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Troubling the Null Curriculum through a Multiple-Perspectives Pedagogy: A Critical Dialogue Between Two Equity-Minded Teacher Educators

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**Troubling the Null Curriculum through a Multiple-Perspectives Pedagogy: Critical
Perspectives from Two Equity-Minded Teacher Educators**

Foreword

It would be an understatement to say that *much has changed* in the post-2020 era since we originally interviewed each other in 2016 and wrote this article when we were employed as teacher educators at a White-dominated university in the Upper Midwest. One of us resigned from the university in 2017, and the other retired in 2018. That is, neither of us taught during the COVID-19 era, which also came with the rise of Black Lives Matter (#BLM) after Minneapolis police officers killed George Floyd in summer, 2020, as well as the increasing public awareness of other forms of racialized violence. Since 2020, current events are rapidly changing in the U.S., even within weeks, especially incidents that threaten democracy and public education. Nevertheless, our former insights about troubling the null curriculum through a multiple-perspectives pedagogy have relevance in the post-2020 context in the world of teacher education. As Martell and Stevens (2020) write: “Education must provide the tools necessary for students to engage in civic problem-solving and revising society for the better” (p. 6). In this article, we explore the utility of specific classroom activities and discussions that “encourage them [aspiring and current teachers] to question themselves, their assumptions, and their experiences” (Vasquez, 2018, p. 16), which involves reflecting not just on what they learned in school as children and young adults, but also on what they did not learn about and why, as well as on unraveling intergenerational approaches to education as they prepare to teach the next generation.

Overview

This article explores the challenges and realities that two teacher educators who identify as equity-minded teachers confronted when they incorporated a multiple-perspectives pedagogy into their courses in a teacher-credential program occupied primarily by White pre-service teachers. Profiting from the insights of scholars who critically analyze the politics of knowledge production (e.g., Apple, 1995; Busey, 2019; Loewen, 1993; Pasque et al., 2022; Vasquez, 2018; Zinn, 2007), the conceptual framework charts a new course for theorizing the various ideological challenges that arise when attempting to model a multiple-perspectives pedagogy to critique various aspects of the null curriculum in PK-12 and teacher education as it relates to multicultural perspectives. Drawing on the definitions set forth by Sadker, Sadker, and Zittleman (2007), we define the official curriculum as the actual content that is formally taught in educational settings; the hidden curriculum as the unwritten expectations that are assumed by school personnel to be universally understood, such as attendance, behavioral, and in-class participation expectations; and the null curriculum as what is not explicitly or implicitly taught. Significantly, the null curriculum exists because of intentional or unintentional decisions made by organizations such as political groups, school boards, or textbook publishers, as well as by individual parents, school leaders, and teachers, about how certain types of knowledge should be excluded or included in public spaces.

For this article, we interviewed each other in 2016 to discuss what inspired us to embrace a multiple-perspectives pedagogy and reflect on the various challenges and opportunities as we have piloted different strategies in our respective classrooms. We discuss how incorporating a multiple-perspectives pedagogy troubles the persistence of

the null curriculum in teacher education with reflections on teacher educators' ethical and social responsibility in introducing their teacher candidates to discover or uncover hidden, impartial, and missing narratives as represented in curricular materials and instructional decisions.

Countering the Null Curriculum through a Multiple-Perspectives Pedagogy

The demographics of U.S. schools and society have undergone rapid transformation over the past several decades. As of 2020, nearly one-half of all PK-12 students in U.S. schools are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, and by 2029, the projections are estimated to increase by over five percent (Racial/Ethnic Enrollment in Public Schools, 2020). Despite the above trends, approximately 80% of all teachers are White (Huebeck, 2020), and the majority of teacher educators who train teachers at the university level are also White (Milner, 2010). In a more diverse 21st-century America, scholars have called for various reforms in PK-12 and teacher education, ranging from diversifying the teacher workforce to transforming the curriculum to ensure that all students have an awareness of and respect for diverse contributions, experiences, and perspectives throughout their formal education (Banks & Banks, 2004).

