Schooling Racialized Bodies: Curriculum at the Intersection of Visibility and Absence

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To handicap a student by teaching him that his black face is a curse and that his struggle to change his condition is hopeless is the worst sort of lynching. It kills one's aspirations and dooms him to vagabondage and crime. It is strange, then, that the friends of truth and the promoters of freedom have not risen up against the present propaganda in the schools and crushed it. This crusade is much more important than the anti-lynching movement, because there would be no lynching if it did not start in the schoolroom. Why not exploit, enslave, or exterminate a class that everybody is taught to regard as inferior? (Woodson, 1933, p. 3)

Historically maintained inequities in schools are implicitly and explicitly maintained creating a system that creates marginalized student and teacher populations through everyday teaching and learning (e.g., DuBois, 1903; Hendry, 2011; Quinn & Meiners, 2009; Valente, 2011). Similar to Anna Julie Cooper's (1892) discussion of schools and society as intensely practical, one central purpose of education under these models can be understood as a "defensive strategy that [calls] for the eradication of the socially inferior and the preservation of 'old stock' American values" (Winfield, 2007, p. 100). In short, as Woodson (1933) argues, schooling in many ways calls for the

educational lynching of marginalized children that suffocates a child's aspirations and stultifies any sense of self.

Marginalization in schooling is deep seated and systemic, so much so that all are involved in its reification regardless of their role or position. Othering in K-12 education has certainly been well documented (e.g., Apple, 2006; Brown & Brown, 2010; Jackson, 1968; Varenne & McDermott, 1998; Pinar, 1998; Watkins, 2001; Winfield, 2007). This is particularly the case in public schools where exclusion has been recorded throughout various forms of curricula that are reified through an educational system in which historical and political structures of Anglo, heteronormative power are continually maintained (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1973; den Heyer, 2003; Delpit, 1995; Eisner, 1994; Gershon, 2013a).

Although there continues to be increased attention to the historical place of scholars of color, the field as a whole has often largely overlooked the historical importance of scholars of color and their role in the field of curriculum studies (Brown, 2010). For instance, while the field of curriculum studies has paid close attention to lines of power (e.g.: Apple, 2006; Pinar, 1975; Quinn & Meiners, 2009), the field itself has generally overlooked the contributions of scholars of color in its historical reconstruction of the field (Berry, 2010; Brown, 2010; Milner, 2007). Contrary to their otherwise strong representation of the field, several influential historical studies of curriculum have either not closely attended to or marginalized race primarily by leaving out scholars of color in the field who are prominent figures integral to the field's historical roots (Brown & Au, 2014; Hendry, 2011; Watkins, 2001). Such a framing is significant because theory strongly informs every day practice and how we respond to the current moment is often dependent on our remembered past (Rothberg, 2004; Winfield, 2007). This is not to say that curriculum studies does not have strong scholars of color in the field or that people not of color have somehow missed questions of race. Nor does this

mean that there is not a history of strong scholars of color in curriculum studies. Instead, here I attend to the ways in which historical lines of the field are often constructed.

It is therefore important to return to Spencer's (1859) question, "What knowledge is of most worth?" The question in this case not only asks *what* knowledge is deemed valuable but can be used to attend to *whose* knowledge is considered relevant. What is significant here is that even within the existence of an African American intellectual tradition, important voices are still often overlooked. A salient example of such absences is found in the marginalization of African American women's voices from these his-tories (e.g., Berry, 1982; Evans, 2008; Guadalupe Davidson et al., 2010; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; hooks, 1994).

How is it that in an intellectual tradition that honors emancipatory possibilities of multiple perspectives, the work of women like Ana Julia Cooper, Mary Jane McLeod Bethnune, Hallie Brown, Barbara Sizemore, Angela Davis and Constance Baker Motley is often missed while male scholars like W.E.B. DuBois, Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington or Carter G. Woodson are cited? Similarly, queer voices and those who are dis/abled are often also notably absent within these intellectual traditions. It would therefore seem that within historical questions of race in curriculum and education there remains a general absence of gender. Similarly, within discussions of gender in the field there is often an absence of dis/abled and queer voices. In short, where is the nuanced multiplicity of one's embodied self in a field of what often seem to be silo-ed pluralities?

