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# The legacy and trajectories of multicultural education: recognition, refusal, and movement building in troubling times

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## ABSTRACT

In this conceptual analysis paper, I provide a brief overview of multicultural education and highlight the critiques to the field that demonstrate challenges to implementing an education that is multicultural especially when considering students from minoritized and global majority backgrounds. Next, I explore the changing political and social context that suggests, among other things, the need for re/newed orientations to multicultural education. I focus on two important scholarly lines of inquiry – Decolonization and Antiracist theorizing – that might inform possible trajectories for multicultural education including a pedagogy of recognition and a pedagogy of refusal. I conclude by identifying questions that lay at the intersection of these two pedagogies and share some final thoughts about the role of social movements in forging a more critical, responsive approach to multicultural education.

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In a special issue honouring the 75th Anniversary of the *Harvard Educational Review*, Sonia Nieto (2005) acknowledged the substantial inequalities in society and the long history of betrayal and broken promises concerning educational quality especially when considering the schooling experiences of ethnically and linguistically minority children and youth. In the paper, titled 'Public education in the twentieth century and beyond: High hopes, broken promises, and an uncertain future,' Nieto asserted that schools are the best hope for personal and social success for most people.

Nieto (2005) stated that for many, given their experience in public schools in the United States, education often has been a light by serving as a catalyst for their personal and social development, the cultivation of basic numeracy and literacy skills, and the enculturation into a civic ethic and active engagement around living in democratic societies. For a smaller number, education has also been a vehicle to develop critical thinking orientations that illuminated oppression (and resistance to that oppression) of students from ethnically and linguistically minority backgrounds.

It is also true that education has been the dark marked by a history of outright exclusion, segregation, and denied opportunity for children and youth from ethnically and linguistically minority backgrounds (Nieto, 2005). It is marked by a curriculum that

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upholds a hegemonic ideology and epistemological racism wherein certain social identity groups were completely absent or debased. Education has employed pedagogies and assessments, neither of which are reflective of learning approaches compatible with linguistic and ethnic minority children. From school organization, to policies/procedures, to who served in the teaching workforce, schools have been operating under a race-based and racist ideology (Scheurich & Young, 1997).

In this conceptual analysis paper, I provide a brief overview of multicultural education and highlight the critiques to the field that demonstrate challenges to implementing an *education that is multicultural* (borrowing the term from Sleeter & Grant, 2009) especially when considering students from minoritized and global majority backgrounds (defined below). Next, I explore the changing political and social context that suggests, among other things, the need for re/newed orientations to multicultural education. I focus on two important scholarly lines of inquiry – Decolonization and Antiracist theorizing – that might inform possible trajectories for multicultural education including a pedagogy of recognition and a pedagogy of refusal. I conclude by identifying questions that lay at the intersection of these two pedagogies and share some final thoughts about the role of social movements in forging a more critical, responsive approach to multicultural education within a broader global and international lens.

A note about language: I use the word *minoritized* to capture a key relationship between social identity membership and power. Despite the fact that whites are not a global majority in the world nor are they a numerical majority demographically even in schools in the United States as of fall, 2014 (US Department of Education, 2016), ethnically and linguistically diverse children and youth, and their respective communities, are negatively impacted by the continuing policies and practices which are intended to subordinate these students/groups. That is, while ethnically and linguistically diverse children and youth are a majority demographically and phenomenologically, politically and educationally they are minoritized. Adding *global majority* is an acknowledgement that brings non-whites 'in from the margins and challenges directly those who have the power' (Portelli & Campbell-Stephens, 2009, p. 2).

### **The legacy: honouring multicultural education**

Multicultural education, as a unique entity and in its most contemporary form, has had a significant impact on education. To be clear, I recognize and honour those important academic disciplines that have been, and continue to be, foundational to the field of multicultural education, most especially ethnic studies, women's studies, gender/sexual studies, and critical race scholarship. Relatedly, scholars from these other academic disciplines have advanced ideas about how to foster a more inclusive vision of education – and society, by extension. Multicultural education's contemporary emergence was spurred by James Banks, Geneva Gay, Carl Grant, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Sonia Nieto, and Christine Sleeter, to name but a few. I honour these legacies and appreciate what has been done to set the field on its current course.

While a more comprehensive history of the foundational principles of the contemporary movements within multicultural education in the United States is beyond the scope of this paper,<sup>1</sup> I offer the following overview as most germane to this discussion. First, once integration (*de jure*, but not *de facto*) became the law in the United States,

the question became how to provide the kind of education that would be most meaningful not only for ethnic minority children and youth but for all children. While human relations models (see, e.g. Allport's seminal work *The Nature of Prejudice*, 1954) initially provided one response, it became clear that in and of themselves these models were not going to be sufficient for disrupting the centuries of institutionalized exclusion based on explicitly racist ideologies, which resulted in long-standing inequitable outcomes for students from communities of colour (Banks, 2013).

