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Critical Citizenship Education for Multicultural Societies

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Abstract:

Multicultural societies face many challenges with regard to how citizenship is defined and enacted for the development and sustainability of democracy in our changing times. Some of these challenges include intercultural conflict and racial/ethnic tensions that result in exclusion and discrimination of some members of society, and inequality in social, economic and political opportunities. This paper proposes a model of critical citizenship education as pedagogical approaches to be implemented in schools to address these challenges present in our multicultural societies. In this paper, I define critical citizenship education and contrast it with minimal and maximal forms of citizenship education. I describe four pedagogical approaches and provide examples of them in classrooms. The article concludes with considerations for implementing critical citizenship education in the classroom.

Introduction

Most countries in the world today are characterized by highly diverse populations, be it indigenous peoples living with those who colonized them, diverse immigrant groups who have arrived at the shores and borders of countries historically and in the present day, or different ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups who have been amalgamated into a single state. Diverse populations living together in a democratic state are presented with many challenges for the functioning of state institutions, including ensuring equality and participation—key characteristics of citizenship within a democracy (Banks, et al., 2005; Kymlicka, 1995). Democracy in diverse societies is fraught with the tension of upholding justice, equal rights, and the participation of all, while historical and present day practices of most democracies and the relationships between its members reveal inequality, discrimination, and exclusion. Citizenship as an ascribed identity is exclusionary by definition (Castles,

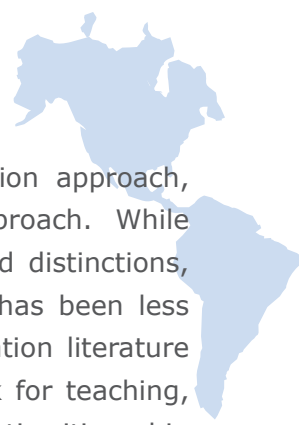
1998), excluding indigenous peoples, African Americans, and women historically (in the U.S. and most Latin American countries), and immigrants in the present day. Even when granted legal citizenship status, protection and enactment of rights and the ability to participate equally in societal institutions is not ensured for all (Kymlicka & Norman, 2000). In response to exclusion and inequality, some scholars argue for different forms of citizenship, e.g., cultural citizenship or group rights (Flores, 2003; Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Kymlicka, 1995; Kymlicka, 2003).

In the Americas, both research on citizenship and research on education for the purposes of democratic citizenship reveal continuing inequalities among diverse populations of the various countries. At a political level, policies and practices of citizenship and its related rights have been challenged by the indigenous and immigrant reform movements. In the U.S., the scholarly and public discourse is increasingly debating



immigrants' and non-whites' political, social and civic engagement, as well as their school achievement (see, for example, Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Qin-Hilliard, 2005). At the level of education institutions, disparities in achievement, educational opportunities, and civic engagement persist. Of particular concern in the U.S. is the high drop-out rate of Latino/a, African American, and Native American youth from schools. In addition to being an educational achievement issue, the lack of participation of these youth in schools reflects a growing concern for their participation in, and contribution to, a democratic society. Several studies examining immigrant status, race, and socio-economic status have found that these demographic factors matter in young people's civic knowledge, attitudes, and engagement (Foster-Bey, 2008; Fridkin, Kenney, & Crittenden, 2006; Stepick & Stepick, 2002). Yet these studies take a deficit approach to different groups' civic participation, and they do not explain why these differences persist or how school and societal factors may affect differing civic attitudes, knowledge, or participation. Torney-Purta and her colleagues' (Torney-Purta, Barber, & Wilkenfeld, 2006; Torney-Purta, Barber, & Wilkenfeld, 2007) recent studies on Latino/a youth in the U.S. help explain these differences. They found that school level variables, including open classroom climate and time studying political topics, matter more for Latino students' civic engagement than do individual demographic variables. Kahne and Sporte's (2008) study of racially and socio-economically diverse students found that school curriculum and learning, including experiential learning activities, affect students' commitment to civic engagement, after controlling for demographic variables. These studies suggest that what teachers do in schools with regard to how they teach diverse students is important for civic engagement.

