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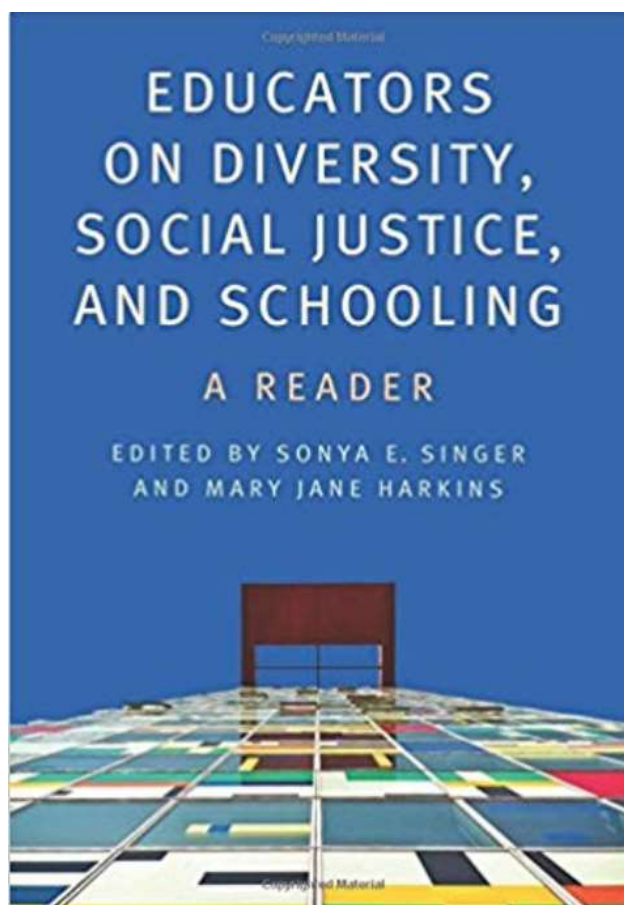
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*Educators on Diversity, Social Justice, and Schooling: A Reader* (2018), edited by Sonya E. Singer and Mary Jane Harkins, showcases a range of thought-provoking chapters by individuals in the field of education, including researchers, educators, and graduate students from Canada and the United States. *Educators on Diversity* is designed for similar audiences. This book is timely and relevant because of the growing diversity of students, as well as the ongoing issues of inequity that are evident in Canadian and U.S. schools, communities, and societies.

Singer and Harkins divide their book into three sections each on diversity, social justice, and schooling. While the editors' organizing principle for the book is evident, as a reader I saw multiple themes *across* sections that were stimulating and pushed me to revisit chapters multiple times with different lenses. For this review, I discuss three themes that I believe provide important insights. Examples from various chapters are provided to illuminate the themes.



## Theme 1: Reflection and Dialogue

A preponderance of chapters in *Educators on Diversity* showcase the importance of reflection and dialogue on the goals of understanding diversity and for doing social justice work in education. Reflections occur in myriad ways. Some chapters in the book show individual authors' reflections as well as reflections *between* authors presented in conversational style. When individual authors reflect on their lives, experiences, and identities in relation to diversity, social justice, and schooling, these, too, are dialogues between readers and authors.

Didi Khayatt's personal reflection is one such example of an author inviting the reader into her dialogic reflection on grappling with her complex and intersectional identity. She understands her identity as constantly shifting based on context and constant reflection on and negotiation with her identity. Reflecting on the concept of race in the context of her upbringing in Egypt and her move to Canada at age 23, Khayatt states that it was "colonialism, gender, class, religion, and sexuality," not race, that were the "greatest influences" as she grew up (p. 5). However, she explains that her self-awareness as a racialized being came to the fore in Canada, where "Colour...has a very different meaning, one that is meant to make a contradistinction with whiteness, one that characterizes colour as the 'other' and in so doing, hints at the supremacy of whiteness" (p. 6). Khayatt shares that although she became aware of her racialized identity in Canada, it was her identity as a lesbian that became of particular importance to her as she pursued her academic career. Khayatt embraces Stuart Hall's view of identities as "never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular, but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices, and positions" (pp. 5-6).