However, several ideological mismatches exist when analyzing the democratic ideals that are publicly promoted in most educational institutions against what is actually taught in classrooms at all levels, ranging from PK-12 schools to teacher-credential programs at the university level. For example, scholars such as Loewen (1997) and Vasquez (2018) contend that while American history is full of compelling and significant stories from multiple perspectives, such narratives are largely absent from common-knowledge sources such as curriculum guides and textbooks. The absence of multiple

perspectives could be attributed to various factors, ranging from pressures for the textbook industry to create marketable products (e.g., short chapters with charts, images, and pictures to break up large amounts of content) to societal pressures to present a romanticized and uncontested view of American culture and identity to socialize young children to embrace nationalistic and patriotic ideals (Apple, 1995). Moreover, scholars such as Busey (2019) and Ward (2006) note that PK-12 students in the U.S. are generally not exposed to different perspectives because the majority of their teachers have not received sufficient training on how to integrate diverse perspectives into their classrooms. Thus, when considering the cumulative impact of the null curriculum, it is cyclical, invisible, and perpetuates itself across multiple institutional contexts and settings, ranging from PK-12 schools to university classrooms.

Another cause of the null curriculum directly pertains to who is in charge of training aspiring teachers. Specifically, Cross (2005) and Vasquez (2018) contend that U.S. teacher-preparation programs tend to privilege Eurocentric perspectives because most teacher educators are White Americans who have benefited from a culturally affirming curriculum for most of their lives in which people who are White are elevated and well-represented across the content areas, which in turn, impacts how a predominantly White pre-service teaching force envisions how and what is essential to teach in their future classrooms. Consequently, the knowledge base that is valued in most schools does not usually include the experiences, histories, and perspectives of ethnically and racially diverse Americans (Banks & Banks, 2004). Ultimately, how knowledge is transmitted in PK-12 schools is also directly tied to the enterprise of teacher education, including how the curriculum at the teacher-preparation level is structured to who is

represented among the faculty. Since faculty members are usually in charge of designing the curriculum at the university level, the question of the null curriculum is even more high-stakes in teacher-preparation programs that are occupied by a majority-White administration and faculty (Milner, 2010).

One approach for fostering awareness of the politics of knowledge is to situate the relationship between official versus null curricula, with an emphasis on the latter. When considering the impact of the null curriculum, Jones and McCormick (2022), Ward (2006), and Zinn (2007), among others, note that the perpetual omission of non-dominant perspectives from textbooks sends a powerful message to students, including those from dominant groups. More specifically, any content that is omitted sends an unspoken message to students that certain information and viewpoints are more valuable than others. Critically analyzing what is taught as part of the formal or informal curriculum also reveals gaps in terms of how knowledge is produced. For example, Lutz and Collins (1993) provide a strong critique of how the seemingly high-quality educational materials produced by the *National Geographic* empire have created: “a limited universe of ideas about cultural difference and how it can or should be interpreted” (pp. xii-xiii). More specifically, they critique how knowledge about the *Third World*¹ and its people are circulated and produced through culturally biased textual descriptions and visual depictions. Such representations are usually unchallenged or uncontested because these

¹ As Lutz and Collins (1993) note, the term *Third World*, which often is used to refer to nation-states and regions in parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America in a post-colonial context, is outdated and problematic, as it situates certain racialized bodies, people, and places, as inferior to an imaginary *First World*. Thus, we italicize the term in quotations to designate its problematic usage, but to also recognize that it is still commonly used when to describe certain people around the world who were often racialized bodies residing in what were viewed as sociopolitically volatile regions in the world.

images have become such a normalized part of the West's construction of what some have called the *Third World* and its people.

Central to how we visualize a multiple-perspectives pedagogy is through an inclusive curricular approach that seeks to make the invisible visible, or more specifically, to trouble the null curriculum. As Style (1996) notes, all students ideally should be provided with a balanced curriculum that affirms their experiences while providing regular opportunities to learn about others. However, various challenges remain when trying to implement a multiple-perspectives pedagogy, including the reality that the politics of the curriculum in American schools and teacher-preparation programs continue to devalue, distort, or omit the contributions of ethnically and racially diverse people (Ladson-Billings, 2003; McCarthy, 1990). At best, individual schools only occasionally celebrate diversity days or ethnic-heritage months throughout the school year, while teachers who embrace a multiple-perspectives pedagogy have limited opportunities to do so through additive-level means, such as periodically including, for example, a couple of poems by authors who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in a larger unit on American poetry (Banks, 1997). Another ongoing challenge is creating transformative learning opportunities within the constraints of standards-based classrooms (Sleeter, 2005). Nevertheless, Banks and Banks (2004) remind us that while all educational institutions are complex social systems that are slow to change, individual teachers have the agency and responsibility to integrate multicultural perspectives into their classrooms.