In Mexico and in many Latin American countries, Reimers and Villegas-Reimers (2005) suggest that the lack of educational opportunities for poor, marginalized, and indigenous youth undermines a culture of democracy. The kind of educational opportunities, the pedagogy, and the curriculum may also affect attitudes about and engagement in democratic citizenship. Reimers and Villegas Reimers argue that teachers play a pivotal role in teaching children about democracy and critical issues in society. Studies on Latin American adults and youth show low levels of democratic attitudes, knowledge and civic participation (Reimers, 2007; Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001). Less attention has been given in the citizenship education literature on Latin America to civic knowledge, attitudes, and participation among minority ethnic and indigenous groups. At a political level in Latin America, however, the indigenous movement has challenged historical constructions of citizenship and education for citizenship (see, for example, DeVillar, 1998; Yashar, 1998). De Villar (1998) asserts that the state regards the socio-cultural and political development of many minority cultural groups in the Americas as inferior to the majority group, despite claims of justice and democratic equality by the state (p. 187). For instance, Aikman's (1999) ethnographic study of Peruvian indigenous peoples and the historical development of intercultural education examines the tensions between enacting intercultural education for developing self-determination, and enacting it for the purposes of assimilation into the nation-state. Indigenous organizations working with governments in the early 1990s differentiated between egalitarian and inegalitarian interculturalism. Inegalitarian interculturalism has a purpose of assimilation; egalitarian interculturalism seeks the transformation of power relations and the construction of a new political system based



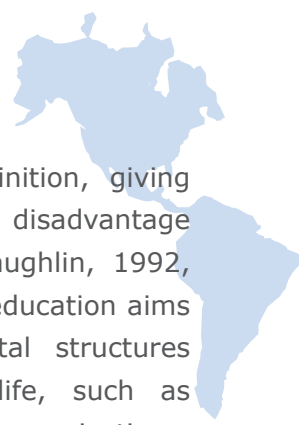
on principles of meaningful participation and consent (Aikman, 1999, p. 20). The principles of egalitarian interculturalism inform the approach to critical citizenship education discussed in this article.

Education has long been regarded as a key institution for the development of democratic citizens, particularly through citizenship education. Levinson (2005) states that schools are key sites “for the consolidation of the meanings about democracy” (p. 335). Schools and the education processes within them can be spaces in which conflicts and inequality among diverse students are perpetuated, and in which perspectives about assimilation of diverse peoples into a singular meaning of citizenship are indoctrinated. They can also be spaces where students and families of diverse backgrounds can be engaged with each other to debate and enact meanings of democracy, citizenship, and ideals of equality in society (Gutmann, 2004; Parker, 2003). Researchers and educators need to ask how educational processes can be enacted to develop critical citizens who understand and can change political, social, and economic inequalities in the larger society. In essence, how can education for democratic citizenship address inequalities and injustices that inhibit diverse members of our societies from developing their civic identities, becoming engaged, and enacting their rights of liberty, equality, and justice in a democratic society?

A body of research in schools examines various classroom practices that aim to engage children and youth in democratic citizenship by addressing societal issues, including inequality and injustices, that persist in multicultural societies (e.g., Kahne & Spote, 2008; Osler, 2005; Osler & Starkey, 2005; Thayer-Bacon, 2008; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Some of these practices are informed by a critical pedagogical

approach, a multicultural education approach, or an anti-racist education approach. While there is considerable overlap, and distinctions, among these approaches, there has been less attention in the citizenship education literature to providing a guiding framework for teaching, learning, and re-creating democratic citizenship in a multicultural society. More often, citizenship education research and literature have focused on specific skills, knowledge, and attitudes related to democracy, without careful consideration of philosophical approaches to democracy and the nature of citizenship in society (e.g., liberalism, communitarianism, republicanism), or to values and practices emerging from these approaches (See Gutmann, 2004 and Thayer-Bacon, 2008 for analyses of schools’ differing practices from various philosophical approaches to democracy). Critical citizenship education, as I propose here, is a framework emerging in the literature that suggests teaching and learning strategies to develop young people’s engagement in the democratic goals of equality and justice in multicultural societies (DeJaeghere & Tudball, 2007; Johnson & Morris, 2009).

