for students to look at failure as one more step closer to success.

3. **Advocating and Empowering Students:** This was demonstrated by the teachers who truly understood the social, cultural, economic, political, and historical life barriers the students face on a daily basis. However, there were textual evidence of responses in this study that not all teacher-participants were explicit in advocating for their students. Consciousness of the life barriers caused awareness for the need to engage students in critical reflection, advocacy, citizenry, and empowerment as a way to overcome the hopelessness that these life barriers can cause in students.

4. **Valuing Optimism:** The findings showed the emphasized importance the teachers demonstrated in connection to having an asset based, positive mindset, and hopeful outlook to combat the daily obstacles students in poverty face such as crime, trauma, depression, and hopelessness that is caused by these factors. The teachers felt like they had to be the hope and the positivity the students would need in order to be successful and to increase the hope and belief the students had for their own quest for success.

5. **Confronting Hopelessness:** All 10 participants noted the importance of sharing their own personal narratives in a way that is relevant and applicable to their students' lives. They expressed the importance of recognizing the models of excellence, which exist right in their own communities and that their stories needed to be told to raise the level of hope in students, so they can believe that success is possible. As Participant 4 stated, "Where you live doesn't define where you are going." In this way, using real-life examples are important ways to confront hopelessness in students of poverty.

6. **Personal Commitment to Ethical Responsibility and Accountability:** This essential theme emerged as teachers mentioned the need for teachers to take on the personal and ethical responsibility for students' success. If the students were not successful, then the accountability was placed upon the teachers. This is connected to hope because it demonstrates their belief in their students' abilities to succeed and the accountability placed on the educator to ensure students believe they can be successful and that they demonstrate that success

in their classrooms daily.

7. **Humanizing Self Identity and Sense of Community:** This vital theme emerged as teachers mentioned the importance of dialogue, valuing the students' experiences, and student voice. This theme was connected to sense of community, as it is a natural result of humanizing practices where teachers emphasized the need for community and sense of belonging in order for the dialogue to occur, which also connects to hope as in the ontological need for one's quest towards success through communal and humanizing practices (Freire, 1997).

8. **Consciousness of Economic, Social, Cultural, and Historical Life Barriers:** This is an imperative theme because teachers recognize what social, cultural and economic barriers students face in their daily lives, what systemic oppressions are currently in place, and what historic oppressions are relevant to the lives of their students. This theme is what makes Critical Hope really critical as the awareness of the social, cultural, economic, political, and historical factors influence one's level of hope and it is the process of reflection and acting in ways that bring transformation of the world.

9. **Inspiring Motivation and Engagement:** This was a natural theme from the outpouring of hope and optimism teachers inhabited. Their belief in their students' success and their relentless expectations for students to see their capabilities and to believe in their future inspired a meaningful language and behavior, assignments, and lesson plans that provided multiple domains of

engagement during instruction. All teachers noted the connection to hope and

engagement by stating without hope, students would not be engaged as there

would be no purpose to participate or to complete the task at hand.

Table 2 shows the themes that emerged and the examples of statements from the

authentic voices of the participating teachers.

Table 2

Themes of Hope and Textual Evidence

Themes of Hope that Emerged	Textual Evidence
Building Trust and Caring Relationships	"I think it goes back to the building of the relationship, they build trust in me and they can feel that I am being authentic. Our students are very good at sensing when people are not authentic." "My family was my support system and I want to be their support system. I tell them even when you go to high school, come back and I will be here for you."
Setting High Expectation and Willingness to Act	"When they experience success outside my four walls that is when their desire for success grows tenfold." "I am a true believer in setting the expectations high and pushing my students to be there best and helping along the way."
Advocating for and Empowering Students	"I am an advocate for exposing my students to a culture that is not what they are used to being exposed to." "Then we spend a lot of time in the classroom figuring out how to get there. We look at college life and analyze the student body. The history of the school and what major is there."

	"I teach my students to not be afraid to use your voice when we have discussions. It's ok to have an opinion, but make sure with that opinion you have facts."
Valuing Optimism	"I try to approach them as already being successful because it's hard to think of ourselves that way." "I try to push them to be the best they can be. I tell them, I know you can do this, you just got to focus. I know they can do this."
Confronting Hopelessness	"Always talking to them and telling them that you are capable and you are able just as much as anyone else. I think those things are helpful." "I like to share my own experiences because I was a low-income student and I am from this community and I tell them that I have been where you are and if I can do it, you can do it to."
Personal Commitment to Ethical Responsibility and Accountability	"A lot of times they have to see that I am interested. The more I was engaged the more the kids bought in." "I think it goes with modeling behavior, so if I want them to be respectful to me, then I need to be respectful to them. If I want them to be involved in the community, then I need to be involved in the community.
Humanizing Self Identity and Sense of Community	"That is what triggers the students, They realize real quick. This again is without me. They do their own research. They discover." "One of the conversations I have with the 8th graders before they leave me has to do with their future. I tell them, ``When you leave that University, I want a pairing flag from your University because your success is my success."
Consciousness of Economic, Social, Cultural, and Historical Life Barriers	"As educators, I think we need to be aware of those factors. There are a lot of barriers they have to overcome in our community being