Second, emerging primarily out of the civil rights movement and the various social identity movements that followed (e.g. the Black Power movement, the American Indian Movement, the Chicano movement, the Women's movement, the Gay liberation movement) were, among other things, calls for integration and inclusion, affirmation and acknowledgement. The groups at the centre of these struggles were fighting a history of segregation and outright discrimination; some of the central goals, then, were to be included, to be represented, and to have the group's culture and languages seen as valued and valuable. It is also important to acknowledge that there have always been activists within these movements calling for a more radical agenda, from the Black Panthers, to the American Indian Movement and Chicano Movement that pressed 'nationalist' agendas in pursuit of autonomy and self-determination (Kelley, 2016).

Third, ethnic and multicultural models emerged as a more productive and broad-based model for multiethnic schools and classrooms. Banks (2013) points out how the field of multicultural education, then, emerged academically out of ethnic studies programmes with their near exclusive focus on developing a more inclusive curriculum reflective of the specific ethnic group. Multiethnic education approaches followed; their primary contribution, according to Banks (2013) was to broaden the focus beyond curriculum to question nearly every dimension of schooling (school policies, family/community participation, assessment, counselling, pedagogy, etc.) from a multiethnic lens. Finally, according to Banks, multicultural education emerged as consideration was given to enlarging the multiethnic umbrella beyond race/ethnicity to include social identities associated with gender, exceptionality, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, gifted/talented, and so on (see, also Ladson-Billings, 2004).

Early multicultural models and frameworks sought to create an epistemological disruption in how education occurred. They also had a clearly stated ethical stance focused on equality of opportunity within a broader social justice and educational equity framework (Banks, 2013). These models recognized the failures of cultural assimilation and favoured the affirmation of cultural pluralism. And many of these models had a strong political advocacy orientation centred on a broader commitment to social justice via social reconstruction (Nieto & Bode, 2012; Sleeter & Grant, 2009). The main focus was on seeking entry in, integration within, and parity of access to the institutions as well as civic equality (Gutmann, 2004) that had, heretofore, been absent.

To be sure, multicultural education as an academic discipline has continued to grow in important ways. Here I highlight the works of scholars and scholarship that have added significantly to our understanding of an education that is multicultural. To name but a few are works by Kevin Kumashiro (2000) on anti-oppressive frameworks, May and Sleeter (2010) to operationalize and deepen understandings around critical multicultural education, Salazar (2013) on humanizing pedagogies, and by a variety of scholars around white privilege (McIntosh, 2004; Sensoy & DeAngelis, 2017). Most recently, we

are seeing important growth in the field inspired by multicultural education scholars using Critical Race Theory (see Ladson-Billings, 2004; and, Sleeter & Bernal, 2004), especially as it re-centres race, all too-often unacknowledged and undertheorized in the extant literature.

Banks (2013) asserted that global and international dimensions of multicultural education represent the most current phase of the contemporary multicultural education project. This phase asks that we become more fully engaged in thinking globally, connecting internationally, and forging new collaborations about pressing issues across lines of the nation-state. Given the world-wide growth of populist and nationalist rhetoric which speaks to the most visceral of biases, prejudices, and xenophobia, these additional focuses on the global and the local – that is, the ‘glocal’ of multicultural education (Cha, Gundara, Ham, & Lee, 2017) – are more important than ever. I find Cha, Ham, and Lee (2018) framework of global grammars and local semantics as being a particularly useful way to understand the glocal of multicultural education.

### Critiques of multicultural education

While scholars have been clear about the aims of education within a multicultural framework, these conceptual understandings have continued to be misunderstood and/or poorly implemented (Shannon-Baker, 2018). Certainly, differing conceptual understandings – which ‘reflect different socio-cultural, religious, linguistic, and political contexts’ (Cha et al., 2018, p. 1) – imply a different way, with varying degrees, of framing the work of diversity in education (Sleeter, 2018).

Even greater criticism has come around the ways in which multicultural education has been implemented. Gay (1992) described an emerging gap between concept and practice early on, while Ladson-Billings (2009) lamented the shallow form taken by those who sought to implement those concepts. Ladson-Billings (2009) described it this way:

Although scholars such as James Banks, Carl Grant, and Geneva Gay began on a scholarly path designed to change schools as institutions so that students might be better prepared to reconstruct the society, in its current practice iteration, multicultural education is but a shadow of its conceptual self. Rather than engage students in provocative thinking about the contradiction of U.S. ideals and lived realities, teachers often find themselves encouraging students to sing “ethnic” songs, eat ethnic food and do ethnic dances. Consistently, manifestations of multicultural education in the classroom are superficial and trivial “celebrations of diversity.” (p. 33)

One plausible explanation, offered by my colleague Verónica Vélez (personal communication, 5 April 2018) for this ‘shallow’ implementation is recognition that the concepts advanced around an education that is multicultural had to engage with institutions where that implementation was to occur. Institutions, historically and contemporarily, have demonstrated great resilience around bringing parts of justice-oriented projects into its current logics while resisting making any fundamental changes. The net result is that multicultural education has been watered down, compartmentalized, and turned into ‘one-and-done’ workshops. Other scholars have asserted that its transformative potential has been purposefully undermined (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997) as part of the processes of hegemony (Jay, 2003).