Critical citizenship education utilizes and extends philosophical perspectives and practices of multicultural education and critical pedagogy (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2002), and applies them to the purposes of education for citizenship. In the next section, I explain how critical citizenship education differs from other forms of citizenship education. I utilize research that examines classroom curriculum and pedagogy to suggest four components of critical citizenship education. Examples illustrate how these components of critical citizenship education can be implemented in education, but not without attention to issues of inequality inherent in societies. Finally, implications for teachers and cautionary notes for enacting critical citizenship pedagogy are discussed.



What is critical citizenship education?

Citizenship education in many countries has been categorized along a continuum of minimal to maximal characteristics (Cogan & Morris, 2001; Davies & Issitt, 2005; DeJaeghere, 2006; Kerr, 1999; McLaughlin, 1992). McLaughlin (1992) discusses the philosophical and pedagogical differences between minimal and maximal forms of citizenship education, particularly with regard to pluralist societies.¹ Minimal citizenship education includes normative ideas of citizenship, such as the legal ascription of a citizen identity, and civic rights and duties. Minimal citizenship education emphasizes rights and equality for all within a democracy, without accounting for the diversity of experiences within our multicultural societies to enact these rights. Teaching and pedagogy within this form of citizenship education tends to be content-led and focuses on civic knowledge, with little attention to citizenship participation and processes. Its goals are to promote the “good” citizen, who is law-abiding, contributes to society, and possesses a good character. However, this form of education does not address societal structures and relations that create inequalities among citizens. Schools taking this approach to citizenship education typically might address citizenship in a single course, such as civics. These courses, and corresponding assessments, stress knowledge about the political system, laws, rights and responsibilities, with little room for alternative perspectives and discussion about the meaning of democracy, and the enactment of rights in the daily lives of people (See McLaughlin, 1992; Kerr, 1999).

McLaughlin (1992) and Kerr (1999) refer to maximal citizenship education as developing values, attitudes, and behaviors related to fuller participation in democracy and civic life at all levels. Citizen identity is dynamic and a matter

of continuing debate and redefinition, giving rise to questions of how social disadvantage can undermine citizenship (McLaughlin, 1992, p. 236). This form of citizenship education aims to foster involvement in societal structures created for political or civic life, such as voting or participating in civic organizations, although McLaughlin and Kerr are less clear on how participation challenges or changes the functioning and equity of societal structures. In addition, maximal forms of citizenship education stress the acquisition of knowledge and skills in a variety of subjects, such as global studies, rather than only traditional civics education. An example of implementing maximal forms of citizenship education is a school that teaches citizenship values, responsibilities, and skills throughout their curriculum and through extra-curricular activities, such as school government.

Extending McLaughlin’s (1992) minimal and maximal approaches to citizenship education, *critical citizenship education* approaches problematize and (re)construct democratic citizenship to address civic realities of exclusion and discrimination, two factors that prevent the full enactment of democratic citizenship in multicultural societies (DeJaeghere, 2006; DeJaeghere & Tudball, 2007). This approach shares foundational principles with critical pedagogy, and more recent developments in critical multicultural education (e.g., Freire, 1970; Gamage, 2008; Kincheloe, 2004, 2008) and post-colonial theory about educating for citizenship (e.g., Said, 1978; Ong, 1999). Kincheloe and Steinberg (2002) explain that a critical multicultural approach questions the existing socio-political order and how it creates injustices and inequalities for groups of people in society. Freire’s concept of praxis is also useful for critical citizenship because it combines the development of critical consciousness with social action. With regard to citizenship education,



critical pedagogy and critical multiculturalism can help students to understand and develop new meanings of civic membership and participation, while critiquing the ways in which citizenship has not been developed, either historically or in the present, around democratic principles of freedom, equality, and justice.