	low socio-economic and a lot of them come with issues that you would not expect of middle-schoolers." "A lot of them have tough lives at home and they share that with me.
Inspiring Motivation and Engagement	"We are dealing with real life." "I think hope is the biggest factor when it comes to engagement." "Acknowledging them and making them feel valued in the classroom and even out of the classroom like going to their games."

While you can gather the statements of hope from the participating teachers as presented in Table 1, the opposite expressions of hopelessness were also captured as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

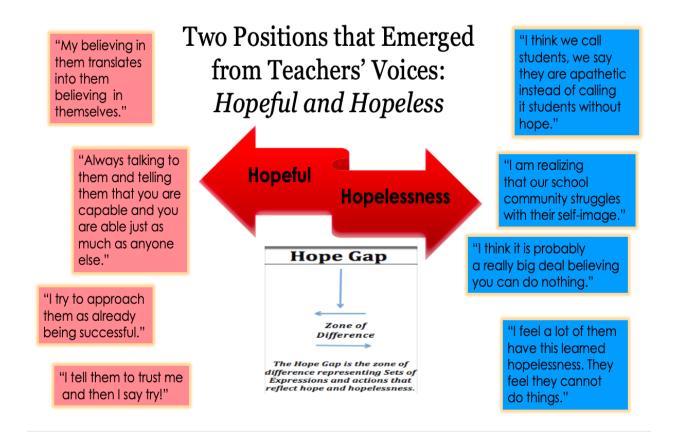*Themes of Hopelessness and Textual Evidence*

Themes of Hopelessness that Emerged	**Textual Evidence**
Mistrust, Low Expectations, and Deficiency in Social skills	"One of the worst things I see on campus is the lack of high expectations by all teachers." "One factor is that teachers look at statistics such as an assessment taken at the end of the year and base their expectations off of that one test that gives you a snapshot based off of one modality." "When my expectations are high and other teacher's expectations are low, they start to doubt their abilities."
No Willingness to Act and Raise Expectation	"I feel often that when kids feel they were abused, molested, or when they were given up for adoption, they can use that as an excuse, that they don't have to try anymore." This demonstrates that the students themselves have depleted willpower, as they

	often do not try inside the classroom."
Lack Advocacy for Students to Empower Them	"We get caught up in the mindset of making too many accommodations and by the end of the lesson, as the teacher you are doing a majority of the work for them. "They become copiers, not thinkers."
Learned Pessimism	"I feel a lot of them have learned hopelessness. They feel they cannot do things." "The hopeful students are working and completing tasks. The others, you are constantly working with a mindset that, I would rather have students make a distraction just to have some time lost. I have not shared this analogy with my students,but I was thinking that just like when your muscles stretch, sometimes our heads hurt when we are stretching, like that uncomfortable feeling you get when it just really is difficult."
Ignoring and Reinforcing Hopelessness	"I think we call students; we say they are apathetic instead of calling it student's without hope." "I think every teacher on campus understands that the students are special because of their circumstances, but I do not think they know how to deal with those circumstances. Instead of acknowledging that, they talk past it, they don't speak to it."
Personal Deflection and Lacks Ethical Accountability	"Adults can feel that they have no bearing, they take no responsibility when they (students) are not doing well, and they take responsibility when they (students) are doing well." "I have to think of that in terms of History. I'm not sure directly, you know it's not a career class."
Dehumanizing, Low Self-Esteem and Disconnected	"If they feel they are the ones that are bad, instead of their behavior that is a poor

	choice, then that will hinder their aspirations." "I read about something called stereotype threat, which is not other people stereotyping, but it's themselves, how they see themselves that is limiting them from reaching their potential." "We label them as behavioral students instead of as a student who is making a poor choice."
Unconsciousness of Economic, Social, Cultural, and Historical Life Barriers	"It has a lot to do with the teachers and what they believe their students can do. Like I said, I came from nothing, so it's possible but I don't think all teachers understand this." "Here they are living that same generational curse. Their parents did not make it out, and yet they are ones expected to break the cycle."
Apathetic, Unmotivated and Disengagement	"I think that if you do not have any hope you will not be engaged in school because you will not feel any value in what you are doing." "You can't really read it from a book and when they do it's general, it's not my life."