Subsequently, while not necessarily news to the contemporary field of curriculum studies, it bears repeating that through the multiplicities of marginalization that exist systemically in American education, a presence of absence is created. For example, LGBTQ students are certainly present in schools but their absence within everyday formal curriculum tends to continue

as a substantial loss. Following Mills' (1998) discussion of social ontologies, as educators we must ask how much our practice and theory contribute to the social Othering of marginalized student populations. What does a "presence of absence" mean in our history, contemporary scholarship, and everyday lives in schools? Perhaps more importantly, how do questions of presence and absence resonate (Gershon, 2013b) with/in and between students whose ways of being are, echoing Woodson some eighty years later, (un)intentionally choked out through schooling?

This inaugural edition of the *International Journal of Curriculum and Social Justice* speaks to not only to overarching questions of equity and access but more specifically were selected for the ways in which contributing authors seek to disrupt normalized ideas and ideals about the voices and curricula that are (un)heard within the structures of schooling. Additionally, this themed issue seeks to continue and complicate dialogues started by scholars like Cooper, Buthane, Woodson and DuBois that are situated within questions of both the epistemological and the ontological. In sum, articles in this issue on the theme of *Schooling Racialized Bodies: Curriculums at the Intersection of Visibility and Absence*, ask us to (re)consider the everyday of schooling and scholarship in order to interrupt spaces and places of historically and politically created marginalization (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997) where the victims of daily educational lynching are often children.

This inaugural edition begins with Winfield's significant discussion on eugenic ideology as it relates to questions of social justice, curricular forms and cultural memory. Her discussion strongly resonates with the theme of this issue because, as Winfield argues, North American public education has "been the primary tool for achieving a publically embraced hierarchy of human worth." Working to interrupt educational recursions toward eugenic ideals by using present contexts as a lens for historical analysis, Winfield's work resides at the multiple intersections of contemporary and historical theory and

practice. In these and other similar ways, Winfield's article pushes at the present contexts of schools as cites of racialized visibility and absence for marginalized youth through culturally constructed ideals of discrimination and superiority.

Similar to Winfield's discussion on memory, Hughes and Gershon's article on the "millennial contradiction" complicates questions of knowledge within scholarly dialogues of disciplinarity and identity. Specifically, the authors seek to nuance theories and methods that can potentially reinscribe hegemonic ideals of "legitimate ways of knowing" within the field of curriculum studies. Hughes and Gershon's work explicitly questions scholarly forms of knowledge and the unintentional epistemological re-productions that have been buttressed within the millennial contradiction. As Hughes and Gershon argue, a critical rethinking of inquiry within a field can engage scholars in critically reflexive action that necessitates "awareness, attention, care and dignity rather than a specific set of identities" within theoretical and methodological reframing of historical and contemporary dialogues.

Following Hughes and Gershon's discussion on knowledge production, He, Ross and Sealy's work further complicates methodological dilemmas in social justice research by asking what "counts" as educational research. Their work focuses on the intersections of oppression and suppression in the U.S. South that have compelled a crucial complication of traditional understandings within research. Similar to Hughes and Gershon's piece, He, Ross and Sealy use critical race methodology to decenter dominant ideologies in research while grounding social justice and curriculum studies within the nested and layered nodes at the intersection of race, class, and gender scholarship. To these ends, He, Ross and Sealy's work use counter narratives not only in a traditional collective sense but also as "sources of survival and resistance" for traditionally marginalized populations.