Post-colonial theory provides a critique and re-conceptualization of the formation of the nation-state based on colonialism. Ong (1999) argues that there is a need for reexamining the concept of citizenship shaped by race and imperialism in the Americas, in relation to and beyond colonial/post-colonial constructions to see the development of alternative constructions of citizenship. She suggests that citizenship belonging and rights need to be understood as a cultural process of subject-ification, in which citizens are both self-made and being-made in relation to state institutions and transnational phenomena. Among other things, a post-colonial perspective examines how histories and identities are created through mainstream knowledge imparted in schools. Within a critical citizenship education framework, educators must consider how young people's citizen identities are being made and are self-making vis-à-vis pedagogy, content, and relations in the classroom.

In critical citizenship education, both knowledge and participation are used to empower learners by helping them to understand and engage with the underlying causes of social problems in society. Knowledge in this approach refers to a critical analysis of the historical and contemporary formation and practice of citizenship in nation-states, and the social structures through which democracy is enacted. Such knowledge is learned from a variety of disciplinary and cultural perspectives, including perspectives of those whose knowledge

has been marginalized. Developing positive attitudes toward and an emotional connection with those who are different from oneself and engaging with others around contested issues are important components of critical citizenship education. Participation goes beyond a personal responsibility or a duty to society to an examination of the relationships between an individual's and group's participation in society and the structures of social inequality. Participation involves collectively experiencing and addressing societal issues, while challenging our understanding of the issues from multiple perspectives.

I suggest here four pedagogical approaches that are important for implementing critical citizenship education. Scholars writing about transformational citizenship education (Banks, 2008), anti-racist citizenship education (Osler & Starkey, 2005), and global education (Merryfield, 2001) share similar epistemological and pedagogical approaches. Merryfield utilizes post-colonial perspectives to suggest similar pedagogical approaches for global education and social studies curriculum. Osler and Starkey's work provides anti-racist pedagogical strategies that aim to understand how racism, and thus exclusion and discrimination, are formed historically in the nation-state. The critical citizenship pedagogical approaches suggested here bring coherency to these other approaches found in different forms of education, and apply them specifically to the purposes of citizenship education in multicultural societies. Some research on these approaches has found positive effects on students' civic engagement and development of citizenship identity, though additional research is needed to understand these approaches' impact on creating critical citizens engaged in democratic processes in society. In the remainder of this paper, I explain each of these four pedagogical approaches



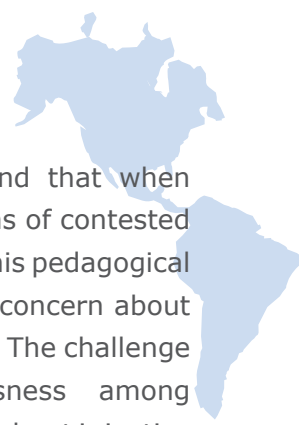
and provide examples of how they can be implemented by educators in classrooms and schools.

The approaches are:

- 1) Including marginalized knowledge and voices in the curriculum to allow for the construction of alternative forms of citizenship, and seeing this knowledge in relation to, and as a critique of, mainstream constructions of citizenship and democracy;
- 2) Learning and enacting double-consciousness, which is examining one's perspectives about and identity related to citizenship through the eyes of another (self-awareness and awareness of others' perspectives) *and* understanding the complexities of citizen identity affected by discrimination and oppression;
- 3) Developing intercultural understanding through intercultural learning experiences to engage others in civic relations and spaces; and
- 4) Utilizing strategies for collective social action, such as a collaborative engagement of students, teachers, schools and communities to create social change. In critical citizenship education, the inclusion of non-mainstream literature and knowledge of non-majority people allows for a critique of how mainstream literature creates particular narratives of a society's history, which includes the concepts of democratic institutions, citizenship, and rights. Merryfield (2001) calls this approach contrapuntal pedagogy, referring to Edward Said's contrapuntal approach to reading literature. Pedagogically, teachers and students engage in inquiry and critique about how colonialism and imperialism