Parker (2005) argues that young learners should be exposed to multiple perspectives by first or second grade to help them understand that human beings disagree

and may view the world differently. Through a multiple-perspectives pedagogy, learners of all ages begin to understand the work of historians as they attempt to make sense of diverse source materials as well as opposing viewpoints on various ideas, social issues, and topics. Hutton and Burstein (2005), in agreement with Parker (2005), state that by incorporating multiple perspectives into their classrooms, teachers provide worthwhile opportunities for their students to apply critical-thinking skills to learn the process of documenting and sharing a wide range of human stories, as well as improve their skills in critical literacy as they evaluate and select diverse source materials.

Situating the Context of Our Work

In 2016, we were employed as teacher educators at a midsize liberal-arts college in Minnesota. We taught in a school of education that had a seemingly progressive mission focused on constructivism, co/creating a community of learners/teachers, critical reflection, and promoting equity and social justice in schools and society. We identify as teachers whose teaching philosophies are aligned with the tenets of social reconstructivism, meaning that we believe the fundamental purpose of education is to teach students how to apply and share their knowledge to discuss solutions to real-life social problems (Sadker, Sadker, & Zittleman, 2007), which aligns with a multiple-perspectives pedagogy. Finally, who we are matters: Author 2 is a White American woman and Author 1 is an Asian American woman. Before our career as teacher educators, we taught young children at different levels. We have known each other for a decade and regularly shared curricular materials and instructional ideas.

The interviews took place between January 2016 and June 2016. We collaboratively developed a set of open-ended questions that would be useful for any

educator who is seeking practical ways to implement a multiple-perspectives pedagogy in the classroom. We reflected on the various ways by which the null curriculum has manifested in both the realms of PK-12 and teacher education. We also offer examples of activities, assignments, and discussion questions that align with the key tenets of a multiple-perspectives pedagogy.

Limitations

We recognize there are some limitations to our analyses and approaches. For one, we considered piloting a dialogue-based format where we would go back and forth in a dialogic form, like Lensmire and Lozenski (2022), where they wrote letters and responded to each other. We ultimately decided there would be value in having each of us share our experiences in a larger block of text to enable readers to gather more in-depth information about a specific pedagogical incident or problem of practice. Moreover, we recognize the limits of our narrative experiences and reflections, especially one that focuses on a fixed point in time several years ago in just one institutional context. Thus, our narrative reflections may read by some readers as a more static form of dialogue.

Further, this article may, at least on the surface, appear to subscribe to dominant formats and frameworks, in that Author 2's narrative is placed first. However, the reasoning for this format and structure was intentional. Author 1 was Author 2's direct supervisor when she served as a department chair at our former institution, where Author 2 was a tenure-track assistant professor. Author 1, who identifies as a Woman of Color feminist, asked Author 2 for her narrative to get placed first, trying to flatten some of the power dynamics that are often inherent in collegial relationships that involve formal titles and supervisory roles. Author 1 also taught on a reduced course load, and in some years

as a department chair, she did not teach at all due to the demands of the position that also involved coordinating or directing several academic programs. Thus, the ordering of the narratives was intentional. Specifically, Author 1 wanted to acknowledge the significant pedagogical expertise that tenure-track scholars in teacher education, like Author 2, bring to the field.

Finally, we recognize the limits that this article primarily focuses on our experiences teaching White teacher candidates. Similar to the demographics of the PK-12 teacher workforce and university education programs (Huebeck, 2020), White-identified individuals comprised just around 70% of enrolled students in our department at the time of our collaboration. That is, our lived reality was primarily teaching White teacher candidates. However, we acknowledge the limits of centering Whiteness in our critical reflections, and also, we wish to acknowledge how BIPOC teacher candidates, like Author 2, may uniquely experience the formal, hidden, and null curricula, both in their PK-12 and university years. As Rios and Longoria (2021) further remind us, universities with teacher-credentialing programs have a unique responsibility to recruit, retain, and support BIPOC teacher candidates; however, our primary focus was on the students who were enrolled in our programs. Therefore, we ask readers to consider that our foci are admittedly limited to our own micro-context, with a focus on pedagogy versus policy.

Interview 1 with a White Woman Teacher Educator

Question 1: What inspired you to embrace a multiple-perspectives pedagogy?

The time came in the late 1990s when I was getting my master's degree in education at Hamline University. I was also teaching in a 5-6 multiage elementary classroom. I started researching ideas on building community and teaching about multiple

perspectives. As I reflect back to that time in my career, a curiosity in teaching about multiple perspectives was really another way of teaching for what we know today as *social justice*. I wanted to build community between these two grade levels, especially on topics such as cultural diversity and racial identity.