Using the Portugal's dual historical position as both a subaltern and colonizing country, Paraskeva presents the ways in which curriculum functions as a "regulated, compromised commodity". He argues against theoretical ideologies that often reinscribe racialized curricular histories and cultural memory. Further, Paraskeva troubles the idea and ideals of multicultural approaches, like those adopted in Portugal, that function as a form of "subtle cultural genocide". Through the (re)examining of various forms of democratic pedagogy, Paraskeva significantly questions the reiterations of dominant values through what is often considered progressive approaches.

The aforementioned articles have significant practical implications that are central to their theoretical, methodological and historical arguments. Reflecting the ideas and ideals in these authors' work, Price's piece serves as a non-traditional representation through film. For example, Price's work answers the questions raised about "what counts as scholarship" (He, Ross and Sealy), attends to questions of knowledge production (Hughes and Gershon), and considers the impact of history on contemporary contexts (Winfield and Paraskeva). This short film documents not only the dire situation of Chicago City Schools in 2013 but also speaks to overarching educational problems through the voices of political and local actors such as how American public schools are funded. This piece stands as a vivid reminder of public agency in the face of hegemonic practices in schools that, as seen in this video, have material consequences for schools, communities and the future of urban youth.

Helfenbein's article underscores Price's video commentary on urban education, turning toward the "concrete" by engaging in curriculum theorizing through lived experiences and urban youth narratives. Helfenbein argues that these narratives call attention to "spaces of possibility" within urban contexts as they relate to issues of space, place and identity. Through moving toward

the concrete, Helfenbein attends to the material consequences of social constructions as they are played out in the everyday lived experiences in classrooms. This move is significant in its framing of urban youth experience as a complex space of political knowing within expressions of identity, epistemology and ontology.

Similar to Helfenbein's work, my article with Varndell and Speer frames material consequences of social ideas and ideals about the LGBTQ community both in and outside of schooling contexts. Here we use Racial Battle Fatigue as a point of departure to discuss the exhaustion LGBTQ individuals and their allies experience in their daily lives. Grounded in narratives, we seek to queer perspectives on fatigue from a theoretical position that is in turn practically documented. As such, queer battle fatigue provides one means for attending to LGBTQ youth, a marginalized population whose fatigue contributes to high suicide rates and raising trends in depression among this group. It is an example the appalling consequences of when the pain of the aforementioned educational lynching turns inward to and for children and youth.

Finally, Mitchell and Michell's article discusses critical intersections of being and knowing such as visibility and silence. Working from Gershon's (2013b) understanding about the power and possibilities of sounded narratives, this article offers significant challenges to researchers about the art of listening as well as participant agency in offering auditory or ocular perspectives. This article essentially asks not only what is heard in academic recordings of lived experience but also how these stories resonate across the field of curriculum studies. In short, this article offers a set of "reflexive sensibilities" for both practitioners and researchers that push at (un)intentionally marginalizing ways of knowing embedded in educational philosophies and practices.

In sum, the authors in this inaugural issue write toward questions of history, theory, methodology and practice in ways that complicate more commonplace understandings of education and the broader field of curriculum studies. As clearly demonstrated through these authors' work, the practice of schooling has a longstanding history of marginalizing youth based on questions of race, sexual orientation, religion, language, gender and class. Just as DuBois (1903) writes about his Blackness being a "problem," children in contemporary schools continue to become problems through socially constructed understandings of their ways of being and knowing. These constructions have material consequences for children in ways that leave them sometimes with a sense of resistance and resilience and, at other more unfortunate times, leave them with a sense of deficit and negatively framed difference.

Parallel to DuBois' framing, here the authors speak back toward systems of schooling and ask what it means when the problem is not the child, but the structure. Perhaps more importantly, what does it mean when the problem chokes a child's ability to simply "be" in schools? And finally, what does it mean when part of the "problem" that renders a child to feel inferior is, in part, reinscribed by the scholarship that was meant to disrupt the contemporary iterations of educational lynching of normalized violence against those who are already marginalized?

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