

CHAPTER 13

Afterword: Movement toward a “Third Reconstruction” and Educational Equity

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From the August 2014 police killing of an unarmed Black adolescent in the St. Louis suburb of Ferguson and the June 2015 murders of nine African Americans, including a state representative, in Charleston, South Carolina, to the 2016 presidential primaries and the eventual 2017 promotion of White nationalism within the governing circle of the president of the United States (Ganim, Welch, & Meyersohn, 2017; Harkinson, 2017), the U.S. witnessed a countervailing rise of a new civil rights movement (Taylor, 2016). As more deaths of unarmed Blacks at the hands of police surfaced, “Black Lives Matter” became a tagline for international protests as an expression of institutional racism experienced globally by historically marginalized populations (Tharoor, 2016). In this context Angela Davis (2016) reminds us that “the Black radical tradition is related not simply to Black people but to all people who are struggling for freedom” (p. 39).

Framing these collective actions as a historical movement toward a “Third Reconstruction” facilitates “thinking about moments in the past where there has been a combination of grassroots radicalism and political leadership” (Foner, 2015, p. 141). Although grassroots activism was visible during the composition of this book, overt and consistent political leadership for completing the freedom goals of the Civil Rights Movement and self-determination efforts by Indigenous groups has been missing. In fact, the world has witnessed an uptake in xenophobia and nativist nationalism, according to the United Nations (2016): “We still live in a world where we witness politicians and leaders using hateful and divisive rhetoric to divide instead of unite societies” (para. 2). In light of the damning documentation within this book about inequities a disproportionate number of children and youth of color suffer daily in public schools, we first briefly review previous efforts at reconstruction for social justice and educational equity.

1 Reconstruction(s) and White Backlash(es)

Reconstruction historically refers to the period of 1865–1877 when the U.S. set conditions for the South to return to the Union. Davis (2016) calls Reconstruction “one of the most hidden eras of U.S. history” (p. 70). She notes how “former slaves fought for the right to public education” and that “poor white children who had not had an education gained access to education as a direct result of former slaves” (p. 71). The removal of federal troops from the South and political normalization of racial discrimination in the North signaled, however, Reconstruction’s end and an acceleration of White terrorism (Foner, 1990). The U.S. Supreme Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) solidified the practice of White supremacist segregation by declaring in effect that public facilities could be “separate but equal” based on the phenotype of skin color. In the opinion of the court, racial segregation was “merely a legal distinction between the white and colored races – a distinction which is founded in the color of the two races and which must always exist so long as white men are distinguished from the other race by color” (para. 20). Using public education as an example, the court observed that the “most common instance of this is connected with the establishment of separate schools for white and colored children” (para. 23).

A half century after *Plessy*, the U.S. was in the midst of a Civil Rights Movement, which is considered a Second Reconstruction that extended from after World War II to 1968 (U.S. House of Representatives, n.d.; also, Woodward, 1955). During this same era oppressed populations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America along with Native American Indigenous groups responded to colonialism through self-determination movements. *De jure* school segregation on the basis of race was overturned by *Brown v. Board* in 1954. However, 20 years later the courts had abandoned enforcement at a time when racial segregation between and within schools was increasing (Irons, 2002). Hence, by the 1970s the federal government effectively withdrew support for the completion of a Second Reconstruction.

As the 2020s approach, we hear a resonance with former slave Frederick Douglas’s (1881) description of a racialized “color line” of discrimination and W.E.B. Du Bois’s (1903/2007) well-known observation that “the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line” (“Forethought” n.p.). In 2015 a *Richmond Times-Dispatch* editorial called for a national “truth and reconciliation commission” because “*the color line persists*” and “accounting has not occurred” (“Virginia must lead,” 2015, para. 4, 7, emphasis added). With little hope for such a national reconciliation, grassroots social justice activist Reverend Dr. William Barber II (2016) contends, “Nothing less than a Third Reconstruction holds the promise of healing our nation’s wounds and birthing a better future for all” (p. xiii). In his home state of North Carolina Barber

helped to create a movement that fused various social justice movements: “*Within the framework of a Third Reconstruction*, we see how our movements are flowing together, recognizing that *our intersectionality* creates the opportunity to *fundamentally redirect America*” (p. 122, emphasis added; also, Goodstein, 2017).

