

All Immigrants are Mexicans, Only Blacks are Minorities, But Some of Us are Brave

Race, Multiculturalism, and Postcolonial Studies in U.S. Education

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MULTICULTURALISM as articulated within the prevailing parochial race paradigm in the United States is disastrously inadequate to address the complexities of contemporary conditions. The dramatic demographic changes in schools lead me to ask: Is multicultural education really for peoples of color? What kind of multicultural education is implemented in a predominantly white school in comparison to a mostly black school? How do refugees and immigrants, like the growing Somali population in Columbus, Ohio, complicate the notion of who is “black”? How do we in education address multiculturalism in almost exclusively non-white schools, like in some areas in Los Angeles where Latino/as and Asian Americans are numerically greater than other racial and ethnic groups? And what about educators of color who work in schools with a student body different from themselves? Do teachers and administrators of color confront similar or different issues compared to their white counterparts in relation to multicultural education? I raise these questions with a sympathetic understanding that the process of answering these questions and the answers themselves are difficult, conflicted, and diverse but also to engage the limits of contemporary multicultural discourse and explore potential directions for a more nuanced thinking and praxis on race and ethnicity in education.

As an incitement for continuous cross-pollination of interdisciplinary insights, this article examines the ways in which postcolonial studies challenge and extend the configurations of multicultural discourse in U.S. education. Animating this inquiry is the question: What directions open up in our theorizing and praxis of education and social justice when perspectives from multicultural and postcolonial studies are brought together? With this in mind, I trace the works of three prominent education scholars, James Banks, Henry Giroux, and Cameron McCarthy, and contextualize their contributions within changing national and global landscapes. While I insert an autobiographical interlude in order to frame my discussions, I also pay particular attention to how Giroux and McCarthy have deployed postcolonial writings in their intellectual theorizing and academic research, especially in the realms of curriculum and pedagogy. Ultimately, I suggest three directions where the juxtaposition of multicultural education and postcolonial studies can guide us into productive, albeit not completely uncharted, territories.

U.S. Parochialism and Multicultural Education

Within educational discourses in the United States, addressing cultural pluralism and diversity issues falls under the umbrella of multicultural education. Multicultural education, for James Banks (2004a), is an intellectual and political project that promotes the creation of equal opportunities for all students, a reform movement that changes the school climate, and a process that administrators and teachers should strive to achieve. His astute interrogation of curriculum, pedagogy, and school structures contrasts the marked absence of—or, more directly, the mainstream refusal to recognize and embrace—certain histories, literatures, and images, with the dominance, dissemination, and tacit acceptance of hegemonic versions in textbooks and popular media. “Rather than excluding Western civilization from the curriculum,” Banks (1994) argues that

multiculturalists want a more truthful, complex, and diverse version of the West taught in the schools. They want the curriculum to describe the ways in which African, Asian, and indigenous American cultures have influenced and interacted with Western civilization. They also want schools to discuss not only the diversity and democratic ideals of Western civilization, but also its failures, tensions, and dilemmas, and struggles by various groups in Western societies to realize their dreams against great odds. (pp. 4–5)

His challenge to expand western curriculum encompasses two important aspects: to unmask the illusions of western homogeneity by including the contributions of African, Asian, and indigenous peoples of the Americas in the construction and development of the “West” and to unveil the hypocrisy of western democratic ideals by foregrounding the harsh socio-political conditions experienced by the oppressed (Bernal, 1987; Morrison, 1993; Said, 1993; Willinsky, 1998). By underscoring the influences and realities of marginalized communities, he points out that education can prepare students to participate in civic action in order to make our society more equitable and just.

Banks (2004b) marks the five dimensions of multicultural education as: content integration; knowledge construction process; prejudice reduction; equity pedagogy; and empowering school culture and social structure. Content integration is a curricular reform that changes the content by incorporating the voices, experiences, and struggles of women and peoples of color into the curriculum. Knowledge construction is a margin-to-center approach that examines, for instance, historical periods and literary themes from non-mainstream perspectives. It aims to actualize *e pluribus unum* by bringing together diverse and multiple viewpoints in order to understand and situate particular events, concepts, and issues. Prejudice reduction targets the intergroup and human relations dimension of multicultural education. Those from the dominant group learn to develop positive attitudes toward others who are different from them, and those who belong to marginalized groups learn to develop more positive feelings toward themselves. Equity pedagogy is designed to increase the academic achievement of students of color, women, students with disabilities, and those individuals from lower socio-economic strata. Some of the strategies consist of matching teachers’ pedagogical styles with students’ learning styles (such as cooperative learning), bilingual and bicultural education programs, and math and science programs for girls and young women. Finally, empowering school culture and social structure focuses on school and organizational dynamics and specifically targets teachers and administrators since they have decisive authority over curriculum, instruction, and assessment. These five dimensions, according to Banks, need to be developed and implemented in order to

further the goals of multicultural education. As a pedagogy for re-envisioning America, multicultural education helps students to value diversity and participate in a broader pluralistic society (Banks, 2002).