Other chapters present readers with dialogues between two authors in conversational format. In Chapter 13, Young Eagle (Adrian Downey) and Hoopoe (Gonen Sagi) present their dialogue as "two birds sitting together on a branch in a tree, talking and listening to each other without interruption" (p. 257). In Chapter 5, authors Carmen Rodriguez de France and Sara Winona Waldron use Freire's (1970) conceptualization of dialogue to present their ideas. Their dialogue involves respectful interaction as opposed to "one person acting on another" and dialogue as a "pedagogical process by which to know ourselves and, therefore, affirm our identity through the experiences of others" (p. 79). For example, at one point in their conversation, Rodriguez de France probes for details about Waldron's experience enacting culturally relevant teaching: "In your experience, what are some principles that teachers can adopt to support and enhance their practice?" (p. 86). Waldron shares how she has incorporated the perspectives and experiences of Aboriginal Elders in her classroom: "all students benefited from participating in the sessions where Indigenous perspectives were a part of a culturally responsive curriculum" (p. 86). Waldron believes bringing the practices, cultures, and language of diverse students into the classroom can push back against a "school culture...that presupposes an affluent, middle-class, Eurocentric background" (p. 87). The experiences, questions, and challenges discussed by Rodriguez de France and Waldron support their critique of what they see as Geneva Gay's (2002) simplification of requisites for culturally relevant teaching. Their dialogue allows the reader to see the ways that they co-construct complex understandings of culturally relevant teaching through the dialogic process.

## Theme 2: The Power of Stories and Experiences to Disrupt Dominant Narratives

In synergy with the theme of reflection and dialogue is the theme of the power of stories and narratives to disrupt dominant societal narratives. Throughout the book, the terms story, narrative, and discourse are often used interchangeably by the authors. In a critical examination of assumptions about poverty, teaching, and cultural and linguistic diversity, Luigi Iannacci warns of the danger of what he calls “pedagogical determinism,” which he defines as “the coalescing of limited and limiting assumptions generated from *taken-for-granted* and *historical discourses* about cultural and linguistic diversity and socioeconomic status [which] limit literacy and identity options” for diverse learners (p. 15, emphasis added). Stories are also central in Elizabeth Barrett and Carl E. James’ teacher stories of teaching for social justice in marginalized communities. Barrett and James’ research draws from interviews with three teachers who participated in a university/school board partnership project to increase student engagement. They studied Ms. Elementary, Ms. Middle, and Mr. High School “to examine the extent to which their commitments to social justice teaching related to the *stories they tell* about their students, their schools, and themselves” (p. 179, emphasis in original). They found that these teachers’ stories “highlighted *counter-narratives* that have the potential to motivate teachers to engage in a community-centered approach to teaching for social justice” (p. 181, emphasis added).

In another chapter, Wendy Barber, Lorayne Robertson, Bill Walters, and Geoff Whent share their development of an approach to physical education (PE) that can replace the traditional “hegemonic pedagogy” found in most schools. While these authors do not use the term *narrative*, the hegemonic pedagogy of PE is the dominant narrative of PE “where students of a certain body type and

ability shine, while other students are left at the sidelines” (p. 310). To disrupt hegemonic pedagogy in PE, Barber and colleagues suggest, “A social justice approach to physical education *puts students’ voices and abilities at the center of the curriculum*. Instead of expecting students to adapt to the curriculum, the curriculum adapts to the students” (p. 312, emphasis added). Such re-centering of the curriculum around students – the shifting of whose story or narrative is dominant – is also taken up in the conversation between Young Eagle (Adrian Downey) and Hoopoe (Gonen Sagi). Young Eagle describes schooling as bureaucratic and tightly controlled by a centralized body (p. 263). The centralized nature of schools, Young Eagle says, “is a remnant of the colonial power structures that shaped the government of this nation” (pp. 263-264). He calls for an “emergent curriculum – or a course of study that emerges from the students’ *own lived realities*” (p. 263, emphasis added).

Elsewhere, playbuilding is used as a way of “re(storying)” dominant, master narratives (p. 163). The eight teacher educator authors utilize playbuilding methodology to examine and share their perspectives on inclusive education. The chapter begins with vignette scripts (with URL links to actual performances) followed by thematic analysis of major issues in the scripts, and ends with reflection by each playwright (p. 141). For example, Scene 9: Gatekeepers (pp. 156-157) represents the theme of “Selective Discrimination,” which focuses on the “barriers that prevent qualified candidates from entering and moving through higher education (p. 167). In Gatekeepers, actor roles include the gatekeeper (Jillian), individuals who “buttress” the gatekeeper (Leena and Paula; p. 167), and two qualified candidates for entry into higher education (Patti and Scott). Neither Patti nor Scott have voices in the script, so the role of blocking (directions for actors’ movements within parentheses) is pivotal and symbolizes the silencing and

exclusionary power of gatekeeping. The brief but powerful one- to three-word statements from the gatekeepers to evaluate the worth of Patti and Scott reflect how complex identities can be reduced to “static, one-dimensional markers” (p. 167). Patti’s playwright reflection reveals her connection to the skit: as a Latina in higher education, it was only among a “small, trusted group of colleagues” – “Sistas Doctas” – that she “felt whole and grounded” (p. 170).

