Sociocultural Factors and the Global Goals of Education for All

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Summary

All over the world, nations have spent much of the last 20 years scrambling to increase and improve access to basic education. Globally, the number of people without access to a basic education has fallen significantly in the years since the goals of Education For All (EFA) were announced in 2000 at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, and extended at Incheon, South Korea, in 2016. This is ostensibly very good news. While universal access to a basic education is certainly a worthy goal, one can raise significant questions about the orientation of these efforts and the manner in which they are being pursued. For example, very little attention seems to have been paid to what the schools are or will be like, or to how the nations and people they must serve may be different from those for whom they were designed.

To understand the inevitable problems that flow from this potential mismatch, it is useful to examine education in nations that have achieved more or less universal access to basic education. Many of the educational, social, economic, and social justice disparities that plague those nations are today understood as natural effects of the educational infrastructures in operation. Examination of recent empirical research and practice that attends to the importance of social and cultural factors in education may allow nations that are currently building or scaling up access to head off some predictable and difficult problems before they become endemic and calcified on a national scale. Nations who seize the opportunity to build asset-based and culturally responsive pedagogies into their educational systems early on may, in time, provide the rest of the world with much needed leadership on these issues.

Keywords: Education For All, Education 2030, culture, pathologizing, asset-based pedagogy, assimilation, educational access, sociocultural theory, communalism, meritocracy

Subjects: Curriculum and Pedagogy, Education, Change, and Development, Education, Cultures, and Ethnicities, Educational Systems, Education and Society, Educational History

Introduction

Nations around the world have spent the last 20+ years scrambling to guarantee every child access to a basic education. The effort has achieved moderate success in increasing enrollments, thanks significantly to the framework for action established at the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar (and a 2016 extension at Incheon) and the associated efforts of 164 participating nations. Globally, by 2012 enrollments in pre-primary education had increased by nearly two-thirds since the Education for All (EFA) goals were announced. Enrollments in lower-secondary education have increased by 27% since 1999 and doubled in sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2016). This is ostensibly good news. Universal access to a basic education is certainly a worthy goal: however,

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one can raise significant questions about the manner in which it is being pursued. The question “How is access to education being defined in practice?” is critically important. For example, although EFA calls for the inclusion of socially, culturally, and economically excluded students, in many nations, planning for it tends to be driven by policy borrowing (Steiner-Khamsi & Waldow, 2012) and actions are primarily focused on funding facilities and infrastructure expansion (Ito, 2013). Thus far, little attention has been given to what the schools are or will be like or to how the students who will attend them may differ from those for whom they were designed.

If the models of schooling being disseminated are culturally insensitive, they will impose unnecessary impediments on millions of children, starting the first moment they enter a school. This can hardly be described as guaranteeing access. At issue is the fact that such schooling most often owes heritage to and is patterned after schools in the Euro-West (Yonemura, 2007) and functions to impose a range of Euro-Western cultural values and priorities that are quite apart from the essential skills and knowledge being sought (van Schalkwyk, 2015). It matters a great deal that most of the children targeted by EFA are nonwhite and of other non-European cultural and ethnic backgrounds, because it is well documented that such students tend to fare poorly in the very models of schooling being replicated globally.

To understand the problems that will inevitably flow from cultural insensitivity, it is useful to examine schooling in nations boasting more or less universal access (UA) to basic education. Not surprisingly most are in Western Europe and North America, and the models being disseminated in the name of EFA fundamentally duplicate systems from those regions. Such an examination is necessary because many problems afflicting ostensibly universal access nations, especially educational, social, and economic justice inequalities among identity groups, are best understood as natural consequences of the educational structures in operation. They foretell the inequality issues awaiting nations avidly building the same schooling into their own national infrastructures.

This article proceeds around several questions that undergird and follow from the first. Again; 1) How is access to education being defined in practice? These include: 2) How common are intranational “achievement gaps,[1]” and what are their consequences? Toward this question, this article examines gaps in some UA and EFA nations, and indications that the same consequent problems will or have emerged in EFA countries. Next the article takes up the question Why do “some groups” underachieve? In that section, using the United States as a cautionary example, we’ll define and discuss the meritocracy myths and pathologizing narratives that are commonly deployed to assign blame to marginalized children for their own underachievement. Critical elements of the same processes are also present and being leveraged in other nations. The next section considers, 4) How might examining social and cultural factors demand a critical reframing of the issues at hand? In that section we’ll define and deploy sociocultural theory as a lens through which many education related problems are being usefully reanalyzed and, using Ghana as a case in point, extend that reanalysis to some EFA nations. The chapter then addresses the question 5) What is there to be gained from such reframing? and argues that culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP[2]) raise the prospect of actually closing achievement gaps. Then, as proof of concept, the chapter describes scholarship and implementation of pedagogies leveraging the communalism and verve themes in African American culture to benefit students at the

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classroom level. Finally, the chapter briefly advances the suggestion that nations where schooling is being developed to or transformed on a national scale may avoid serious but predictable problems by building CSP into their systems of education. Nations who do so may ultimately provide much needed leadership for the rest of the world.