The goals and dimensions of Banks' multicultural education are grounded, detrimentally in my opinion, within a U.S.-centered understanding. Although Banks (2004c) has recently begun to productively engage with more global matters, the "West" that he invokes is frequently synonymous with the United States, and it is within a U.S.-focused knowledge production and structural operation that he examines the concepts of race, gender, language, and nation. Even though he is contesting the dominant Euro-American framework, his terms are domestically coded to register race as specifically African American, gender as heterosexual women, language as Spanish and to some degree African American Vernacular English, and nation as the geographically bounded United States mainland. While he shows the contributions and influences of African, Asian, and indigenous peoples to western civilization, he fails to recognize Latino/as parallels typologies that invoke racialized purity and the troubling outdated categories of caucasoids, mongolioids, and negroids. He also fails to acknowledge the existence and experiences of people who are multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and culturally hybrid. In addition, whereas patriarchy and gender (read: women) are analyzed, masculinity and sexualities are not. Heterosexual privileges, normative gender expressions, and the identities and realities of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgenders are ignored.

I do need to quickly add here that I recognize and support the ardent commitment of pioneering multicultural educators, like Banks, and that I have benefited personally and professionally from the changes made in P-12 and higher education institutions due to their scholarship, advocacy, and influence. Multicultural educators dispute the manifestations of white supremacy and patriarchy in curriculum, pedagogy, and administration and confront the devastating effects of non-inclusive practices and conditions, such as low test scores, high drop-out rates, technologically-deficient classrooms, dismal staff turn-overs, and demoralizing campus climates. They work within and against hostile environments that resist and refuse the ideas and practices that these scholar-activists aim to propagate. The liberal reform perspective that undergirds multicultural education, however, does not sufficiently transform the structures and discourses that render certain strategies and results palatable and others unintelligible to the dominant groups' guilt, power, and control.

Filipino/as, Race, and Belonging

Within the past decade, race-conscious education scholars have turned their attention to critical race theory as generated in the legal arena in order to arm themselves with another insurgent framework in their struggles to redress the inequities and injustices experienced by peoples of color in the United States (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1996; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Academics and activists have been dissatisfied with the slow reform process that would putatively improve lived experiences and structural conditions. They feel betrayed by the liberal civil rights orientation that has relied heavily on mainstream juridical procedures and are concerned with the retrenchment and eradication of rights gained since the 1950s. For critical race scholars and practitioners in education, this perspective "challenge[s] the dominant legal, political, ideological, and epistemological thinking about race and power" and, as a radical intervention,

offers alternative visions, perspectives, and policies that are based on placing race (and its partial intersections with other areas of difference, e.g., ethnicity, language, gender, sexual orientation, social class) at the center of the remedies for changes in the current power relations in U.S. society. (Parker, Deyhle, Villenas, & Nebeker, 1998, p. 5)

In an overview of the relevance of critical race theory in education, Gloria Ladson-Billings (1998) delineates four major tenets underpinning critical race theory: Racism is a normal and natural facet in the United States; storytelling as a descriptive, analytic, and rhetorical mechanism gives voice to the marginalized and exposes racism and power relations in its multiple forms; a critique of liberalism and incrementalism transforms the political agenda for progressive social change; and white people have been the primary beneficiaries of civil rights legislation. She links education and jurisprudence, especially since peoples of color have utilized the courts and other legal mechanisms in order to gain educational access and resources. Affirmative action, for instance, was designed to create equal opportunities for students of color and women (Anderson, 2004; Takagi, 1992). However, close to thirty years later, with the persistent attacks against affirmative action, for instance, in California, Michigan, and Texas, it can be suggested that white families have been the main beneficiaries of affirmative action since white women have been the major recipients of affirmative action hiring practices (Ladson-Billings, 1998). While Ladson-Billings sees the usefulness of critical race theory in areas such as curriculum, instruction, assessment, funding, and desegregation, she is wary of its faddish appropriation and pragmatic application. Even though critical race theory extends the tenets of multicultural education to address issues of race and social justice in schools, she urges that cautious steps must be taken so that critical race theory is situated within the legal literature upon which it is based before transposing it into the field of education. The emerging corpus of scholarship in the field of education that deploys critical race theory has certainly heeded her advice (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; López & Parker, 2003).