In summary, according to the current study, teachers' paradigm and pedagogy reflect what we call "hope gap," the zone of difference representing sets of expressions and actions that reflect hope and hopelessness. Figure 1 shows our attempt to illustrate the evident hope gap.

Figure 3

Hope Gap of Hopeful and Hopelessness That Emerged from Teachers' Responses

Two Positions that Emerged from Teachers' Voices: *Hopeful and Hopeless*

Hopeful **Hopelessness**

"My believing in them translates into them believing in themselves."

"Always talking to them and telling them that you are capable and you are able just as much as anyone else."

"I try to approach them as already being successful."

"I tell them to trust me and then I say try!"

Hope Gap

Zone of Difference

The Hope Gap is the zone of difference representing Sets of Expressions and actions that reflect hope and hopelessness.

"I think we call students, we say they are apathetic instead of calling it students without hope."

"I am realizing that our school community struggles with their self-image."

"I think it is probably a really big deal believing you can do nothing."

"I feel a lot of them have this learned hopelessness. They feel they cannot do things."

Recommendations

Three recommendations for educators are put forth in order to make hope visible in the lives of students in low-income schools. The first recommendation is for a professional development for all district educators to understand and practice what hope is and what hope is not, and the importance of embedding hope in teachers' paradigm and pedagogy to facilitate student success. The second recommendation involves a deeper practical application of infusing asset-based or hopeful paradigm, in contrast with a deficit-based or hopeless paradigm, by educators in the use of language and demonstration of behavior, assigning tasks, and lesson planning. Lastly, the third recommendation is for a district-wide professional

development on embracing humanizing practices that aim to value and develop student identity by confronting hopelessness through dialogue, reflection, and praxis which ultimately may create a sense of community in the classroom.

Conclusion

Paradigm and Pedagogy are Inseparable

After examining the manifestations of critical hope in teachers' paradigm and pedagogy, we discovered that the paradigm of hope (asset based) drives the language and behavior of hope, the instructional delivery of hope, and the lesson planning of hope, and those with a paradigm of hopelessness (deficit based) drives the language and behavior of hopelessness, instructional delivery of hopelessness, and lesson planning of hopelessness. This discovery enforces the understanding that educators are driven to teach the way they think and believe, as those who have a hopeful paradigm will result in hopeful teaching practices and those who have a hopeless paradigm will result in hopeless teaching practices. Research has shown that human behaviors are driven by their ideology and influenced by their perceptions of the world (Johnson, 2007). The current study supports this view of the inseparability of paradigm and pedagogy even in the teachers' expression and demonstration of critical of hope when they work with all students especially with the students who are historically marginalized.

There is no Equity Without Hope

It has been shown in research that there are many out-of-school factors that may have an impact on student levels of hope, which can impact their student achievement (Berliner, 2006). Systemic oppression is a result of inequitable paradigms that drive policies and institutionalized practices within society, which ultimately is internalized by educators and the

students who constantly face these inequities. Internalized oppression can lead to waves of horizontal violence and an acceptance of their place in this world (Freire, 1970), preventing students from believing that they can break out of the poverty cycle. Educators must be aware that their practice can reinforce the cycle of oppressive common practices, which creates hopeless paradigm-pedagogy, if not carefully attended to.

Evidently, this study reinforced that hope is very personal and it is connected to a belief in something that is valuable to the individual. What makes critical hope really critical is the awareness of the social, cultural, economic, political, and historical factors that influence one's level of hope and the process of reflection and acting in ways that bring transformation upon the world and more importantly, how without a high level of hope one cannot begin to engage in the struggle (Freire, 1994). In essence, hope is a "galvanizer of action and can lead students to interpret pathways to solving problems, seek more challenging goals, and negotiate their agency" (Massey, Vaughn, & Herbert, 2021, p.1). Educators of all students and especially those living in poverty need to confront hopelessness through the cultivation and fostering of hopeful possibilities and equitable humanizing practices (Strikwerda, 2021). "One of the tasks of the progressive educator, through a serious, correct political analysis, is to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what obstacles may be" (Freire, 1994, p. 3).

This study has added to the knowledge of critical hope by making it tangible and visible through evidence that emerged from the voices of teachers, implying very convincingly that it can be pragmatically taught and applied inside the classrooms. As hope is not simply an individual cognitive pursuit, but rather, "it is both something that individuals have some control to create AND something that is nurtured within community" (Massey, Vaughn, & Herbert,

2021, p. 1).