During my educational journey, I kept *bumping into stories* through critical reflection that kept bubbling up. For example, I kept thinking back to when I was growing up in terms of what I learned or did not learn. For example, many children in the U.S. still learn in elementary school that Christopher Columbus was one of the best heroes of our times or are subjected to a sanitized version of the First Thanksgiving. In the 1990s and prior, these stories did not seem connected. However, almost by accident, I kept searching for these connections, and eventually developed a theoretical understanding of what it means to teach about multiple perspectives in any classroom to promote democratic ideals.

I also thought carefully about what was taught to me (or what was not taught) as an undergraduate at Gustavus Adolphus College. At the time in the late 1970s in my education program, we really did not talk about issues such as race and racism, and how these dynamics shaped different advantages and disadvantages in the classroom. I was in a *Lily-White* town in southern Minnesota pursuing an elementary education degree with a student-teaching experience in an all-White classroom.

Early in my career as a teacher educator, I connected with an elementary teacher who taught at a nearby junior high school. When she was hired, she had no multicultural textbooks available for her teaching, so she just created her own unit plans. She wanted to use nonfiction and historical fiction as sources. She brought in diverse picture books to

share with my students. Our professional relationship blossomed as we compared notes about incorrect and incomplete stories, and how those who are underrepresented and voiceless in our society often do not have advocates and allies. She was effective in messaging the importance of finding a variety of sources to help students discover different perspectives on the same people, place, or thing. She also reiterated the need for teachers to think outside of the box and to not rely on textbook-centered instruction.

Question 2: As a teacher educator, how do you teach practicing and pre-service teachers about multiple perspectives?

Teaching about multiple perspectives has been essential to my pedagogical approach. What became clear to me was that our university, situated in an urban setting, was a prime spot for teacher candidates to analyze how issues around identity and racial disparities have differently impacted diverse communities in various schools, even those within the same school district. We also found ways to connect the content to the interests of diverse learners in terms of encouraging them to explore their own histories and life experiences.

In my Teaching Social Studies in the Elementary School methods course, teacher candidates and I have critically analyzed the politics of knowledge. We start by discussing what we learned about *America* as PK-12 students. What usually comes from these conversations is that most Americans are taught that we are the *caretakers of the world* who cannot or should not show our failures or mistakes to the rest of the world. We also discuss how history is also often taught in a manner where events are not connected, where quantity of content over the quality of it is valued, and where teachers are often

penalized for teaching skills in critical thinking that might challenge dominant narratives about American exceptionalism.

I was also disturbed to hear stories from my teacher candidates who are practicing teachers about how the social studies content is often cut to make room for mathematics and reading instruction. These in-service teachers would reflect on the many challenges of teaching multiple perspectives at the elementary level, including their own lack of knowledge about different historical narratives and perspectives; feeling overwhelmed by the other demands of teaching that makes it difficult to spend extra time on creating engaging lessons that truly teach about social justice; and the overreliance on textbook-centered instruction that was often mandated by their principals. Many of these teachers also shared that they did not know how to bring in different sources to their classrooms because they just did not know how to evaluate information for bias.

At the beginning of the semester, most of my teacher candidates also believed that *the textbook is always right*, which is a problematic belief that perpetuates dominant and uncritical perspectives about history and social studies. Around the time I started teaching at this university, we were also in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack. The narrative of American exceptionalism became even more prominent. Unfortunately, many political speeches about counter-terrorism efforts perpetuated Islamophobic discourses that presented themselves in blatant and subtle ways. For better or for worse, discussing current events in this class has inspired many teacher candidates to develop a multiple-perspectives pedagogy to avoid some of the pitfalls of what we see going on in the news media where balanced information is usually lacking.

In my classes, I require a multiple-perspective assignment before the teacher candidates develop a more robust unit plan. We discuss and then analyze one piece at a time, and eventually, we are able to see how the parts relate to the whole. I start this activity by having students fill out a graphic organizer with a list of generic questions about source information and listing whose perspectives are included. In Chart 1, students choose a historical event or person. They share their own perspectives, and how they know what they know. I then collect and keep these charts until the end of the semester. Then, in Chart 2, using the same graphic-organizer format, I ask students to find additional sources that bring in different perspectives than their original source material. At the end, we compare the content of Chart 1 and Chart 2. I asked students to reflect on questions such as, “In Chart 1, what was my perspective? Has my perspective changed after finding different sources? How and why?”