Another framework gaining ground in U.S. education is postcolonial studies.¹ While I risk transgressing Ladson-Billings' warning of the ways in which emerging and innovative ideas create a productive excitement in educational theory and research that, in some cases, eventually lead to misuse and damage, I want to place postcolonial studies in conversation with multicultural education and listen for their congruence and collisions, their usefulness and incitements. To initiate this conversation, in conjunction with critical race theorists' deployment of storytelling and with standpoint epistemologists that affirm embodied knowledge and lived experience as guides to theorizing and performances (Dillard, 2006; Matsuda, 1996; Williams, 1991), I insert an autobiographical interlude in order to testify to my understanding of U.S. multiculturalism and postcolonialism and bear witness to the complex interplay of race, imperialism, and education.

As a working-class Filipino teenager who immigrated to the Bay Area, California, with my family in the mid-1980s, I was first exposed to public school multiculturalism in English as a Second Language (ESL) courses with mostly Latino/a students and in English and social studies courses that incorporated African American narratives and histories. My struggles to learn English in mostly Spanish-speaking ESL classrooms and to find images and stories that reflected my experiences in "culturally relevant" language arts and social studies courses often left me frustrated, confused, and erased. If Asia was mentioned at all by teachers and textbooks (Asian American and Pacific Islanders were not included in the formal curriculum), the ancient and exotic civilizations of China, India, and Japan were the center of the focus. Lumped within the

model minority category (Lee, 1996), I was perceived as someone who diligently worked hard, did not cause problems, and did not need educational services and accommodations.

My undergraduate education in southern California in the early 1990s provided me with a richer understanding of the processes of racialization and identity politics. I delved into the field of Ethnic Studies where I engaged in African American, Asian American, and Chicano/a issues, literatures, and histories. My doctoral education in the Midwest, however, created further challenges. In a geographical location considered “the heart of it all” where race is considered primarily within limited black-white terms, my constant queries and interjections about troubling and expanding such conventions were often received by blank stares, suspicion, and even aggressive antagonism.

My attempts to extend dialogues on race, ethnicity, and im/migration and to find intersections with class, gender, and sexuality have been perceived as a dilution, complication, and diversion of the “real” issues and have marked me as a traitor and troublemaker, someone treacherous and untrustworthy. Overtly and covertly, my formal and informal education in the United States has taught me that all immigrants are Mexicans, only Blacks are minorities, and some people, like me, do not belong in American configurations of race, racism, and race relations.² The message given to me is loud and clear: If I want to learn more about the culture and history of Filipino/as in the Philippines and in the United States, I have to do it on my own, with minimal support and great suspicion. Even the educational histories of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States are still waiting to be uncovered, written, taught, and learned (Coloma, 2006; Tamura, 2001). Although I appreciate and have gained from learning about other marginalized communities, I question why those who espouse diversity and inclusion manage to minimize or exclude other voices, histories, and representations. I wonder if we are playing into a “divide and rule” strategy that makes us ignorant of each other’s specific and intersecting histories and if we are functioning within a “patron-client” relationship that makes us (peoples of color) scramble for limited resources and attention.

Only through outside, non-class readings did I encounter the histories and literatures of the Philippine-American War, the recruitment and immigration of Filipino/a students, workers, and professionals to the United States, and the anti-Filipino/a exclusionary laws and violent mobs (Bonus, 2000; Cordova, 1983; Posadas, 1999; Rafael, 2000; Root, 1997). I learned about the stories of brave and resilient people who endured through miserable periods in the United States: The *manongs* and *manangs*, the *pensionada/os*, fountain pen boys, and *bracero/as*, the U.S. navy and army soldiers, the post-1965 professionals, the anti-Marcos radicals and expatriates, the student activists and civil rights workers. As the second largest Asian American ethnic group, Filipino/as have a history in the United States which goes as far back as 1763 in Louisiana. It is a history that is interwoven with those of African Americans, Native Americans, Latino/as, and other Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Histories of solidarity and coalition, for example, are demonstrated by Black soldiers like David Fagin who deserted the U.S. army and fought with Filipino/a guerrillas during the Philippine-American War at the turn of the twentieth century, by the coalition of Chicano/a and Filipino/a migrant workers like Cesar Chavez and Philip Vera Cruz who demanded better wages and conditions in California agricultural farms in the 1950s, and by the multi-racial alliances in Hawaii’s labor struggles.