How Common Are Intranational "Achievement Gaps" and What Are Their Consequences?

It is well known that many racially/ethnically marginalized U.S. students have consistently underachieved for at least the half a century during which equal access has been law (Kozol, 2005). One way achievement gaps manifests is as disparities on national standardized-tests. Compared to European Americans (80%), in 2017 only 47% of African American, 57% of Latinx, and 56% of Native American 8th grade students achieved scores at or above basic math competence on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The disparity is similar for their reading scores (National Counsel for Education Statistics [NCES], 2018). Students on the wrong side of this gap are consistently overrepresented in suspension, expulsion and dropout rates (Girvan, Gion, McIntosh, & Smolkowski, 2017). Of course, academic achievement gaps lead to educational attainment gaps and consequently to those children ending up with lower status on outcomes ranging from income, wealth and health, to interactions with the justice system and even life expectancy (Shapiro, 2004; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017).

Similar gaps are of concern in other UA nations, for example in the United Kingdom, where especially students of Roma (10%), white Irish traveler (21%) and black Caribbean (51%) heritage lagged in attaining A*to C standards (e.g., passing marks) compared to students termed "white British" (63%) and Chinese heritage (83%; UK Cabinet Office, 2018). In Denmark, racial and ethnic minority students achieve the lowest proportion of good/excellent grades regardless of their socioeconomic status or parental education (Thomsen, Moldenhawer, & Kallehave, 2010). Further, the gap between ethnic and non-ethnic Danes in 15-year-old low performers in math is among the highest in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) (6th/66; Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2016). Germany ranked even higher (2nd/67) and while students of ethnic German heritage were about evenly distributed in qualifying for the three secondary tracks, students of Turkish (75%), Italian (81%), and former Yugoslavian (59%) heritage were much more likely to be tracked into *hauptschule*, the lowest category (Kristen, 2002).

Though they may seem less pressing than access concerns, achievement gaps are also evident in nations still pursuing UA. For example, there is a worrisome gap between students of the Akon population that dominates the southern/coastal/urban regions of Ghana, and the Ewe, Northerners, and other ethnic groups who are the majority in the interior. Ethnic tensions there have been reflected in lower enrollment rates for Ewe students as far back as 1967 (e.g., Ashanti youths whose parents were unschooled have higher enrollments in secondary school than Ewes youth [Clignet, 1967]) and persist. In 2010, less than half the students in one predominantly Ewe interior district reached passing standards, and 15% of schools reported a 0% pass rate on the national Basic Education Certificate Exam (BECE) exams (Ghana News Agency, 2010). Similarly,

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Gurma children are 2.5 times more likely to be out of school than Akan children (UNICEF, 2012). Elsewhere in Africa, a 2016 survey reported that although 83% of white and 69.7% of Indian heritage graduates qualified for bachelor's degree programs, less than half (46.3%) of colored and less than a third (28.5%) of black South African candidates reached that threshold (Steytler, 2016).

In Brazil, in a sample of 7.4 million students, Valente (2017) found that nonwhites were 25% less likely to score in the higher categories on the National High School Exam (ENEM) compared to white students. Brazil boasts a 97.6% enrollment rate, but Afro-descendent, Indigenous, and quilombola children are highly overrepresented among the non-enrolled (Ministério da Educação, 2008). In Guatemala, where indigenous primary school students score nearly a standard deviation below their non-indigenous peers on Spanish and mathematics assessments, McEwan and Trowbridge (2007) found that around 45% of that discrepancy is explained by race, with the rest split between (overlapping) economic factors such as school quality and parent's education (2007).

Taiwan also acknowledges large discrepancies. In a sample of over 2 million, students of indigenous heritage scored 85–100 points less than "mainstream" Taiwanese (Sung, Tseng, Kuo, Chang, & Chiou, 2014). Immigrants from the Chinese mainland and elsewhere also underachieve in Taiwanese schools (Tierney, 2008). In India, members of scheduled castes and tribes (SC, ST—e.g., those lowest in the hierarchy) typically score lower on high school exit exams. For example, a study including over 92,000 observations reported a gap of about half a standard deviation between scores of SC males (680) and females (685) compared to members of higher castes (767/761). Scores for members of ST were even lower (Bagde, Epple, & Taylor, 2016). Suffice it to say that intranational performance gaps based on identity group status are already a troubling feature of global education. It will be useful to establish and describe the significance of how such gaps are typically explained.