Besides the challenge of conceptual misunderstanding, poor implementation, and surface level change that has resulted, and perhaps because of these, scholars have questioned the lack of significant impact of multicultural education on the educational experiences, and material life circumstances, of children and youth (Jay, 2003). Indeed, Ladson-Billings and Tate (2017) (2016) have argued that multicultural education has largely focused on the needs of whites, especially white teachers. That is, in their view, models of multicultural education for teacher education have been built to educate white students and not the increasing number of students of colour needed for our nation's teaching workforce.

Scholars who support intercultural education have also been critical of multicultural education (see, e.g. Dervin, Layne, & Trémion, 2015). For example, Harbon and Moloney (2015) claim that multicultural education's focus is too strongly rooted in static, narrow, and surface level understandings of culture at the national level. The claim is that intercultural education – with its notion of operating between cultures – views culture as more dynamic, part of one (of many) circles of concern, open to critical cultural reflection, and inclusive of a stronger global orientation (Byram, 1997; Hickling-Hudson & Ferreira, 2004). To be sure, these critiques are accurate for some scholars and practitioners within the field of multicultural education but note that others, especially those engaged with a critical multicultural education framework (see, e.g. May & Sleeter, 2010).

Multicultural education has been criticized on larger ideological grounds. Cameron McCarthy (McCarthy, 1988; see also Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016) argued that multicultural education's roots emerged from a liberal pluralism<sup>2</sup> framework designed to quiet groups frustrated with narrow reforms wherein educational practitioners only tinker with the curriculum. As McCarthy (1988) described, 'Multicultural education, specifically, must be understood as part of a curricular truce, the fallout of a political project to deluge and neutralize Black rejection of the conformist and assimilationist curriculum models solidly in place in the 1960s' (p. 267).

These tensions, questions, and critiques are a vital source that can strengthen the field overall, not undermine it. As described by Sleeter and Bernal (2004), critiques by critical educators should not serve to '...move multicultural education away from its core conceptual moorings, but rather to anchor the field more firmly in those moorings' (p. 240).

### **Troubling times for education that is multicultural**

Beyond these questions and critiques, significant social, political, and cultural conditions have changed since the 1960–80s that served as the incubation period for the development of the contemporary multicultural education project. What I (all too briefly) share is just a few of the most substantive social, political and education changes since the early days of the contemporary era of multicultural education that is pushing/reshaping the field – giving greater impetus to this call for renewing the vision of education that this multicultural – especially when considering changes from a global and international perspective.

### ***Broader global/national political context***

We continue to understand how countries of the world are so profoundly interdependent. Consider just these three: threats of nuclear war, racism and global injustice, and neoliberalism and global capitalism. As a case in point, consider the global impact of the civil war in Syria with respect to displacement and relocation and the resulting refugee crises that has ensued (United Nations, 2016). Over the past seven (7) years, not only have we seen the horrific consequences of that war, the shifting geopolitical alliances between countries taking one side or the other with possibilities of a broader world war, and the concomitant 'collateral damage' (that is, the death of innocent non-combatants), we also are witnessing the resulting refugee crises that has ensued. Nearly 5 million Syrians, risking their lives, have been displaced by the armed conflict in search of safety and fled their home; notably, an additional 6 million have sought humanitarian aid within the country's borders (United Nations, 2016).

At the national level, in the United States, the examples abound but just a few specific to education include a retreat on efforts to curb sexual harassment, efforts to assure the human rights and dignity of LGBTQ youth in schools, and efforts to disrupt discriminatory discipline policies that negatively affect African American and Latino youth in particular. I encourage you, dear reader, to consider significant national changes in your own country whether that is the kidnapping of young children in West Africa, the raise of anti-immigrant (anti-Muslim) nationalism in Western Europe and the United States, the continuing apartheid relationship of Palestinians by the State of Israel, the rapid diaspora of ethnic minorities to urban centres in China and of Venezuelans throughout Latin America, or the tension between increasing numbers of immigrants into Korea with heightened anxiety about the potential loss of traditional Korean cultural expressions (Han, 2007) leading to assimilationist ideologies.