A growing body of research, some of which is contained within the chapters in this collection, applies intersectionality to document that conditions of racial discrimination and acts of resistance by people of color do not occur in isolation. Movement toward a Third Reconstruction signals an ever-increasing public and scholarly consciousness of a confluence of demographic and institutional categories that intersect with aspirations for equity and justice. A movement toward a Third Reconstruction provides a historical descriptor for critical educators to place their scholarship and teaching in a context of Black Lives Matter and other social justice movements led by historically marginalized groups (also, see Mann, 2006; Salazar & Rios, 2016). As teachers, teacher educators, and researchers join in a movement toward a Third Reconstruction, a conceptual framework to consider intersectional approaches emerges from this collection of chapters.

2 A Critical Multicultural Framework

The intersectional research of chapter authors collectively revealed complex matrices of race, ethnicity, class, and gender. *Critical multiculturalism* can serve as a theoretical framework for this work as it brings to the forefront such concepts as resistance, power, knowledge construction, class, cultural politics, and emancipatory actions (May, 2012; McLaren, 1994; Vavrus, 2015). Through “educational criticism” that “is not only deconstructive but reconstructive,” the standpoint of critical multiculturalism actively “build[s] possibilities” that are disregarded by dominant ideologies (Leonardo, 2009, p. 147).

Critical multiculturalism incorporates intersectionality. As chapter authors demonstrated, intersectionality located within critical race theory helps to complicate commonsense, one-dimensional notions of race, ethnicity, class, and gender and subvert assertions of essentialized identities and categories. Intersectionality as “an analytic sensibility” (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013, p. 795) includes *historical inquiry* that can reveal *political economy patterns* to inform our current historical moment. During the nearly three decades of intersectionality scholarship across a variety of disciplines, studies have ranged from the variability among individuals within categories of race, ethnicity, class, and gender to the interaction of such classifications with normative institutions. In other words,

intersectionality claims indicate that some categories interact to produce novel effects, that is, that there are effects associated with occupying the intersection of multiple categories that are not present for individuals 'outside' the intersection (individuals who occupy only some of the categories but not all of them). (Bright, Malinsky, & Thompson, 2016, p. 71)

Complicating this is intersectionality with institutions of power, be they schools, police, or legislative bodies.

This chapter offers a critical multicultural overview of possible intersectional categories of oppression, some of which were presented in individual chapters in this book, that generally exist outside the schooling process yet affect access to an equitable education. A movement toward a Third Reconstruction fits within a broad critical multicultural conceptual umbrella to fuse such actions as (a) advancing a critical decolonial teacher education and school curriculum (Vavrus, 2017), (b) ending a racially discriminatory school-to-prison pipeline (Koon, 2013), (c) preparing teachers with a critical consciousness or *conscientização* to support equity needs of historically marginalized learners (Freire, 1970), and (d) honoring the gender and sexual identities of all students (Vavrus, 2015). Such a movement can reveal for teachers and teacher educators elements of structural violence that limit educational equity, elements that must be critiqued as part of the continuing development of theory, research, and practice for emancipatory schooling effects for *all* children.

3 Structural Violence

"Cultural violence leads to structural violence when it is incorporated into the formalized legal and economic exchanges of the society," explain Pilisuk and Rountree (2015, p. 81). Whereas direct violence by an individual is more visible, structural violence can be more difficult to recognize: "The invisibility of the structure of violence is frequently the result of our inability – or refusal – to see below the surface" (p. 82). For example, increasing wealth and income inequalities as a form of economic structural violence create additional barriers for poor students and those of color to access an equitable public education. Intersectionality research helps make visible normalized structural violence in relation to its impact on educational equity.

The following sections provide a sample of possible categories and issues that can conceptually fit within research and teaching for a movement toward a Third Reconstruction. Categories are conceptualized in a causal and symbiotic relationship that contain various intersections which in turn

enable institutional discrimination on the basis of race, gender, sexuality, and economic status.