have shaped and continue to shape mainstream knowledge about citizens and rights. This pedagogical practice creates the space for the knowledge and perspectives of people marginalized from the mainstream of society to be incorporated into teaching and learning. It does not replace mainstream ideas about citizenship or rights; rather, it allows for these perspectives to be critiqued and other perspectives to be compared, contrasted, and constructed in the classroom. Writing from and about Latin America, Nestor Garcia Canclini (2007) addresses a similar issue about knowledge and perspectives when he asks the question: How can the multicultural construction of knowledge be realized? He argues that, "Despite the unequal recognition that scientific and traditional knowledge receives, and the evolutionist tendencies that tend to disqualify indigenous cultures, local knowledge remains in use by vast sectors as resources for health, peasant work, and everyday education" (p. 299). Including local knowledge in relation to mainstream knowledge is important to understand how groups in our society create knowledge and construct citizen identities in their daily lives.

An example of including counter narratives and critiquing mainstream narratives is found in some Australian states' approaches to indigenous education. Indigenous education is a requirement in the curriculum, and many aspects of indigenous education have been infused within citizenship education curriculum in mainstream schools.² Sections of the curriculum include perspectives from indigenous people about the denial of their rights within Australia and their winning of land rights in recent decades; a



critique of how citizenship rights were historically granted is also included (DeJaeghere, 2006). Aikman's (1999) study in Peru also illustrates how indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and pedagogy, such as experiential learning in and with the community, are important for fostering indigenous peoples' enactment of their rights in society.

Teaching from the perspective of W.E.B. DuBois' "double-consciousness"³ aims to have teachers and students understand issues and views of the "world both from the mainstream and from the margins" (Merryfield, 2001, p. 189). Incorporating double-consciousness extends the first approach of including unrepresented knowledge and perspectives into the curriculum to a pedagogical approach relating this knowledge to students' lives and perspectives. Cultivating double-consciousness allows students to understand their and other students' identities as having different positionalities of privilege and power. Teachers also need to consider their power, how power is utilized in the classroom and outside the school, and how power can be understood and reshaped in students' learning experiences.⁴ Double-consciousness can be facilitated by explicitly including content and discussions on historical and contemporary gender relations, ethnic and indigenous relations, and socioeconomic and citizenship status as they affect one's identity. Such a pedagogical approach allows students to understand how discrimination affects different group identities, as well as how individuals from different groups resist and negotiate societal relations. Discussion of contested issues, such as civil rights and war, may be another pedagogical strategy that, while different from developing double-consciousness, can encourage the development of awareness of injustices affecting different people in society. In an analysis of various teaching practices in schools, Syversten,

Flanagan, and Stout (2007) found that when students participated in discussions of contested issues, such as civil rights or war, this pedagogical method was predictive of greater concern about unjust treatment of others (p. 16). The challenge in developing double-consciousness among students is to deepen that concern about injustice toward others to an empathetic understanding of how these injustices affect one's identities.

Thayer-Bacon (2008) provides an example of a teacher in a predominantly black school utilizing and developing double-consciousness to reveal power and its uses to discriminate against Blacks in the U.S.⁵ She recounts a day in the classroom when a boy brought in a book for discussion on racially biased criminology. The conversation that Thayer-Bacon recounts illustrates how students and the teacher "named" the racialization of violence by predominantly white media, and how they felt about media reports when violence affects white communities. One boy concluded that he did not know what it means to say, "I'm Black and I'm Proud," while the teacher recounted experiences of the civil rights movement and how she felt pride in this movement despite injustices in how the movement was portrayed and understood. The teacher allowed these students to grapple with their identities and double-consciousness to see how identities are created in relation to society (pp. 62-63). Thayer-Bacon analyzes this teacher's pedagogical style as transforming both liberal and neo-conservative notions of authority to one of relational power, in which she creates an environment where students feel valued and safe to share their views and develop their perspectives in the classroom. Relational power is also used to understand how identity and one's sense of power are developed in relation to others in society.