Furthermore, it is impossible to critically analyze the lived experiences and socio-economic conditions of Filipino/as in the Philippines and in the United States without explicitly recognizing the role of American imperialism and the effects of its continuing legacy on Filipino/as in the diaspora (Choy, 2003; San Juan, 2000). The historical and contemporary

experiences of Filipino/as cannot be understood without directly and vigorously confronting the prevailing rhetoric of U.S. exceptionalism in relation to its complicity in the colonial enterprise (Campomanes, 1995). My interest in positioning the United States as a colonial power is not only to disrupt the historical amnesia in regards to U.S. imperialism but also to understand the postcolonial conditions of peoples of color both in their “native” countries and in the diaspora.

Scholars outside of education, particularly those in the humanities, have led the vigorous engagement with the analytical possibilities of postcolonial theory. For instance, in regards to the study of race, ethnicity, and globalization in the United States, literary and cultural studies scholars Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt bracket two competing schools of thought—postethnicity and borders. The “postethnicity” school emphasizes:

A progressive of the U.S. as a society of increasing inclusion, especially after 1965—a world in which ethnic identities should be understood as a prelude or base through which to join a society “beyond ethnicity” where cultural identities are formed by “consent,” voluntary pluralism, and “postethnic” or hybrid cultural multiplicities. (Singh & Schmidt, 2000, p. 6)

Echoing the melting pot mythology and championing the immigrant success narratives, the postethnicity school offers, as its model, the accepted version of ethnic Europeans’ assimilation into the U.S. society in which one is no longer Irish, Italian, German, or Scandinavian but becomes (white) “American.” It also foregrounds the accomplishments of certain minorities who, against seemingly insurmountable odds, are able to pull themselves by their bootstraps and join the professional and middle-class echelons. Asian Americans, particularly those of east Asian ancestry (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans), have been characterized as the model minority and as provisionary whites based on their allegedly innate ability to perform well in standardized tests and enter prestigious institutions of higher education, to gain lucrative employment and have the financial base for material ostentation and geographic mobility, and, in an anecdote illustrated during a distinguished lecture at my alma mater, to speak “like any one of us” without a trace of a distinguishably non-white/American accent.³

Certainly, the field of Asian American studies works as a critical intervention and historical corrective to the (mis)representations of Asian and Pacific Islanders in the United States. Historian Gary Okihiro (1994), in a move that counters the prevalent assumption that Asian Americans are on deck as “almost whites” and that builds alliances with marginalized communities, argues that:

Asian Americans have served the master class, whether as “near-blacks” in the past or as “near-whites” in the present or as “marginal men” in both the past and the present. Yellow is emphatically neither white nor black; but insofar as Asians and Africans share a subordinate position to the master class, yellow is a shade of black, and black, a shade of yellow. (p. 34)

Okihiro outlines the historical congruence and intersections of Asians and Africans under white supremacy and in their struggle for freedom and democracy. He points out their shared histories which include: colonization, decolonization, and neocolonization; racist and class oppression in the United States as victims of slavery, cheap labor, legal exclusions, and mobs; as well as struggles for freedom, equality, and social justice. He also demonstrates the cultural sharing,

commerce, and trade between Africans and Asians that predated any European involvement as well as the contributions of African and Asian civilizations to Greek city-states that point to the non-purity of European civilization. Ultimately, he wants to reconfigure the contemporary discourses of understanding the “West” by recovering buried histories and connections and by destabilizing western homogeneity and hegemony. I would add to Okiihiro’s conceptualization by arguing that brown is a shade of both yellow and black. Through Filipino/as, the histories and cultures of Asian Americans intersect not only with African Americans but also with Native Americans, Latino/as, and Pacific Islanders, particularly Puertoriquenos, Cubanos, Hawaiians, Samoans, and Chamorros, who suffer from the historical legacies and pervasive manifestations of United States’ imperialism.