I model this assignment by using Rosa Parks as an example. Most teacher candidates know just one story about Parks. We take turns sharing what we think we know about Parks. We then discuss that how (and when) we grew up, and how we were taught about Parks not only create certain biases in terms of how we understand the Montgomery Bus Boycott, but also shape how we construct and deconstruct knowledge. I then share with them Kohl’s and Brown’s (2005) rendition of the story of Rosa Parks, specifically, why the story that we supposedly know about her is incomplete. For example, by calling her *Rosa*, we minimize the broader picture. Yes, she was Rosa Parks, but she was also part of the larger Montgomery Bus Boycott. We also discuss the hidden message in terms of gendered stereotypes. For example, how Parks is usually depicted in mainstream historical accounts as a stubborn, tired, or weak old woman. Thus, we learn

that there are many hidden facts that we do not know about Parks and her real story. I also share with them alternative narratives such as Brinkley's (2005) *Rosa Parks: A Life*.

Then, teacher candidates must pick their own historical example or event to research on their own. Many pick a major historical figure, such as Christopher Columbus, George Washington, or Paul Revere. To accompany this assignment, we also read classics such as Loewen's (1997) *Lies My Teacher Told Me* and Zinn's (2007) *A People's History of the United States: 1492 to the Present*. I also share different perspectives including Kohl's *I Won't Learn from You!: The Role of Assent in Learning* (1993) and *Should We Burn Babar? Essays on Children's Literature and the Power of Stories* (1996) to help teacher candidates realize that the politics of knowledge in American education is contested.

Question 3: What are some challenges that you encounter when teaching in-service and pre-service teachers about multiple perspectives?

When we discuss insider/outsider perspectives, this discussion often generates intense reactions from some White teacher candidates. I have even struggled with teaching multiple perspectives myself. For example, when a White teacher candidate from the U.S. was speaking about the bombing of Hiroshima as her historical example, there was a student from Japan in my class who was upset. I was constantly questioning myself: "How is this presentation impacting this student from Japan who grew up learning another view about the end of World War II—one that is drastically different from American students? Was I enabling my other students, most of whom were White, to have the White-savior complex by learning about these different perspectives? Can we peer into knowledge as insiders or outsiders, and determine which perspective is better,

worse, or neither? How do we potentially perpetuate racial tensions in the classroom?” In all, getting teachers to think more critically about who they are, what they know, and what they do not know, is a difficult task. I remind my students: “As teachers, we are not in the know. We facilitate a learning environment where we are helping our students to gain skills researching and reporting what we, as a class, are finding out about different topics.”

Similarly, I have found that many White teacher candidates are not comfortable with the notion that teachers cannot teach in a bias-free manner. Yet, ironically, many continue to fight to retain what is familiar to them. Many become emotional when they deal with these conflicting views. I constantly reiterate the following: “Just because it’s familiar to us doesn’t mean it’s right.” We constantly discuss why it is difficult to get over what is tradition or familiar- primarily, because staying with *what we know* is easy and safe. Yet, having one’s own worldviews challenged is often one of the most difficult experiences that teacher candidates have in our program.

I also teach about bias in the classroom by asking teacher candidates to explain why they are drawn to certain ideas, sources, and topics over others. I require them to reflect on the reality that they, as educators, do and must make significant instructional decisions on an everyday basis in the classroom. Part of what I hope to communicate is that what we do not teach, whether intentional or not, is part of the null curriculum. We must be aware that we cannot cover everything, and at the same time, must be willing to allow our students to share different perspectives on controversial topics. We also must recognize that each learner also brings different interpretations and understandings that may collide or conflict with our own viewpoints as teachers.

Interview 2 with an Asian American Woman Teacher Educator**Question 1: What inspired you to embrace a multiple-perspectives pedagogy?**

During my PK-12 years, I rarely learned about diverse perspectives from my teachers, all of whom were White, except for a few rare moments that lacked any connections to meaningful and rigorous learning. For example, when learning about the *Third World* in elementary school, my White teachers presented completely ahistorical and decontextualized portraits beyond our borders according to racially derogatory images of Otherness. For example, the emaciated child and the sick mother from what was called the *Dark Continent* were presented as our introduction to Africa, which was often conflated with notions of the *Third World*. We learned nothing about how various colonial projects and imperialistic ideologies led to the construction of what we know as the *Third World*, including how the U.S.'s geopolitical involvement throughout various parts of the world influenced and shaped various types of conflict, displacement, and migration. Unfortunately, I grew up during times where my peers and I did not even learn about the basic contributions, experiences, and histories of ethnically and racially diverse Americans, except for select White ethnic groups like the Irish, Italian, and Polish. To say the least, not learning about multiple perspectives, particularly about race relations and racism in the U.S., was incredibly damaging to all students, especially for children like me who were designated as *Other*.