Why Do "Some Groups" Underachieve? (Pathologizing Narratives)

Unlike gaps in physical access to schools, intranational achievement gaps are most often blamed on those suffering them. The historical and current U.S. discourse on the issue provides a useful cautionary tale concerning what kinds of narratives may be employed to do this and why.

United States

At one time, it was widely believed that segregation and inequitable resources were the primary impediments to the general progress of African Americans in all areas, including education. That is, at one time access to a basic education was the acknowledged critical issue. For example, a post–civil war Freedmen's Bureau report argued "because they are men who have been, for generations, despoiled of their rights . . . the essential is that we secure to them . . . 'a fair chance'" (Owen, Howe, & McKaye, 1863). Nearly a century later, the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court declared school segregation, and its "inherently unequal" educational access, unconstitutional. Although no vision of integrated or equal schooling was ever substantially realized, with the end

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of legal discrimination the American meritocracy narrative (the myth that people's life outcomes are determined by internal/controllable factors—talent and effort—uninfluenced by circumstantial factors—identity status and opportunity structures) was officially extended to AAs. When their academic underachievement did not swiftly disappear, an explanatory vacuum opened.

What flooded into that void was largely informed by negative stereotypes extant in the national consciousness long before equal protection, generally repackaged in the language and sheen of scientific psychology (Guthrie, 2004). As a result, the "explanations" that dominated the academic, public, and policy discourses were, for decades, centered on various deficiencies alleged to plague AA individuals and communities. Those proposed and subjected to "confirming research" included accusation of low intelligence, low self-esteem, low need for achievement, low self-efficacy, dampened curiosity, external locus of control, stunted intrinsic motivation, mistrust of authority, distractibility, emotional volatility, lack of impulse control, inability to delay gratification, a lack of self-discipline more broadly, not valuing education, and others. These shortcomings were attributed to factors ranging from biological inheritance, the breakdown of the black family, lack of parental involvement, too little (or later, too much) stimulation at home, and a culture of poverty (see Guthrie, 2004).

Consequently, since the 1960's, AAs thusly defined as "culturally disadvantaged" have been subjected to government and privately funded interventions ranging from the benignly inappropriate to the bizarre. To name just a few, there was the Milwaukee project, through which infants were removed from their homes to "infant stimulation centers" daily for 7 hours to receive the "appropriate stimulation" that their parents (apparently) could not give them. Revealingly, center staff qualified simply by virtue of being "warm, caring, and language facile adults" (Garber, Hodge, Rynders, Dever, & Velu, 1991). There are still programs through which nice middle-class white ladies[3] enter family homes some 48 times annually to model and provide infants and small children stimulation typical of a "normal family" (Love et. al., 2002). Interventions have also included language programs premised on correcting AA children's "deficient vernacular speech"[4] to remedy their "deficient cognition" (Osborn, 1968). A theme among these is that they intend to "help" children approach the norms and expectations for how the "ideal student" ought to perceive, think and behave in order that they might then learn in school. All were designed to "fix" AA children (or intervene before their families could somehow "break" them). "Helping" and "fixing" are common euphemisms in projects of forced assimilation, which always begin by pathologizing the lives, habits, and capacities of marginalized populations.

Although the branding and individual constructs of interest come in and out of favor,[5] the themes have persisted and still figure prominently in underachievement discourses. For example, the idea of a pathological "culture of poverty" has reemerged (Fleming, 2016) with the oppositional culture model among its main complements. Now broadened to include other racially/ethnically marginalized students, the model blames poor performance on students' attitudes, positing that many reject learning and achievement as "acting white," and so disengage. Associated interventions seek to change these attitudes, often by convincing them to trust meritocratic social mobility narratives (despite the arguably more accurate lessons of their lived experience).

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The oppositional culture narrative is intuitively compelling to many and continues to influence pedagogical theory and practice in the United States (Desmond-Harris, 2017) despite little empirical substantiation (Whaley & Noel, 2011), with even teachers attributing AA underachievement to motivation and work ethic rather than to unequal opportunity structures (Bol & Berry, 2005). In fact, the preponderance of evidence indicates the opposite—that racially minoritized students maintain strong educational aspirations (Whaley & Noel, 2012). As much as pathologizing accounts have dominated the academic discourse, so have they led the public and policy discourses. For example, U.S. president Barack Obama made affirming references to the oppositional culture thesis in promoting his My Brother's Keeper initiative (Desmond-Harris, 2017). This history is particular of but not unique to U.S. education. For the purposes of this article, however, its lessons are important in their generality and inevitability in the comparable models of education being duplicated elsewhere.