Okiihiro (1994) posits that “the core values and ideals of the nation emanate not from the mainstream but from the margins” (p. ix). It is precisely from the standpoint of the margins that the second school of thought—the “borders” school—draws its interpretive and political strength. The term “*borders*” refers to the construction and mobilization of difference ... [that points to] both examples of internal stratification within an ethnicity or a nation and the ways in which cultural differences may be used to define transnational connections and tension” (Singh & Schmidt, 2000, p. 7). Extending Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis and working with Gloria Anzaldúa’s concept of *la frontera*, the border is considered as

neither the site of assimilation nor the marking of an alien Other. It treats such a space as definitive for an ever-growing number of U.S. residents and explores it as a realm of exile, mobility, survival strategies, and the emergence of alternative and multiple identities mixing old and new that cannot be easily or accurately assimilated into earlier dominant narratives of ‘American’ identity. (Singh & Schmidt, 2000, p. 13)

This school of thought highlights how “affected groups invented strategies of border crossing, ‘passing,’ hidden cultural memories, and alternative public spaces in order to survive,” and criticizes “both the politics of inclusion ... and the politics of difference” (Singh & Schmidt, 2000, pp. 7-8). In short, the border functions as a celebratory and liberatory space that expands the definitions of home and citizenship, enables postcolonial subjects to cross and transgress socio-cultural demarcations, and produces multiple, constitutive subjectivities (Coloma, 2008).

Border and Nonsynchrony in Postcolonial Projects

Since the border works as a salient analytic trope in postcolonial studies (Loomba, 2005; Saldivar, 1997; Young, 2001), I now turn to two education scholars who are actively engaged in utilizing postcolonial insights in their intellectual production and academic research. Henry Giroux and Cameron McCarthy, whose inquiries address curriculum and pedagogy, have utilized not only postcolonial perspectives but have also juxtaposed them with Marxist and postmodern theories. In their respective intellectual projects, they work through the tensions between the politico-economic and material structuralism of neo-Marxism and the socio-cultural and discursive representation of postmodernism to locate congruencies for insights and applications.

Among the first in the field of U.S. educational studies to engage postcolonial theories, Henry Giroux⁴ is a leading scholar of critical pedagogy and cultural studies (Giroux, 1981, 1988, 1994, 2000, 2003). He pursues the emancipatory reconfiguration of educational discourses and praxis by describing “the possibility of both challenging and transforming a cultural politics formed in binary oppositions that both silence and invite people to deskill themselves as

educators and cultural workers” (Giroux, 1992, p. 21). For Giroux, postcolonial perspectives significantly rework the broader multicultural projects in three ways. First, since colonialism shapes the history and politics of difference, the gaps and erasures in history as well as the structural and discursive mechanisms of marginalization and exclusion need to be scrutinized. Second, the relationships between margin and center as well as the cultures of the “West” and the rest need to be examined not as separate binaries but as “complicitous and resistant, victim and accomplice” (Giroux, 1992, p. 21). Finally, Giroux suggests that the postmodern insistence on the “death of the subject” does not denote the elimination of human agency and social justice advocacy; rather, it points to the historicity of the human subjects and to the mechanisms that enable them to speak and be audible. Postcolonial insights therefore become sources for an oppositional politics that contests the dominant eurocentric understanding of theory, epistemology, and experience.

Giroux’s use of postcolonial discourses proffers a liberatory space to construct new identities, affirm multicultural difference, and perform ethical acts of resistance that transform U.S. colonial heritage and inheritance. It is from this space that “border pedagogy” (Giroux, 1991, 1992, 1997) emerges and proliferates. As a philosophical stance and praxis, border pedagogy puts the concept of difference at the center of struggles for social justice, acknowledges the border as a contradictory technique in the construction and circulation of knowledge-power, and foregrounds the liberatory agenda of a democratic society as a major goal of schooling. In particular, border pedagogy addresses three areas, namely, curriculum, students, and teachers. Aimed to create new ways and objects of knowing and to implode the causes of suffering and inequities, its strategies include demystification, radical textual readings, and studies of popular culture. It encourages students to become ideological and political “border-crossers” (Giroux, 1992) in order to shake up their knowledge and unlock their multi-layered realities that destabilize complacency and rigidity. Moreover, it urges teachers to simultaneously become more self-reflexive and engage in other people’s cultures and conditions in order to explore how their partiality and specificity affect their values, beliefs, and teaching.