### ***Sustainability and global warming***

Bearing witness to the ever-present impact of real, significant global warming and environmental degradation around the world, from Tuluva to Puerto Rico, is renewed attention to the value of an environmental justice framework (Taylor, 2014), which recognizes that connection between environmental, cultural, and economic sustainability. The environmental justice movement recognizes the link between 'racial and other kinds of social inequalities and framed the issues in terms of rights to safe and healthy environments' (Taylor, 2014, p. 3). We know that there is a long historical and contemporary 'expulsion of minorities from desirable land and communities, the demolition of their neighborhoods, the relocation of minorities to segregated neighborhoods, and the construction of minority neighborhoods in undesirable locations' (Taylor, 2014, p. 3). Add this to the compelling evidence of the disproportionate number of hazardous waste sites and toxic materials within close proximity to minoritized communities (Taylor, 2014). Walia (2018) pointed out that climate devastation produces one new 'climate refugee' every 6 s. For these reasons, sustainability concerns need to be more fully included as a central area of scholarship in forging an education that is multicultural within a global context.

### **Contesting citizenship**

One of the most challenging identity questions – connected with increasing global displacement and migration – centres around what it means to be a citizen and, by extension, civic identities (Banks, 2013). Importantly, at its heart are renewed questions about what citizenship means, to whom is it granted, and under what conditions (Salinas, Vickery, & Franquiz, 2016). For them, ‘Citizenship is dynamic, temporal, and spatial but also raced, classed, gendered, and so forth.’ (Salinas, et al., p. 332). In the United States, questions about citizenship is experienced more profoundly by the Latino community since La *frontera* (‘the border’) has been and remains a constant both as a physical manifestation but also as a symbolic and psychic manifestation. But regardless of the who, at its heart citizenship questions revolve around what it means to ‘belong.’ This needs to be layered onto, as Grande and Anderson (2017) (2014) reminds us, important questions about the very nature of nationhood as contested from a Native American perspective. These citizenship and belonging questions are substantial for those students in classrooms focused on advancing an affirming and inclusive school setting.

### **International and global dimensions of multicultural education**

Spring (2017), acknowledging that global integration is not new but has become more rapid and significant, asserts that multicultural education can ‘help to reduce problems in the transition’ (p. 303) by way of assisting newcomers in cultural adaptations, promoting cultural restoration, and pursuing ‘economic and social equity for these previously dominated peoples’ (p. xiii). As important, important scholarly work is suggesting that the focus on national citizenship is being overtaken by a vision of cultural and linguistic diversity and universal principles and benchmarks around the world (Cha et al., 2017).

With respect to universal principles, what Cha and his colleagues (Cha et al., 2017, 2018) call the ‘global grammar’ (p. 217), (see Cha et al., 2018, p. 2 for definition) my colleague Suzie Marcus (Rios & Marcus, 2011; Marcus & Rios, 2018) and I have sought to highlight the value of applying a human rights framework<sup>3</sup> to multicultural education. In doing so, we centred the framework in United Nations<sup>4</sup> principles around the following rights: to learn about and through one’s language/culture affirmed, to learn from a range of epistemological orientations, to learn free from discrimination, to learn about others, to learn about human rights themselves, and to learn skills associated with agency and democratic participation. An important extension to this was advanced in Joyce King’s 2015 Presidential Address to the American Educational Research Association. In that address, King warned against continuing actions aimed at cultural genocide and advocated for ‘the importance of intergenerational memory, knowledge transmission, and ancestral connections as sources of racial/cultural dignity and belonging, which ought to be understood as vital to education as a universal human right’ (p. 219).

In limiting this overview of the contemporary moment with respect to these global and international dimensions, I lament being unable to detail some other significant national challenges being experienced in the United States:



- Contemporary attacks on people from minoritized communities including the continuation of police brutality and school-to-prison pipeline against Brown and Black bodies;
- Narratives around immigration and calls to build a wall with Mexico (but not Canada) as well as positioning immigrants as criminals;
- Advances in technologies and resulting social and educational changes given that people have both more access to information and broader communication choices resulting, in many instances, in political insularity but also more creative construction of differences including transnational identities;
- The enactment of educational policies and practices especially those that continue to push a neoliberal (privatization) agenda of school reform resulting in the re-segregation of schools;
- The changing national political context in the US that has led to increased incidents of hate and fear in school climates termed the 'Trump Effect' (Costello, 2016);
- A deeper understanding of the depth and importance of social-cultural dimensions of teaching and learning, especially the nature of identities as intersectional, strategic, dynamic contextual, and multiple (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012); and
- Growth of student diversity in higher education institutions with concomitant recognition (and demands) for these institutions to be more responsive given their stated commitments to diversity.

These give just a small picture of this broader political moment in the United States marked by 'increased racial and ethnic tensions; police brutality and state violence; homophobia and transphobia; economic insecurity; environmental racism as seen in Flint, Michigan; and an overall contentious presidential primary season that has allowed space for someone like Donald Trump to utilize a national platform to stoke white racial resentment, xenophobia, and misogyny' (Fuentes & Pérez, 2016, p. 16). In the collective, they provide a clarion call for the need to rethink the theoretical, conceptual, and pedagogical approaches to crafting an education that is multicultural.