3.1 *Foundational Exclusion of People of Color from “The People”*

To analyze who constitutes “the people” of a nation-state, we consider the example of the U.S. and intersections embedded in the dispossession of Indigenous lands and culture, the modern invention of race, White supremacist nationalism, and colorblind/post-racial mythologies. Throughout this telling, intersections of class interests and racial and gender identity narratives evolved into tightening structures of racial and gender oppression that have had devastating schooling consequences for a disproportionate number of children of color. This perspective suggests that youth identified as Black, Latinx, and Indigenous along with those who are poor and hold nonconforming gender and sexual identities are perceived as not fully included within “the people,” especially in regards to educational opportunities and support.

European settlers and the U.S. military forcibly removed Indigenous people from their ancestral lands, and *White* as a racial category signaled who “the people” would eventually be for the new nation, the United States of America. The story of *Whiteness* is one in which skin color and geographic origins were markers that determined status ranking and eventual property rights. Whiteness identified who “the people” were, a privileged group with various advantages over people of color. To disrupt labor and class solidarity in the late 1600s, the plantation and colonial aristocracy invented the modern notion of “race” to undermine alliances and revolts among imported African slaves, English indentured servants, and other poor English immigrants. Two races were invented – “White” and “Negro” – to separate the English from the Africans through legal means and sanctioned terrorism (Baum, 2006). Nearly 350 years later, social psychologists note how strong in-group loyalty exhibited by a White majority remains correlated with racial intolerance, nationalism, and ethnocentrism (Haidt & Kesebir, 2010). The intersection of 21st century hierarchies of “race” with “the people” highlights the lingering effects of racially labeling bodies in relation to degrees of educational access and inclusiveness for students of color, a condition negatively affected by White supremacist nationalism (see Zeskind, 2009).

Intersections of immigration policies with institutional governing power serve as a barometer to the influence of White supremacist nationalism. Contemporary resistance to immigration reform can be traced to intersections of xenophobia and nativist construction of immigrant cultures and languages in threatening terms (Behdad, 2005). Tropes that circulated since the Founding continue to find nationalistic traction for an “American” citizenship exclusively equated as White and Christian.

Despite claims that the U.S. is somehow a post-racial, colorblind society, skin color identification continues to materially favor Whites over people of color (Hall, 2008). Whereas evidence exists that numerous schools continue historical patterns of explicit and implicit racial discrimination, Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts simply argued that public policies should use a colorblind strategy to eliminate racial discrimination in public schools (*Parents Involved*, 2007). In kinship with Supreme Court colorblindness, post-racialism attempted to signal that “bad things had happened in the past, but that was long ago, and by electing a black president the country had forcefully and forever broken with bygone days” (López, 2014, p. 194). In educational settings, intersectionality research compares institutional claims of colorblindness and anti-discrimination to school disciplinary policies and practices and disparities in access to curricular and extra-curricular opportunities. A critical multicultural social justice framework makes clear that racial and economic discrimination and violence directed at millions of people of color contradicts the trope of a post-racial society (see Aja & Bustillo, 2015).

3.2 *Historical Constraints*

From British colonialism to the present, people of color experienced institutional constraints on their freedom through forms of structural violence. Black and Brown lives have been constrained by racialized employment, racialized residential housing, and racialized policing. Any of these factors can negatively the mobility of parents and their children, which reduces educational opportunities for children of color.

3.2.1 Racialized Employment

Despite the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that ended legalized job discrimination and increased the racial diversity of workplaces, racial discrimination remains. By 1980, for example, the “progress for black Americans in the workplace came to an abrupt stop” (Stainback & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2012, p. 177). Lack of access to living wage jobs negatively affects parental mobility and material resources in ways that can shape a child’s access to equitable educational resources, especially in schools located in low-income communities (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). The same discrimination that a parent of color finds in employment is often what awaits their children.

3.2.2 Racialized Housing

Even where workplaces have some degree of racial integration, when the work day is over, the majority of Whites retreat to their historically racially isolated communities and social events. Notwithstanding various efforts by the U.S. Justice Department, Frankenberg (2013) notes, “Enforcement of the

Fair Housing Act has never been seriously monitored” (p. 563). For young, low-income adults of color, housing discrimination results in disproportional restrictions on their mobility and life opportunities (Britton & Goldsmith, 2013). A former administrator for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development explained that practices of racial housing segregation intersects with a broad pattern of discrimination and social obstacles: “It’s about everything that goes with it: joblessness, crime, drugs, *underperforming schools*, crumbling infrastructure, inadequate public services – the list goes on” (Goldfarb, 2015, p. A22, emphasis added).