While the border has been celebrated as a pleasurable space for alterity and transgression, I do not want to forget that, for many, the border as a geo-political marker is a painful site of surveillance and regulation.⁵ While I hazard being accused of a literal interpretation, I ground my position on the experiences of peoples of color in both historical and contemporary periods.⁶ The Ellis Island narratives of European immigrants along the Atlantic shore are different from those of African slaves in the South and of Chinese and Japanese sojourners who were sequestered in Angel Island (Chan, 1991; Takaki, 1993). The northern and southern borders demarcating the U.S. from Canada and Mexico respectively also elicit different stories. Whereas border-crossing between the U.S. and Canada especially for white people is relatively simple and easy, that is not the case for peoples of color moving between U.S. and Mexico. In the U.S. Southwest, television broadcast programs and newspapers repeatedly report patrols pursuing on foot and by car Latino/as that allegedly cross the border. In San Diego, California, traffic signs along the highway show images of a man, woman, and child in the act of fleeing, reminding drivers to be alert of (and to report?) people who cross national borders. Along the Rio Grande, the remains of those who did not successfully swim across or were killed by renegade militias that took security matters in their own hands float along the river or are found buried in shallow graves. In 1994 California voters passed Proposition 187 which took away educational, health, and other social services from undocumented residents and their U.S.-born children.

A historical perspective contextualizes the border as a tool of exclusion and abuse, of capitalism and imperialism. The Mexican-U.S. border was drawn after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848, separating the northern half of Mexico which included California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Texas from Mexico's contemporary geographical configuration (Perez, 1999). So, rephrasing a common Chicano/a statement: We do not cross the border, the border has crossed us. Furthermore, while the border is strictly enforced especially during tough economic periods in order to save "American" jobs and families, the restriction is only one-sided. Mexicans are recruited as dispensable cheap labor by U.S. agribusiness, as exemplified by the *bracero* program, and U.S. companies benefit from moving their operations "south of the border" with hardly any union regulation, as in the case of the *maquiladoras* (Calavita, 1992; Kopinak, 1996). I concur that "knowledge is a social construction, that it reflects the perspectives, experiences, and values of the people and cultures that construct it, and that it is dynamic, changing and debated among knowledge creators and users" (Banks, 1994, p. 5). I do hope, however, that a more culturally and historically informed theorizing and curriculum would utilize appropriate metaphors that attend to the complexity of invoked symbolics of description and analysis and that do not undermine the espoused ideals of a radical democratic philosophy.

On the other hand, postcolonial hybridity serves both as a personal and intellectual standpoint for Cameron McCarthy in his work on curriculum, cultural studies, and globalization (McCarthy, 1990; McCarthy & Crichlow, 1993; McCarthy, Hudak, Miklaucic, & Saukko, 1999; Dimitriadis & McCarthy, 2001; McCarthy, Giardina, Harewood, & Park, 2003). Considering the promises and limits of postcolonial studies, McCarthy (1998) observes that postcolonial theorists fail "to account for the conditions of production of their own intellectual work and their contradictory interests and affiliations" (p. 5). He is concerned that they have become the "stand-in or proxy for the oppressed third world," speaking for the "voices, cultural practices, and meaning of style of concrete, historical postcolonial and indigenous minority subjects" (p. 5). As a self-described offspring of the British empire and African slavery, he asks, "For whom does the postcolonial intellectual speak? Where is his constituency? Where is his theoretical and political warrant?" (p. 15). McCarthy also advocates for a "non-canonical reading of the canon" (p. 34) by introducing Caribbean writers, like Wilson Harris, in order to expand the circumference of postcolonial thinking beyond the seemingly enshrined trinity of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha. In addition, he points out the structural, racist, and imperialist limitations of neo-Marxist and radical sociology of education analyses. Instead he brings in Third World writers, such as Aime Cesaire, who present more humane and complex alternative perspectives on power and resistance. In spite, or perhaps because, of his criticisms, he sees the value in postcolonial discourse, especially in relation to race, multiculturalism, and curriculum.

McCarthy (1998) outlines three implications of postcolonial studies for multicultural education:

First, that proponents of multicultural education must cease to understand culture and identity in static and a-theoretic terms, but instead must highlight the complex interpenetration of cultures; second, they should do so in a way that brings into view the subaltern gaze on the eye of the power, while simultaneously problematizing the very construct of center and periphery; and finally, proponents must address the contemporary reality of students' lives in a postcolonial, globalized, market-driven world in which

schooling is only one of numerous spaces available for the negotiation for both identity and culture. (pp. 154–155)

Like Giroux, he examines the structures and discourses in schools that enable students and teachers to negotiate between hegemonic repression and radical intervention. He also endorses an understanding of culture and identity as dynamic and shifting, that is implicated in a dialectic relationship between west and Other, modernity and colonialism, power and subjugation.