### **A call for a re/newed vision of education**

In sharing this brief review, I believe that our time, this time is an opportunity to revisit, rethink, and re/new our vision for and approaches to multicultural education that are responsive to critiques and the current contexts. A renewing vision of multicultural education is consistent with many critical perspectives around the need for a continual renewal of the field. Consider, for example, Kincheloe's (2007) assertion that 'critical theory and critical pedagogy – in the spirit of an evolving criticality – is never static; it is always evolving, changing in light of new theoretical insights, fresh ideas from diverse cultures, and new problems, social circumstances, and educational contexts' (p. 18). It is also a principle associated with Paulo Freire (1970) around our 'unfinishedness' (Phillips & Zavala, 2016).

Critiques of education come from many different quarters across the political spectrum; for example, De Oliveira Andreotti, Stein, Ahenakew, and Hunt (2015) provide a useful 'cartography' of critiques and alternative approaches. I especially appreciate Sandra Grande's (2014) excellent analogy of the political (conservative)

right's educational reform vision of standardization, sanitization, privatization, and corporatization; for her, this reform agenda is akin to environmental degradation. Grande asserts that these educational reformers are engaging in 'educational deforestation' sacrificing long term health and community well-being for short-term individualist gain: 'clear cutting of curricula, slashing and burning of budgets, exploitation of local human and material resources for private gain' (p. 15). She goes on to say: 'Classrooms, like forests, are life-giving only insofar as the complex network of systems and relations that sustain them are cultivated and appreciated' (p. 15).

The political left urges us to pursue 'strategies for empowerment, recognition, representation, redistribution, reconciliation, affirmative action, recentering of marginalized subjects, and/or the transformation of the borders of the dominant system' (De Oliveira Andreotti et al., 2015, p. 26). The radical left asserts that the education system is beyond reform and urges us to create space for new possibilities completely outside of the current system (De Oliveira Andreotti et al., 2015).

For me, Decolonization and Antiracist Theories are two of the most provocative discourses and lines of inquiry advocating for new approaches in how we think about education for minoritized students and their communities. These critiques are calling for an entirely new political and pedagogical paradigm and related frameworks. I echo Tuck, Yang, and Wayne (2018) assertion that, 'There is not legitimacy in the field of education if it cannot meaningfully attend to social contexts, historical and contemporary structures of settler colonialism, white supremacy, and antiracism' (p. 5). I share this most cursory review to these fields of inquiry in the hopes that you, dear reader, will pursue this work more fully as informative to the work of pursuing an education that is multicultural, especially when considering their implications within a broader global and international frame of reference.

### *Critical indigenous scholarship on decolonization*

Colonization is about progress, industrialism, humanism, secularism, linear-time flows, scientific reasoning, patriarchy, capitalist, Western-centred, Christian-Centric and is deeply embedded in how we think about democracy itself (De Oliveira Andreotti et al., 2015). Concomitantly, colonization relies on the subjugation of people, land, difference, and alternate epistemologies via genocide, erasure and dispossession (Grande, 2018) (2014). It is centred in a 'remove to replace' logic of settler colonialism (Grande, 2014, p. 15). For Tuck and Yang (2012), decolonization is – at its heart – about the deliberate and purposeful theft of land and the resulting ways in which that theft is rationalized and justified.

For De Oliveira Andreotti et al. (2015), we need to be even more purposeful and deliberate about advancing education as a decolonizing project. For them, the politics of recognition and reconciliation will not accomplish that aim. Asserting that the education system is beyond reform, De Oliveira Andreotti et al. (2015) urge us to create space for new possibilities completely outside of the system, to use the current system to generate new possibilities, and/or to nurture the death of our current system while we learn from it about its integrity, cleaning up its mess, and clearing spaces for something new.

## **Antiblack scholarship**

Antiblack scholarship asserts that society – historically and contemporarily – positions Blacks as property and non-human; that is, not just the ‘Other’ but as ‘Other Than Human’ (Dumas, 2016). For Dumas, the foundation of this is slavery, which was not only a historical period but serves as an ontological position of Blacks. He asserts that Antiblack scholarship seeks to challenge the ‘structures and logics’ of white supremacy and, as important, how ‘blackness is positioned at the opposite end of whiteness’ (Dumas, 2016, p. 32).

One net result is the way in which society positions Blacks as a ‘problem,’ a thing rather than a people suffering from the consequence of antiblackness (Dumas, 2016). Education, then, is (and has been for centuries) a site where antiblackness plays out. Calls around the dehumanization of the Black body as part of dehumanization of Blacks more generally (Dumas, 2016) is central to the larger antiblackness conceptual focus. While this antiblack racism is pervasive in the United States, it is evident also in other countries of the world as well given that ‘racism is a form of globalized ideological knowledge’ (King, 2017, p. 212).