### **Theme 3: Conceptualizations and Outcomes of Diversity and Social Justice at Individual, Group, and Institutional Levels**

A third theme focuses on commonalities and differences in diversity and social justice frameworks as conceptualized at the individual, group, and organizational/institutional level (and corresponding goals and outcomes for each). Across sections, author examine the topics of diversity, social justice, and schooling in varied contexts and through different modes of inquiry. These include individual reflection, discussion about the beliefs and experiences of multiple individuals or members of a group, analysis of diversity and social justice policies or initiatives, and identification and discussion of overarching systems or epistemologies that impact diversity and social justice goals.

Some chapters begin with an individual focus but leverage the details of individual experiences, beliefs, and reflection to address issues of diversity, social justice, and schooling at the group, institutional, and/or systemic level. For example, in her chapter on teaching African Nova Scotian students, Wendy Mackey uses the personal (her own experiences and perspectives) in parallel with the historical and systemic nature of racism (documented, supported by literature). She shares her experiences growing up in the inner city and attending public schools as an African Nova Scotian female and describes her

journey from student to teacher to administrator to instructional leader. Snapshots of her life also “chronicle the factors involved in low academic achievement for African Nova Scotian students” (p. 39). In her “My Schooling Memory Timeline,” which reads like a memoir, Mackey shares an experience from grade six that reveals the documented trend of teachers’ lowered expectations for students of color and the ways that teachers’ low expectations and deficit views of their students can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Mackey reflects on a teacher who was aghast with surprise that she performed well on a quiz: “I made it my mission...to work harder than anyone in my class, so my teacher would stop looking at me as the ‘dumb Black girl.’ The perception of myself as the dumb Black girl grew, and fixed itself upon my psyche as my schooling experiences continued up to and through university” (p. 42). Mackey’s chapter showcases the efficacy of harnessing the emotional and narrative impact of personal experiences to reveal historical systems of oppression.

Other chapters share insights from inquiry at the organization or policy level and then examine implications for group and individual levels. For example, in her chapter on Canadian child advocates, Daniella Bendo shares findings from her honors thesis that pursued the following research questions: “How is child and youth advocacy being discussed within Canadian law, policy, and media documents? and How does the work of the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates create opportunities for the betterment of children’s lives?” (p. 194). Bendo utilizes legal texts, media documents, government and non-government reports, policy documents, data from academic databases – the texts comprising the “discourse” surrounding child advocacy in Canada. Her analysis revealed four key themes from across 19 representative texts that move from the institutional to the individual:

“institutional and interpersonal power, vulnerability, CRC [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989] implementation, and youth voice” (p. 202).

### **Using *Educators on Diversity* in Your Classroom**

The 19 chapters in *Educators on Diversity* embody great variation in the ways they take up the topics of diversity, social justice, and schooling. Indeed, each chapter can stand on its own and provide fodder for rich discussion and analysis. At the same time, the interweaving themes evident across chapters show the multiple ways that chapters from

within or across sections of the book could be paired/combined. The variation in demographic contexts is valuable; often books on diversity are situated within a single national context (e.g., issues of inequity in the US). Discussing different chapters and different themes across the book offers an opportunity to unpack the similarities and differences between issues of race, schooling, and social justice in Canada and the US, providing fertile ground for rich discussion. Teacher educators who read *Educators on Diversity* will most likely find themselves revising their syllabi to include one or more chapters from this edited collection.

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### **About the Reviewer**

**Autumn M. Dodge, PhD**, is an Assistant Professor of Language and Literacy Education at the University of Lynchburg where she teaches classes for the MEd in Reading and undergraduate education program. Her main areas of research are social justice issues in teacher education, specifically White teacher identity and LGBTQIA equity and inclusion; she also writes on intersections between literacy, literature, and pop culture. Dodge also served on the committee that developed revised 2017 Standards for International Literacy Association Standards, the national accrediting body for master’s programs preparing specialized literacy professionals. She is on the editorial review board for the *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *The Reading Teacher* and *SIGNAL* Journal (Special Interest Group Network on Adolescent Literature).



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