McCarthy, however, parts ways with Giroux as he develops the concept of “nonsynchrony” to articulate the identities and experiences of minoritized groups. Nonsynchrony helps “to specify these dynamics of race and gender in a manner that would allow for an understanding of the multivocal, multi-accented nature of human subjectivity and the genuinely polysemic nature of minority/majority relations in education and society” (McCarthy, 1998, p. 66). It also illustrates that

different race-class-gender groups not only have qualitatively different experiences in schools but actually exist in constitutive tension, often engage in active competition with each other, receive different forms of rewards, sanctions, and evaluation, and are ultimately structured into different futures. (p. 78)

For example, a queer male student of color may occupy both oppressed and oppressor positions in a predominantly white male classroom. He may be considered inferior due to his race and sexual orientation, especially if he openly identifies as queer. However, he may benefit from patriarchy due to his gender, especially if he performs in heteronormative masculine ways. In other situations, a particular subject position might be more salient than others. In a mostly white fraternity, for instance, a person of color is almost always marked by his race, the prominent feature in that setting (Coloma, 2003). However, due to his physical appearance, speech patterns, and mannerisms, the same person traveling outside of the United States is distinguished primarily as an “American” and not immediately by his “race” (Coloma, 2008).

While Giroux’s border and McCarthy’s nonsynchrony both affirm multiple and contingent identities, nonsynchrony allows a less romantic negotiation of identity and agency within particular power dynamics and socio-historical contexts. As a constantly shifting site of confluence and divergence, nonsynchrony delineates a useful way of analyzing the embodiment and proliferation of difference, and provides greater possibilities for building alliances within and across various groups. It does not demand the acquisition of a border mentality or the habitation in a(n imagined) borderland. Rather it requires an acute awareness of discursive and material conditions, an understanding of subject positions that are constituted by cultures and economies of power, and a commitment to critical multiculturalism and progressive social justice.

Implications and Incitements

Cameron McCarthy’s work serves as a wonderful example of an intellectual and political project that brings together race analysis, multicultural education, and postcolonial studies. His work offers a productive point of departure to explore three significant directions in race, multiculturalism, and postcoloniality: the reminder of Third World struggles and solidarity; the

disruption of geo-national boundaries and the incorporation of im/migrants in the U.S. race paradigm; and the need for peoples of color to address issues with each other.

Not only does McCarthy position himself as a diasporic person enmeshed in U.S. race relations and hierarchies, but he also accounts for his intellectual production and the political legacy from which he draws. Both Wilson Harris and Aime Cesaire connect McCarthy to his Afro-Caribbean “origins” and the African diaspora, and remind us of the struggles for independence and the legacies of colonialism. Invoked in this historical recovery are the Third World resistance movements and anti-colonial writings of Amilcar Cabral, Frantz Fanon, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, and Leopold Sedar Senghor. Historical amnesia allows us to forget the pan-African advocacy of W. E. B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, and Alexander Crummell that urged free Blacks in the Americas to help improve the conditions in the African continent (Hord & Lee, 1995). Short-term memory loss allows us to forget that the 1960s U.S. civil rights movement was grounded in the liberation of the Third World and from internalized colonialism. For instance, Martin Luther King, Jr. sharply criticized the U.S. role in the Vietnam War and Southeast Asia, and Malcolm X cultivated a more transnational perspective after his journey in Africa. Therefore, addressing issues and concerns outside of the U.S. geopolitical sphere is not a dilution or diversion of “real” domestic issues. Rather it is very much a part of the history and legacy of progressive social justice and coalitions in the United States. Filipino/a American activists, for example, mobilized against the Marcos dictatorship in the 1970s and 1980s in response to the martial law and other repressive maneuvers in the Philippines (Aguilar-San Juan, 1994). Many continue to be involved in solidarity movements that address issues related to comfort women, unrecognized World War II veterans, and ecological disasters in their country of ancestry.⁷

Questions of loyalty, commitment, and focus have been raised by people, like me, who work with a multi-identity and transnational perspective. My rejection of mainstream (read: liberal, reform-oriented, and single-issue) frameworks have, more often than not, been met with suspicion, resistance, and dismissal. The failure to engage in multi-issue and global work, I insist, is a symptom of U.S. parochialism. Such a myopic attitude arrests our understanding and activism and neglects the plight of people who live outside of and, for some, who then enter the national borders of the United States. I have even heard well-intentioned allies state that “we need to take care of our business first.” Unfortunately a stance that promotes a “national” or in-group self-interest leaves those most vulnerable to power dynamics operating in the U.S. society, such as low-income immigrants and refugees from developing nations and other disenfranchised peoples, exposed to further discrimination and subjugation.