Hope anchors and drives the application of equity as an educational practice. Without critical hope or optimism that positive change is inevitable to inspire a sense of community, advocacy, liberation, and justice, "shattering inequities" is just wishful thinking. Hope is the galvanizer, the willpower for teachers to have social and cultural consciousness, to be aware of the influence of race and language in their interactions with students, to recognize and know who their students are in order to distribute or redistribute resources and attention, to be respectful of their backgrounds, and to motivate and engage them by providing ample opportunities for them to experience a sense of belonging, competence, autonomy, and relevant and appropriate academic and career experiences (Lalas & Strikwerda, 2021).

Let us not be people who collapse under the weight and weariness found in the obstacles ahead, but rather, let us be those educators who are equity-centered, removing barriers, raising hope, and moving beyond resistance towards transformation. As Dr. Martin Luther King states, "Out of a mountain of despair, a stone of hope" (Yorder, 2018, p. 14).

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Appendix A: Observation Matrix

Manifestations of Critical Hope Reflected in Teachers' Paradigm and Pedagogy Observation Matrix
(For observing elements of critical hope manifested in teachers' language and behavior of hope, teachers' instructional delivery of hope, and teachers' lesson planning of hope)

I.   The Teacher
Time Observed: _____   Observer: _____Date: _____

Manifestations of Critical Hope Elements in Teachers' Paradigm & Pedagogy	Manifestations of Critical Hope in:	General Indicators	Examples	Observed Evidence
✓ **Goal Directed Thinking** ✓ **Navigating Pathways** ✓ **Willpower or Agency** (Edwards, Rand, Lopez, & Snyder, 2007)	**Teachers use of vocabulary expression and written direction**	• Language and behavior that connect, connote, imply valuing and trusting optimistic aspirations	○ Positive reinforcements ○ Positive directives ○ Praises ○ Encouraging statements ○ Competence	
✓ **Optimism** (Freire, 1997) ✓ **Ethics** (Freire, 1997) ✓ **Criticality** (Freire, 1974, Giroux, 2011) ✓ **Social and Historical Consciousness** (Freire, 1974, 1997) ✓ **Humanizing Practices** (Freire, 1970, 1974,1994,1997)	**Teachers prepared written tasks and assignments**	• Teacher delivery in prompting critical thinking and aspirations to be caring socially conscious and ethical.	○ Higher levels of questioning ○ Making value judgments that show caring and ethical disposition based upon the criteria	
✓ **Sense of Community** (bellhooks, 2003, Freire, 1997) ✓ **Caring Relationships** (Knoddings, 2017, Freire 1997) ✓ **Knowledge of Social & Cultural Capital** (Bourdieu, 1986) ✓ **Critical Citizenry** (Giroux, 2011, Freire, 1997) ✓ **Democratic Advocacy** (Giroux, 2011)	**Teachers composed lesson plans**	• Teacher planning that may elicit a sense of community and humanizing practices.	○ Lesson plans that requires collaboration and creativity in manifesting voice and advocacy that reflect sense of community and humanizing practices	
	Other observations:			

Adapted from: Ongtengco, H., Villanueva, A., Domino, R., Munar, B., Caparoso, V., Lubrio, S., Silverio, R., and Lalas, J. (2017)
(Strikwerda, 2019)

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Teacher	Questions	Comments
	Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study on hope and the influence on student engagement for low-income middle school students. This interview will last approximately 20 to 30 minutes. I will be audio recording the interview to make sure I have all the information you give me. I will be asking you to review the transcript of the interview for accuracy. (PI's introduction to questions) START WITH an OPEN-ENDED QUESTION: JUST LIKE TELLING A STORY: 1. We already know through existing research that there is an achievement gap between low-income students and affluent students. Tellme, how do you make your low-income students aspire to be successful? **Follow-up questions to teacher's storytelling:** 2. In your experience,are you aware of factors that compliment students' desire to be successful? 3. Are you aware of any factors that would hinder these aspirations? 4. Why do you think on campus there is that disparity between high expectations and low expectations? 5. What learning opportunities do you provide your	

| | students that would strengthen their desire to be successful in the fields they are interested in?

6. What issues or topics of conversation will be helpful for low-income students to see themselves as an active member of society?

Second Interview Questions:
Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study on hope and the influence on student engagement for low-income middle school students. This interview will last approximately 20 to 30 minutes. I will be audio recording the interview to make sure I have all the information you give me. I will be asking you to review the transcript of the interview for accuracy.

7. How would you define hope?

8. Based on your definition, how do you facilitate hope in your students?

9. To what extent do you think being hopeful or having aspiration facilitates engagement in your classroom?

10. How importantly do you view community involvement and relationships as a factor for your students to achieve their goals? | |