Despite what the United Nations (2009) has identified as persistent racial profiling in police actions, the continuing disproportional arrest and incarceration of parents of color affects their job and housing options, all of which limit the quality of education their own children will receive.

3.2.3 Racialized Policing

From its colonial heritage, the U.S. government has a pattern of allowing the infliction of legal and extralegal violence on populations of color. For example, in the policing of Blacks from private slave patrols to the rise of modern urban police departments, Hahn and Jefferies (2003) explained, “The primary objective of white voters and politicians was to prevent both slave and free black persons from disrupting a segregated social structure, and the police served as an essential instrument of that policy” (p. 124) – all of which provided impunity for police in their use of violence on Black populations.

Comparatively, African Americans along with other populations of color are overly surveilled through policing (Cyril, 2015). Intersections among a history of underreported instances of punishment given to both children and adults by governmental authorities such as police, teachers, and administrators stem from *neo-Confederate narratives* of Black criminality (Vavrus, 2015). This history was empowered by the suppression of data on institutionalized physical abuse and the creation of a racialized perception as to who is inherently prone to criminal behavior.

3.2.4 As If It “Had Never Happened”

The 1705 Virginia Slave code noted that a murder of a slave by a White person would be as if it “had never happened” (General Assembly of Virginia, 1705, p. 459). More than two centuries later when Ferguson police detained journalists in violation of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (Bomboy, 2014), Wesley Lowery, a Pulitzer Prize-winning *Washington Post* reporter, eerily echoed the 1705 Virginia Slave Code: “Apparently, in America, in 2014, police can manhandle you, take you into custody, put you in cell &

then open the door *like it didn't happen*" (as cited in Hartman, 2014, para. 18, emphasis added). The *Guardian's* national security editor Spence Ackerman (2015) helped expose Chicago's Homan Square, a decades-old "secret" detention center where city police literally tortured local Black residents. Despite an unprecedented \$5.5 million reparations agreement, the police officially continue to act "*as if that has never happened*" in Chicago, that there's no history there, there's no legacy there" (para. 41, emphasis added). From the Virginia Slave Code to a school-to-prison pipeline, police shield abusive colleagues from criminal charges, actions that led an Ohio prosecutor to compare police defendants to an "organized crime syndicate" (McGinty, as cited in Queally, 2015, para. 4).

3.2.5 Criminalization of Bodies of Color

After the Civil War the Southern White political class sent propaganda warnings to the North about supposed criminal Blacks migrating to the North. Reiterating the ideology of the Confederate of States of America, African Americans were portrayed ideologically as "*domestic enemies*" that allowed states to adopt "a posture of self-protection" (McCurry, 2010, p. 219, emphasis added). The propaganda of Black criminality was very successful and was openly perpetuated by Woodrow Wilson, U.S. president during WWI and a long-time defender of Ku Klux Klan terrorism as necessary to maintain social order (see Wilson, 1902).

Murakawa (2014) documents that U.S. presidents for the past 65 years have considered the "first civil right" to be keeping a White public free from violence. This particular perception of civil rights was a pitch to Whites who feared people of color demanding equal rights in all aspects of public life. The assertion of a first civil right served as the backdrop for continuing governmental regimes spouting slogans of law-and-order to cast the source of crime primarily upon Black and Brown communities while turning poor urban schools into hostile learning environments (Fabricant & Fine, 2013). In effect, schools with a high population of students of color have gone "from rehabilitation and services to criminalization" (Koon, 2013, p. 3). Furthermore, the presence of police in schools is associated with "a surge in arrests or misdemeanor charges for essentially non-violent behavior...that sends children into criminal courts" (Eckholm, 2013, p. A1). For adolescents released from incarceration, the return to society is difficult because incarceration disrupted a high school education necessary for gainful employment. Returning to unstable social environments without a diploma and with possible learning challenges along with an arrest and conviction record intersect to make it nearly impossible to secure a living wage job and transition into civic life.