In college, I accidentally became introduced to multiple perspectives through two literature courses that I took through the English department. In a literary-criticism course, we learned about various feminist, Queer, and Women of Color theories. We read various works by authors who are/were BIPOC, as well as White women. I took another

American literature course where the professor, a radical White male, formally introduced us to literature written about, by, and for people who are BIPOC. However, in my teacher-training program, we briefly discussed how Banks (1997) defined the different levels of multicultural integration in a required diversity course, but unfortunately, none of my education courses went beyond superficial understandings of difference. How we learned about difference, including ethnic and racial identity formation, primarily came from the perspectives of White American teacher-education faculty.

My first teaching job was working with ethnically and racially diverse preschool children. I was the only adult of Color in the building, which made me hypersensitive to issues of identity and the politics of representations. My primary goal was to provide all students with affirming images of both other and self. Drawing from the formal and informal knowledge that I gained about multiculturalism, I experimented with lessons such as singing songs and teaching colors, greetings, and shapes in different languages. I also made it a point to include pictures and posters that were representative of various forms of diversity, including different types of families, as well as images of young children who represented various abilities and cultural or racial backgrounds. Working with young children solidified my belief that teachers have a significant stake in the lives of their students; that is, we have an individual and social responsibility to teach in an inclusive manner that helps all students become aware of different experiences and perspectives.

For nearly two decades, I have taught at the university level as a teacher educator. What troubles me is how little has changed over the years in that the majority of our

teacher candidates have not received an adequate overview of multicultural perspectives in their PK-12 years or throughout our teacher-credential program. More specifically, most of our teacher candidates realize that multicultural perspectives have been part of a perpetual null curriculum from their PK-12 years to higher education. As one example, Hmong Americans have been in Minnesota for over three generations and are one of the state's largest ethnic-minority populations. Yet, many of our colleagues [teacher educators] and the teacher candidates we educate, the majority of whom are White Minnesotans, have no idea why the Hmong are in the U.S. Several Hmong American students I have taught also do not know much about their own history/histories. As I explain to teacher candidates at the beginning of each class, the fundamental purpose of a multiple-perspectives pedagogy is to make the invisible visible and the unknown known. We start with the premise that we, even as educated Americans who have a love of knowledge as current and future teachers, have quite a lot of un/learning to do.

Question 2: As a teacher educator, how do you teach practicing and pre-service teachers about multiple perspectives?

As a scholar of ethnic studies and a teacher educator of Color who studies issues of identity, inequality, and race relations in the U.S. context, I am always looking out for imbalances, omissions, and misrepresentations of information and perspectives in everything from curricular materials to institutional practices. Of course, in addition to ethnicity and race, I approach these issues with our candidates from an intersectional approach by critically analyzing representations of class, disAbility, gender, language/dialect, religion, sexual orientation, and other social identities. At the start of my courses, I reflect on how my own personal and professional struggles have shaped my

commitment to teaching in an inclusive manner. Drawing from the works of prominent multicultural educators, such as James Banks, A. Lin Goodwin, Tyrone Howard, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Sonia Nieto, and Pedro Noguera, among many others, we read about the damage that the null curriculum has on learners who never or rarely see their own community's faces or histories in formal, educational settings. We also discuss how the null curriculum as it relates to the lack of multicultural perspectives does not benefit White students because they miss out on learning about the contributions of diverse Americans.

I am well aware that there is a tendency in our program and other teacher-training institutions to approach issues of diverse perspectives and inclusivity in a disjointed and isolated matter. Therefore, I make efforts to implement a multiple-perspective pedagogy in all courses that I teach. For example, I have regularly taught a foundations course required for all teacher candidates titled *Schools and Society*, where one of the standards is learning about the histories (plural, not singular) of American education. Rather than simply reading the department's standard textbook for the class, which basically glosses over the different histories of American education while distorting and omitting different perspectives, I break the class up into teach-teams where each group is responsible for becoming content experts on a certain legal case in American education. I start by asking the class to identify what they know about America's history with segregation and integration. Most people in class cite *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954) as the start of the desegregation movement. For this assignment, each teach-team researches a major legal case such as the education of African Americans before and during *Roberts v. City of Boston* (1849), Chinese Americans before and during *Tape*

v. Hurley (1885), and Mexican Americans before and during *Méndez et al. v. Westminster School District (1946)*. Through this activity, teacher candidates learn that ethnically and racially diverse communities have long been fighting for equal access to public education. Moreover, we learn that BIPOC families and parents have taken various school districts to the courts far before the 1950s. We make connections to present-day implications, including discussing why BIPOC communities today have many of the same concerns that were prominent back in the era of *de jure* segregation.