## **The trajectory: how might we move forward?**

What some of these decolonization and antiblack scholars – frustrated with the gradual, incremental and only minimally expansive equity initiatives – argue for is a nearly complete overhaul of the current education system. For De Oliveira Andreotti et al. (2015), it is evident in their call for us to play the role of palliative workers who gradually watch the current system die. For Dumas (2018), it is rooted in ‘Black liberatory fantasy’ wherein it is imagined ‘how we might bring this whole thing down, and rejoice in these possibilities. In this way, Black suffering can be generative of radical reforms’ (p. 43). I assert that they both share an ethical (normative) stance of resistance and refusal.

Resistance AND refusal movements have been evident throughout the history of most nations. For example, consider the resistance and refusal movement of Africans enslaved at the dawn of the political project known as the United States. These movements have always included more radical critiques seeking genuine self-determination. These more radical critiques often operate at the edges of the broader movement for human and civil rights; but they also have been instrumental in moving the equity and justice agenda forward (Cueto, personal communication, 27 April 2018).

Regardless of the line of inquiry pursued, we need to be clear about our theory of change (Tuck, 2014). For example, Tuck asks: do we believe that social justice-oriented scholarship will create the kind of changes we need or do we need to spend collective energy organizing? That is, given the vision of justice that we have for our various nation-states, what trajectories might we actively pursue to create the change consistent with that vision? Equally important, we must understand the cautions of each of these trajectories.

Before sharing two general trajectories that would be renewing for the field, I wish to acknowledge that some scholars and practitioners are comfortable with the status quo regarding multicultural education while there may be others who would even seek to dismantle any vestiges of it. This is a business as usual approach (Sleeter & Grant, 2009)

and will not move the field forward but also ignores the significant (and potentially generative) critiques and changes to the social, political, and cultural context in which we currently live. While I encourage multicultural scholars and practitioners to reject this approach, if any do choose business as usual, we should heed Doris Lessing's (2008) words and advice, written in the preface to her novel *The Golden Notebook*, which resonate back, both clearly and painfully, to those who advocate for doing nothing different:

It may be that there is no other way of educating people. Possibly, but I don't believe it. In the meantime, it would be a help at least to describe things properly, to call things by their right names. Ideally, what should be said to every child, repeatedly, throughout his or her school life is something like this: You are in the process of being indoctrinated. We have not yet evolved a system of education that is not a system of indoctrination. We are sorry, but it is the best we can do. What you are being taught here is an amalgam of current prejudice and the choices of this particular culture. The slightest look at history will show how impermanent these must be. You are being taught by people who have been able to accommodate themselves to a regime of thought laid down by their predecessors. It is a self-perpetuating system. Those of you who are more robust and individual than others will be encouraged to leave and find ways of educating yourself – educating your own judgment. Those that stay must remember, always and all the time, that they are being molded and patterned to fit into the narrow and particular needs of this particular society. (p. xxi)

### ***Recognition and resistance within a critical multicultural framework trajectory***

One line of inquiry is to strengthen the case for more compelling, critical multicultural education approaches that are responsive to the changes outlined earlier. Recognition is aimed at reform rooted in principles of activism, social literacy, and equity (Ayers, Quinn, & Stovall, 2009); Souto-Manning and Winn (2017) agree with these and add the importance of care and relationship building while Rios (2010) adds the affirmation of difference. While renewing attention to multicultural education within a critical framework (see, e.g. Quijada Cerecer, Alvarez Gutiérrez, & Rios, 2010; Chapman & Hobbel, 2010), it must also strengthen our understandings of identities (multiple, situated, complex, and generative), foster greater inclusion in every aspect of schooling, include concepts related to global justice (Sleeter, 2018), and centre race and coercive relations of power (Cummins, 2007) more fully (among other things).

The conceptual tools associated with a renewing vision of multicultural education, as described by Sleeter and Bernal (2004) include the following: critical reflexivity including attention to voice, ideology, and culture; 'critical analysis of class, corporate power, and globalization' (p. 242) within a broader understanding of power relations; 'an analysis of empowering pedagogical practices within the classroom' (p. 242) including understanding the reciprocal relationship between teachers and students; and, a 'deeper analysis of language and literacy' (p. 242) especially by valuing and emphasizing students' lived experiences in democratic public spaces. The theory of change asserts that only by engaging with systems and the power mechanisms that underlie them can change occur. Because it relies on the benevolence of the state, the caution is that engagement can lead to cooptation, complacency (as gradual successes are attained), and continued subjugation (Tuck et al., 2018).