A third pedagogical approach is

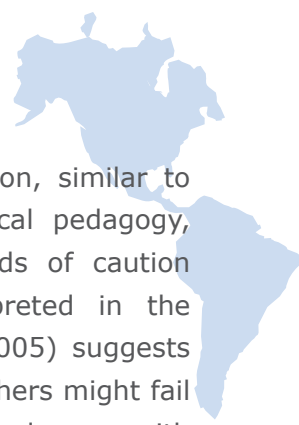


intercultural experiential learning that facilitates understanding of and effective interaction across differences between cultural/racial groups. Experiential learning, in general, has been shown in various studies to have a positive impact on students' civic engagement (Kahne & Sporte, 2008; Hyman & Levine, 2008). The research on experiential learning and civic engagement does not specifically address, however, whether these experiences encourage intercultural understanding and engagement. Intercultural experiential learning goes beyond the traditional intercultural understanding and learning about the "other" or about respecting "others." This approach involves a deep understanding that people in our societies have different values, beliefs, and constructions of meaning. It also requires engaging with others who hold different values and beliefs. Kymlicka (2003) suggests that intercultural citizens must not only understand intercultural differences globally, but they need to be able to engage with people in their local context who are different from them. Local intercultural engagement is grounded in a purpose of creating justice for those with whom we live, rather than merely developing intercultural understanding for the purposes of personal growth.

Intercultural learning experiences involve teachers and students in activities and conversations that challenge them to examine and confront different values and beliefs among groups in our societies, while also exploring their own cultural perspectives and beliefs. In classrooms throughout the U.S., Canada, and Latin America, students come from many different countries, as well as from different racial and religious backgrounds. Intercultural learning can purposefully occur in these classrooms. However, research on intercultural competence suggests that meaningful intercultural learning experiences will likely not result from random interactions;

rather, facilitated encounters are needed in which teachers and students explicitly discuss and try to understand, through empathy, each others' perspectives, meanings, and experiences (Bennett, 1998). Intentionally creating and facilitating these learning opportunities as intercultural experiences extends students' civic understanding and engagement to intercultural interactions in our communities. It aims to develop intercultural citizens who can engage one another with their differences, rather than merely facilitating intercultural awareness and respect, and seeking some sort of commonality. Kymlicka (2003) argues that engaging one another through our differences is fundamental to democracy in multicultural states.

Finally, critical citizenship education includes a pedagogical strategy for collective social action, which involves collaborative mobilization and action by groups of people around an issue to advance our democratic societies. Research by Hyman and Levine (2008) suggests that pedagogical practices for citizenship education should emphasize collective problem solving to address real problems rather than voluntary service as a method for more effectively engaging students in developing a sense of citizenship. In this strategy, students and teachers acquire knowledge and experience to examine social problems, such as structural inequities and the effects of these inequities on individuals' lives. This pedagogical strategy also aims to engage young people and teachers in developing solutions and enacting them. Young people in our schools are not often given the opportunity to collectively mobilize around an issue of importance to them. In recent work with a U.S. school district that aims to address inequities in student experiences and outcomes, I facilitated "learning power"(cf. Oakes & Rogers, 2006) sessions for students who feel marginalized in their schools. Students identified