I also have taught a course titled Reflective Teaching for teachers at various stages of their careers, from beginning to veteran. The majority of people in the class have already taken some type of introductory-level education course that included content on the different philosophies of education and influential people who shaped American education. In their teacher-training programs, most teachers were required to generate some type of philosophy-of-teaching statement where they cited the names of educational philosophers whose beliefs about learning and teaching resonate with them. When I ask them to share the names of these famous people, common answers include, among others, George Counts, John Dewey, Lawrence Kohlberg, Maria Montessori, Nel Noddings, Jean Piaget, and B.F. Skinner. We then discuss why the majority of the influential educational philosophers mentioned in U.S. teacher-training programs are/were White, and how the lack of diverse perspectives may have directly and indirectly shaped their own beliefs and practices in the classroom.

I then assign each teacher to learn more about the contributions and philosophies of other major contributors to American and U.S. education, including Luther Standing Bear, Marva Collins, W.E.B. DuBois, Jaime Escalante, Paulo Freire, bell hooks, Michelle

Rhee, Booker T. Washington, among others. The final project is a person-pouch performance. Each teacher candidate presents a brief skit about an assigned person in the first-person narrative. Many bring props or wear era-appropriate clothing to make their skits memorable. Throughout the skit, the teacher candidate pulls out 10 interesting or unusual facts about the influential person's significant contributions to education from a bag or pouch. After the skit, the class breaks out into smaller groups to dig deeper into each fact, including asking additional follow-up questions to the presenter. We also compare and contrast the views of different influential people from the framework of dominant versus non-dominant perspectives. For example, both Marva Collins and William Bagley could be described as essentialists who endorsed the basics, rigorous education, and traditional teacher-centered approaches. Yet, most students have never heard of Collins, an African American woman who started a school in Chicago for low-income African American children in the 1970s and made national headlines for being a turnaround teacher. Collins was also controversial because some of her ideas suggested that she held deficit views of low-income children of Color and their families. Ultimately, I do my best to create multiple learning opportunities for teacher candidates to help co-create new forms of knowledge that we are able to connect back to our prior knowledge.

Question 3: What are some challenges that you encounter when teaching in-service and pre-service teachers about multiple perspectives?

I am fortunate that most of the current and future teachers I have had the privilege of teaching are enthusiastic to learn about multiple perspectives. Each time I teach, I am pleased to see the level of creative detail put into each product. For example, one White pre-service elementary teacher I worked with put together a wonderful guidebook around

the topic of multiethnic celebrations that included activities, pictures, and WebQuests. She also put in an entire section on how to actively include students whose families do not, for example, celebrate birthdays or holidays, with guiding questions to help teachers facilitate honest conversations about honoring diverse ways of life.

One challenge that I occasionally encounter is teacher candidates who become resistant to learning about perspectives that challenge their own beliefs. For example, one White American teacher candidate who took a History of Education course with me created an excellent lesson geared toward ninth-grade students titled, *The Other Side of America*, which challenged the narrative of American exceptionalism. She presented two counter-narratives of America as a settler-colony through the case examples of the Philippines and Puerto Rico. She introduced terms like “*benevolent assimilation*” and had us read Rudyard Kipling’s poem about the Philippine-American War titled “The White Man’s Burden.” She introduced and sequenced the lesson well, and also, had many opportunities for people to share counter-perspectives. Unfortunately, two of her White colleagues became visibly upset, and ended up leaving class before it ended.