### *A pedagogy of refusal trajectory*

Yet one other trajectory, rooted in antiblack and decolonizing lines of inquiry, is developing a pedagogy of resistance and refusal (McGranahan, 2016; Tuck et al., 2018). Oppressed communities have a long history with 'being refused.' These communities have been refused a place at the table, refused entrance into education at every level, refused access to accurate information about their group's history and contributions, refused the right to speak their home language, etc. I've been thinking about how even efforts at recognition and reconciliation have been refused; consider this image of Dr. Martin Luther King, killed 50 years ago from when I write (see Figure 1). Even when allowed into the university, the work of scholars of colour has been 'refused, denied, and rejected as an expected part of the academy' (McGranahan, 2016, p. 320; see also Salazar & Rios, 2016). In turn, there has been resistance to that oppression at every turn, both historically as well as contemporarily.

Tuck et al. (2018), arguing for a pedagogy of refusal, note that the social justice project in the United States must be rooted in the abolition of antiblackness and the advance of decolonization leading to the rematriation of Indigenous land and life. They assert their refusal of those justice-oriented projects wherein people have to prove their worth/humanity, where consciousness raising is required, where appeals are made to those who abuse communities of colour, where gatherings of white settlers who have presumed agency is necessary, and where compromise is sought. The theory of change is that only radical resistance will create the conditions for new ways of moving forward. McGranahan (2016) cautions that while many have been brought up on resistance, it can lead to a more complex 'nature and form of domination.'



**Figure 1.** Martin Luther King, Montgomery, 1958.

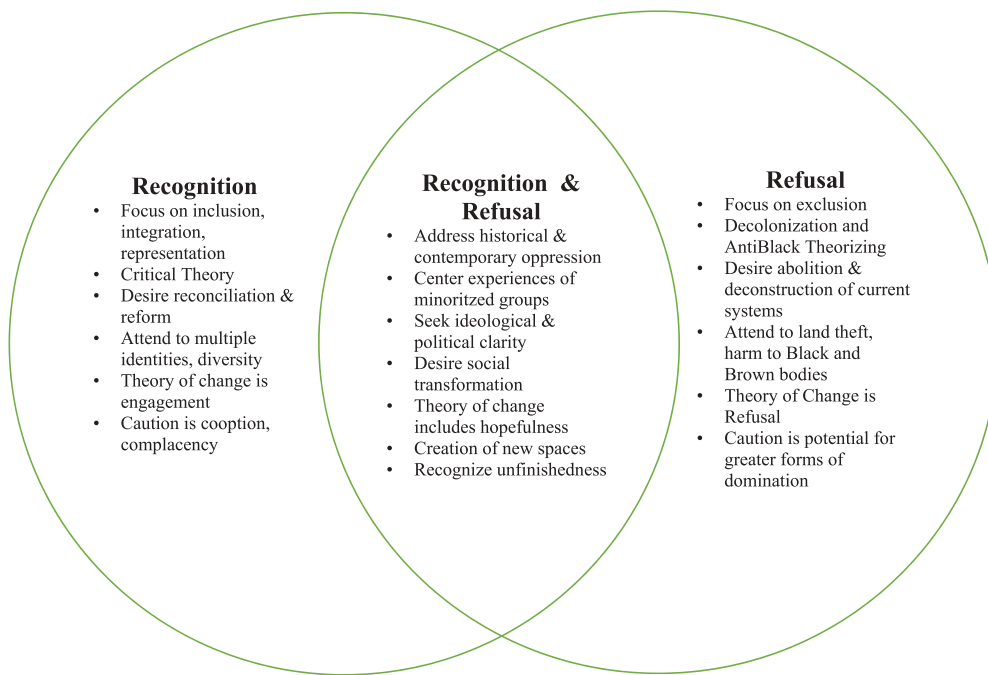
What might be our refusals when pursuing an education that is multicultural? Ladson-Billings (2017) offered a few suggestions for our consideration.<sup>5</sup> First, refuse the temptation to always comply especially to those substantial threats to basic freedoms and important movements. Simultaneously support those movements (such as with the Black Lives Matters and No Person Is Illegal) to counter these threats. Second, refuse the master narrative by combatting omissions, distortions, and stolen knowledge. This includes attending to how knowledge produced in minoritized communities gets co-opted and how transformative themes have been steadily sucked back into the system (McCarthy, 1988). Third refuse staid and stale pedagogies. We need to explore not only those non-Western knowledge systems but also to expand the ways in which knowledge is shared, learned, and assessed. I would add the following: Refuse deficit ideologies. These ideologies – based on colonist, racist, and assimilationist ideologies – continue to find their ways into our discourses and practices (Souto-Manning & Winn, 2017). Instead focus on asset-based approaches to individuals, communities and their social identity groups. To be sure, I recognize that how we refuse will differ depending upon the local context, the historical moment, the political landscape, the cultural orientations, and the personal dispositions of the individual.