I contend that liberal multicultural education operates as an indoctrination into a U.S. citizenship that disregards the cultures and heritages brought by immigrants and colonized subjects. While postcolonial theories do not provide complete remedies, they offer alternative ways of thinking about race beyond the dominant U.S. black-white paradigm and of accounting for the realities confronted by diasporic peoples who have moved from the periphery to the metropole. Drawing insights from postcolonial and ethnic studies, a decolonizing multiculturalism troubles the demarcations between margin and center, between superpower and colony, between nationalism and imperialism. The juxtaposition of these perspectives gives hope to an intellectual and political project that attends to the rethinking of agency, identity, and community.

Finally, perhaps the most contentious direction in the juxtaposition of postcolonial studies and multicultural education that directly impacts U.S. race relations is the opportunity for peoples of color to deal with our issues and with each other. While both multicultural education and postcolonial studies still bridge the binary of white-colonizer-oppressor and peoples of color-colonized-oppressed, if brought together in conversation they might spark productive spaces to address diversity and discrimination. Suspicion and distrust seem to have separated some scholars and activists who examine U.S. racial formation and race relations from those who work in postcolonial studies (duCille, 1996). Implicated in the tension are the systems of reward and legitimacy through academic positions and publications as well as the accessibility of language and commitment to equity and social justice. I wonder, however, if race undergirds this tension: that the predominantly South Asian postcolonial scholars have become the (model) minority darlings of the academy due to their fluency in western theories of postmodernism and deconstruction; that African American studies scholars continue to be marginalized and balkanized; and that both are replaying, once again, historical struggles for the white academy's recognition and legitimacy. How productive would it be if we focused our attention, instead, in using the strengths of both postcolonial and ethnic studies in understanding U.S. race relations and education with a perspective that moves to the center the specific and intersecting lives of peoples of color? Although white supremacist discourses and structures will continue to persist and may not ever be completely erased in the U.S. society, I contend that concerted efforts to explore and learn from the historical and contemporary relationships within and among communities of color can construct new alliances and insights that can transform the politics of education and our everyday lives.

NOTES

1. Although the relationship among postcolonial studies, multiculturalism, and indigenous peoples is beyond the scope of this article, see Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) and K. Tsianina Lomawaima (2000) for generative discussions on western epistemology and researchers in relation to Native knowledge and communities.
2. I pay homage to and rephrase the title of the groundbreaking Black feminist anthology, edited by Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith (1982), not only to acknowledge my intellectual and political debt of gratitude to feminists of color whose writings first exposed me to the power of intersectionality, but also to emphasize the illegibility of Filipino/as, immigrants, women, and queers within the dominant U.S. racial paradigm.
3. Political Science professor Andrew Hacker delivered a presentation on February 21, 2001, entitled "The State of Black and White America – Implications for the New Millenium," as part of the President and Provost Diversity Lecture Series at The Ohio State University.
4. For this article, I focus on Giroux's scholarly production while he was located in the U.S. academy. Since 2004 he has held the Global Television Network Chair in Communication Studies at McMaster University in Canada.
5. Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) describes life in the borderlands as "intimate terrorism" where "pain is the way of life" (p. 27). She by no means forecloses the productive aspects of hybridity and fluidity in the borderlands. However even *la facultad*—a key survival tool based on cultural intuition living in such geo-political and psycho-social space—is generated from and honed by pain and fear.
6. In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 horror, border, and travel procedures have not only created inconvenience for many people, but also demonstrate the onerous burden placed on peoples of color in regards to national security issues. I wonder how much of our civil liberties and human rights have been violated, ironically, in the name of safety and protection.
7. Comfort women is the term used for Asian women, including Filipinas, who were abducted and forced into sexual slavery for the Japanese military during the Second World War (Henson, 1999; Yoshimi, 2002).

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