3.2.6 Gendered Oppression

Gender intersectionality captures the extreme oppression experienced by poor women of color. Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall (2013) note, “Although Black male and white female narratives of discrimination were understood to be fully inclusive and universal, Black female narratives were rendered partial, unrecognizable, something apart from the standard claims of race discrimination or gender discrimination” (pp. 790–791). Black women historically have been blamed for the poverty of African American communities, stereotyped in behavior, and had their academic potential and lived experiences and knowledge marginalized – all of which intersect to lower teacher expectations for achievement by Black girls, expectations that also extend to Latinx and Indigenous girls (Crenshaw, 2015; Epstein, Blake, & González, 2017).

A history of marginalizing and scapegoating African American women was reinforced during the 1960s War on Poverty. *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (U.S. Department of Labor, 1965) contended that poverty was a cultural feature of Black “family pathology” (p. 19). The identified cultural source was the Black female head-of-household because “a matriarchal structure...seriously retards the progress of the group as a whole, and imposes a crushing burden on the Negro male” (p. 29). The trope of the Black female parent as a cause of social problems would later become prominent in President Ronald Reagan’s 1980s racializing discourse of mythic welfare queens and by the 2010s expanded into a “cultural commonsense created by rightwing race-baiting: lazy nonwhites abuse welfare, while hardworking whites pay for it” (López, 2014, p. 73).

Stereotypes of the Black female exist beyond the negativity projected upon their role in families and communities. Since the era of slavery, White men in particular constructed their female slaves as hypersexualized to justify rapes by Whites and the mixed race off-springs from these violent encounters. Collins (2000) notes how contemporary schools socialize females to express themselves “within a context where Black womanhood remains routinely derogated” (p. 100). In 21st century popular culture and public schools, an assertive African American female is often singled out as a socially inappropriate “angry Black woman” (e.g., Harris-Perry, 2016).

Despite a history of discrimination, African American women have been central to the theory and practice of Black resistance and civil rights activism. During the late 1800s and into the 20th century, for example, “Colored Women’s Club” formed in every state in the western U.S. to create supportive environments in hostile societies. These organizations often were specifically created in response to lynchings (Taylor, 2003). The Civil Rights Movement of the Second Reconstruction era was propelled by the nearly

invisible but tireless work of African American women in the relative freedom available through Black churches (Olson, 2001). More recently, it was three Black women who created the Black Lives Matter movement that spurred a movement toward a Third Reconstruction (see Garza, 2014) – and a formerly incarcerated 65-year old Black woman has become a leading advocate for incarcerated women (Burton & Lynn, 2017).

4 Moving Forward with Praxis

By briefly outlining examples of key issues of material consequences through intersecting categories of oppression and structural violence, this chapter offered a critical multicultural framework with both historical and contemporary perspectives. Freire (1970) claimed, however, that the discovery of oppressive conditions “cannot be purely intellectual but must involve *action*; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must include *serious reflection*: only then will it be a *praxis*” (p. 52, emphasis added). Such actions involve applying aspects of the collective knowledge of social justice research by working and organizing across school districts and colleges of education along with grassroots community groups committed to equity (Associated Press & Romero, 2017; Au & Hagopian, 2017). Collaborative community organizing can result in publicly advancing electoral platforms – be it for local school boards or state offices – that offer policies and candidates committed to remedying inequities. Teachers and teacher educators can teach the history of activism and civil disobedience that has advanced equity and includes contemporary examples (Minsberg, 2017). Furthermore, educators can participate directly with contemporary social justice movements such as Black Lives Matter that “encourages purposely disruptive protests, peaceful civil disobedience, mainstream political activism, and mass demonstrations” (Linscott, 2017, p. 76) and endeavors to be an independent force in electoral politics (McClain, 2017). Hence, in order to expand a movement toward a Third Reconstruction, teachers, teacher educators, and researchers with a critical multicultural commitment will need to embrace praxis by engaging in scholarship, teaching, *and* actions that contribute to the advancement of educational equity for all our children.

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