That evening, I received an e-mail from one of the White teacher candidates that read, “I had to leave class because _____ [colleague] was teaching stuff that felt like an attack on my beliefs and it felt like an attack on White people.” Before our next class, I invited her to debrief with me, in person. We discussed her discomfort, and what came out of the conversation was that her colleague was teaching in a manner that contradicted how she was taught history when she was in school. That is, as a former PK-12 student, her history teachers, who were mostly White males, presented a fairly narrow view of national history that reinforced the narrative of American exceptionalism. She shared that

knowledge about history mostly came out of a single source, which was an assigned textbook. In contrast, her colleague in class presented American history as contested and multivocal. For example, during the lesson, there were stations set up where teams could analyze and discuss various primary-source documents that provided multiple perspectives regarding how various populations throughout the Americas and world have actively resisted U.S. colonialism. In all, learning information that disrupted what she learned in school was overwhelming and uncomfortable. At the time, the only way she knew how to react was to try to bring it back to the self (“an attack on my beliefs”) instead of asking her own questions, being open to learning about different views, and engaging in critical dissent.

While certainly not pleasant, I actually appreciate these deep moments where teacher candidates across the color line express their discomfort and resistance to learning about different perspectives. I now ask teacher candidates to come up with their own rules for engagement where everyone comes to an agreement in terms of how to respectfully ask questions, challenge another person’s viewpoint, or simply to express disagreement. I also include a scenarios-based class session devoted to discussing how teachers might diffuse situations when they encounter a parent/guardian, school administrator, or student who becomes angry, offended, or upset when a controversial or unpopular perspective is presented in the classroom. For example, based on different grade-specific scenarios, we discuss questions such as the following: What if a student publicly challenges what you are teaching? How would you respond to a parent who criticizes how and what you are teaching? As a teacher, what are ways to potentially

prevent emotionally charged encounters or misunderstandings in a proactive rather than a reactive manner?

Another challenge is that many of our teacher candidates initially struggle with the extensive level of research, particularly the time commitment, that goes into learning and then teaching about multiple perspectives around a certain event, person, or topic. I reiterate that we as teachers are researchers who should always be up for the challenge. However, just expecting teacher candidates to find a vast range of information on their own with no support is a recipe for disaster from an instructional standpoint.

To address initial anxieties about the time commitment needed to implement a multiple-perspectives pedagogy in the classroom, I intentionally scaffold and sequence various guided-discovery experiences. For example, I provide teach-teams with a list of a few pre-readings to explore and read on their own. As a class, we go over methods for evaluating and selecting sources, especially materials written about communities from minoritized and racialized backgrounds. We address crucial issues such the politics of authorship, including discussing how an author's own lived experiences shape one's understanding of community-specific perspectives (Harris, 2007; Pasque et al., 2022). We discuss instructional strategies for how to introduce students to reading counter-narratives and counter-perspectives that may directly challenge their understanding of the world. Finally, I reiterate that teachers have the power to either dismantle or reinforce the null curriculum through how and what we teach, which brings up a point you mentioned earlier about the need to have our teacher candidates learn how to always be on the lookout for gaps, imbalances, and omissions in different types of curricula. Obviously,

the purpose of modeling the process of guided discovery is to prepare our teacher candidates to model these steps in their own classrooms.

Conclusion

Teacher educators of all backgrounds significantly influence the socialization of the next generations of teachers through how and what we teach, including how we model inclusive pedagogies that move beyond surface-level understandings of diversity. We must ultimately rethink how and what we do to support practicing and pre-service teachers in navigating ongoing political vitriol, including finding ways to continuously model bravery, compassion for others, and morals-based teaching. However, we must move beyond sitting with and witnessing others' and our own discomfort. We need to model cultural humility, which Hook et al. (2013) define as “the ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the [individual]” that ultimately requires collaboration and “respectful openness” (p. 253).

Teaching multiple perspectives from frameworks of humility may be challenging but is not impossible. King et al. (2018) remind us that “it is possible to discuss race and other controversial issues in a civil and productive manner that empowers every student to feel valued and affirmed” (p. 321). By intentionally modeling a multiple-perspectives pedagogy, teacher educators are able to present a more balanced, comprehensive, and nuanced understanding of diverse experiences, histories, and identities to their teacher candidates. Jones and McCormick (2022) further note that in light of recent events leading to ongoing disruptions to public education in the post-2020 world, educators must stay true to their core values, and moreover, those with commitments to equity and justice

should find ways to communicate their instructional goals proactively, transparently, and unapologetically to community members, families, and parents/guardians. Despite some of the institutional and instructional constraints, a multiple-perspective pedagogy includes various curricular and instructional benefits across the content areas and grade levels, where asking critical questions, being open to new ideas, and learning how to respectfully disagree with others model the core principles of a democratic and socially responsible society where diverse views are equally respected and valued.

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