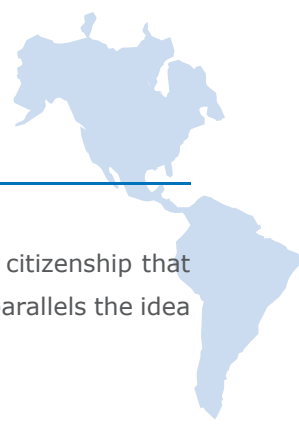
key concerns they experienced in the school, and then they worked collectively to determine plans of action. One of the key issues students from several cultural groups identified was a lack of a multicultural curriculum. They proposed improvements for the curriculum and suggested how they could be involved with school staff to make these changes. School staff present at the session discussed students' suggestions in follow-up staff meetings. Students who participated in these sessions felt engaged and empowered to act on issues that mattered to them. These collective processes for engaging students in addressing problems that affect their lives need to be modeled by teachers in other schools.

Conclusion

These critical citizenship education approaches are suggested pedagogical strategies for teachers to implement in their classrooms to begin to problematize new meanings and enactments of citizenship in multicultural democratic societies. Such approaches require teachers to see their students and the goals of citizenship education differently from the view of traditional citizenship education. Rather than developing knowledge, skills, and attitudes about essentialized notions of democracy and citizenship, these strategies allow teachers and students to bring their lived experiences and constructions of citizenship to engage with issues facing citizens in all strata of our societies. Critical citizenship education allows for the possibility of challenging and changing the way citizenship is experienced in the daily lives of diverse people within a nation-state. To do so, these pedagogies must address inequalities and discrimination perpetuated through current uses of power in our democratic institutions, and help students reclaim the power to engage in democratic processes.

Critical citizenship education, similar to multicultural education and critical pedagogy, cannot be enacted without words of caution about how it could get interpreted in the classroom. Bartlett's research (2005) suggests a cautionary note about how teachers might fail to interpret and enact critical pedagogy with the radical possibilities that Freire suggested. Bartlett warns that critical pedagogy may be enacted in a manner that constructs power as a static concept, in which some people hold power and others do not. Implemented in this way, critical pedagogy offers a critique of power and its oppressive nature; it does not, however, foster students' understanding that they can enact power in relationship with others. Critical citizenship education utilizes this latter perspective of power, as power to create change with others. This cautionary note is important to consider when including marginalized knowledge and developing double-consciousness in the classroom. Similar critiques have been given of the enactment of multicultural education from a non-critical perspective (see Kincheloe and Steinberg, 2002).

In addition to these cautions of how such pedagogical strategies can be minimally interpreted, teachers will face challenges in teaching critical citizenship education when democratic values of equality and justice may not be prevalent in government institutions nor in schools. However, examples marshaled in this article from communities and educators throughout the Americas provide hope that critical citizenship pedagogical strategies can be effectively implemented, particularly if teachers understand the philosophical and epistemological principles of critical multiculturalism and post-colonialism described here, and they apply these principles to concepts of democracy, citizenship, rights, and equality.



Endnotes

- 1 Parker (1996) and Westheimer and Kahne (2004) also suggest a continuum of three types of citizenship that reflect these different aims and goals. Westheimer and Kahne's "justice oriented citizen" most parallels the idea of critical citizenship discussed here.
- 2 Australian indigenous education also includes schools and curriculum controlled by the indigenous community, which is another form of teaching non-mainstream perspectives (See Aikman, 1999, for examples of this form of education in Peru).
- 3 Du Bois regarded double-consciousness as seeing one's identity through the eyes of others, in essence, having two identities often in conflict with each other. The doubleness is a result of societal structures and discourses, particularly through the writing of history, in which Africa and black people in the U.S. are not represented nor given voice.
- 4 I refer here to a Foucauldian notion of power as relational; power is subjectivized in individuals and acted upon through relations in society (Foucault, 1980). This meaning allows for understanding how power can be both oppressing and liberating.
- 5 Ladson-Billings (1994) and Santora (2001) also provide examples of teacher practices and pedagogies that facilitate double-consciousness and discussions about race, privilege, and inequality in societies.

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