## Conclusion

I do not position these as our only lines of inquiry and choices regarding the trajectory of the field of multicultural education or that these approaches are mutually exclusive; consider, for example, that each of the latter two trajectories asks for some kind of recognition and each seeks some kind of refusals. Looking for those intersections of these lines of inquiry might provide a vision of possibility for the future of multicultural education. Broadly speaking, we might strengthen and renew our efforts, rooted in critical multicultural education, to extend epistemological boundaries, to identify/document/affirm policies and actions that expand meaningful opportunity and affirmation, to critique institutional structures that tangibly and concretely prevent student success, and to connect education with a greater global/sustainable vision.

At minimum, we would be well served, as a productive jumping off point, for furthering the dialogue around education for social justice for minoritized and global majority communities by considering questions that lay at the intersections of the lines of inquiry regarding recognition and refusal (see Figure 2) given that both approaches seek to answer the following questions:

- How do we more fully address historical and contemporary forms of oppression, locally and globally?
- Toward what justice? That is, what is our vision of liberation and for what are we seeking?
- How do we reach ideological and political clarity which can also inform our theory of change?
- Given that vision, what is in most need of transformation as part and parcel of a humanizing (and rights-based) education?
- How do we value authentically, affirmatively, and accurately the assets of minoritized and global majority communities?



**Figure 2.** Recognition and Refusal: A Venn Diagram

- How do we engage in the kinds of scholarly research – central to the advancement of any future efforts around education centred in social justice – that is meaningful and respectful of students and communities?
- Given that we are in an applied, service, and human discipline, what are our next steps?
- Finally, where do we find wisdom, humor, hope and longing? (Tuck, 2014)

At the same time, we can advocate for those new spaces and opportunities to remake education as it can and might be, whether that includes new social justice in education programmes, community-informed and community connected teacher education, social justice inspired teacher networks, and global justice initiatives. These can serve as incubation sites for radically different yet responsive approaches to future efforts to make education multicultural.

Importantly, we are seeing greater social movements occurring around the globe in response to the conservative agenda and resultant rhetoric that has unleashed a racist, sexist, xenophobic, homophobic, misogynistic, xenophobic, and jingoist ideology. These movements are 'grounded in racial and social justice. Communities across the United States and the world are rising up to assert their right to self-determination and to live in dignity' (Fuentes & Pérez, 2016, p. 17).

In education, we are also seeing important movement building occurring. Even before the recent student marches in the United States and elsewhere against gun violence and efforts to increase voter registration, there have been a substantial number of youth led organizations and parent-community led advocacy groups seeking

educational reform and educational justice including for fairing housing policies, neighbourhood safety, immigrant rights, to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline, etc. (Warren, 2014). And even before the recent state-wide teacher walkouts in the United States to demand resources needed to pursue educational quality, teacher groups across the nation including teaching for social justice movements. Warren (2014) sees movement building as being central to the wider democratic project because ‘...the pursuit of educational justice is the struggle for people to define their own lives and to develop the capacity to achieve free and full development as human beings’ (p. 13). I assert that no significant changes will occur without a broader movement that is both local and global.

Chandler (2016) asks each of us to consider what it means to stand in solidarity with ethnic minority students, parents, and teachers who are demanding educational justice. For Chandler, each of us needs to understand ‘...what it means to stand and teach in critical-solidarity with one another so that students who are traditionally marginalized might be better able to flourish the elements of their own humanity’ (p. 82). More broadly, it asks us to engage with radical imagination – and then respond – to a vision of a new world order where the collective ‘we’ are able to restructure relations of power, question epistemological dominance, and advocate for structural changes.

In sum, I hope we are continually reminded that the work laid down by scholars and practitioners committed to the multicultural education project has brought us to this point where we can appreciate what has been accomplished, recognize missteps we’ve taken, and take stock in what is yet to be completed. The invitation that we are provided with is to ask new questions, answer them within a vision of new, more progressive possibilities, and as a result set the stage for a next generation who will ask a different set of questions based on what we have done.

## Notes

1. For those interested in a more comprehensive historical overview, consider Banks (2013) and Springs (2016).
2. Daniels (2008) described liberal pluralism as concerned with understanding and celebrating diversity within current social and political structures. It refuses to examine the structural causes (such as capitalism, racism, and patriarchy) of inequality that would lead to transformation of unequal power relations.
3. See Sikkink (1998) for an excellent account of the critiques and opportunities of advancing social justice via human rights framework.
4. The notion of cultural rights as part and parcel of broader human rights have also been articulated by the Council of Europe’s Framework Convention for the Protection of Minorities and the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights; see King (2017) for a related discussion.
5. While Ladson-Billings used the word resist, I’m using the word refusal here while also acknowledging critical differences in meaning and implication. I do so to imagine generative possibilities. As Ferguson (2015) notes, while resistance can be negotiated, ‘refusal “throws into doubt” the entire system and is therefore more dangerous’ (in Grande, 2014, p. 59).



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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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