Parallel Trends

Disturbingly similar patterns are observable in other nations. For example UK prime minister May famously said, "I want Britain to be . . . a country where everyone has a fair chance to go as far as their talent and their hard work will allow" even as reports from her own education department claimed parent, family, and students' (oppositional) attitudes, including "little belief in the value of schooling," were the most influential factors in underachievement (Stokes, Rolfe, Hudson-Sharpe, & Stevens, 2015). In nations where equal protection began with post-colonial independence, the promotion of meritocracy narratives has been undermined by the transparent lack of access. Once the appearance of UA is achieved, however, as in the United States, old attainment gaps will need new explaining, and old prejudices may readily flow into the vacuum.

The requisite general tensions and stereotypes about differences in intelligence and motivation among Ghanian tribal/ethnic groups are legacies of intentional post-colonial divide-to-control strategies (Mfum-Mensah, 2017). Both are well documented in the academic and popular discourses there. For example, the common stereotypes that members of the Ewe are dishonest and prone to attacking rivals, and that Northerners "don't understand the simplest things" and are unnecessarily aggressive, have been described as sources of human rights violations (Odumah & Golo, 2016). Dei (2004), reporting on focus interviews, concluded that "educators and students alike engaged in stereotypical remarks that were very offensive to certain groups and that these remarks . . . worked to stigmatize and marginalize certain groups" (Dei, 2004, p. 352). Such marginalizing leverages existing negative stereotypes into educational settings—reverberating the pathologizing narratives described earlier. That tribalized inferiority myths have been expressed publicly by prominent politicians (Theheraldteam, 2015) suggests that policymaking and resource allocation are vulnerable.

Relatedly, the Taiwanese government has contributed to stereotyping its indigenous peoples (as irrational/barbaric). This is illustrated in the legend of We Feng (a Chinese/Taiwanese man who befriended them, but whom they apparently beheaded), still appearing in primary school curricula, and leveraged into "Chinese/Taiwanese prejudices regarding the behaviour and attitudes of aboriginal teachers and students" (Parod, 2008, p. 35).

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For dominant groups, discourses that leverage existing stereotypes tend to be intuitively gratifying. In drawing attention and accountability away from structural factors and powerful interest groups, they also tend to be politically expedient. In addition, they serve to enforce and extend social stratification and marginalization. For example, the UK prime minister's meritocracy comments were criticized for ignoring the role of "merit monopolizing," whereby affluent parents add paying for private tutoring to the advantages ensuring their children's measured "merit" (Jerrim & Sims, 2019).

How Might Examining Social and Cultural Factors Demand Critical Re-framing?

Educators and policy makers can learn more than cautionary lessons from the UA examples presented. For example, there is increasing evidence that pathologizing models and associated policies ignore one whole side of the transaction between students and schooling, and so misunderstand related problems. Starting in the 1980s, and with the increasing influence of the situated cognition perspective on cognitive development, importantly different models emerged to challenge pathologizing narratives. These have gained momentum as scholars began to employ sociocultural theory as a lens for examining the role of culture in schooling.

Culture, Learning, and Schooling

According to sociocultural theory, "to understand individual thinking, one needs to understand the social, cultural and historical context in which it is used" (Rogoff & Chavajay, 1995, p. 866). "Culture" is commonly defined as the shared norms, habits, and rituals that distinguish groups. In this article, the term is used to reference deep structure culture (Miller, 2004). Distinguished from the functional and expressive dimensions, deep structure culture is the perceptual, cognitive, affective, and behavioral predispositions common among members of cultural groups (Moemeka, 1998). It includes the philosophical assumptions undergirding a group's worldviews and is formed and passed down as well as being stable across generational, regional, and socioeconomic variation. This definition demands examination of what happens when different cultures are brought into close proximity in systems of mass education.

Situated Cognition

Within sociocultural theory, the situated cognition perspective views scaffolding, the process of establishing shared understandings between a student and teacher and employing those toward building new ones, as the most basic process in learning. Learning contexts are important because they situate the elements (including behavioral directives, task instructions, materials, and physical environments) upon and with which children's learning should be scaffolded. Consequently, schooling that ignores or denigrates students' culture will be prone to "scaffolding failures," that is, failures to connect with and build on students' existing perceptual, cognitive, affective, and behavioral repertoires to facilitate new learning.

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Such analyses have been advanced by scholars who note that schooling in the United States is structured to scaffold and reward attitudes and behaviors consistent with values that are commonly assumed to be inherently and exclusively appropriate for education, but which are not. Instead, they are derived from the culture-based priorities of the dominant group. Academic success is thereby made contingent on students' displaying those values, some of which may conflict with the (also culturally rooted) value systems that many marginalized children learn at home and in their communities (Boykin & Allen, 2003). Those children experience little confirmation for the academic worth of knowledge, values, and patterns of behavior salient in their lives. Moreover, they may find themselves chronically penalized for failing to express those demanded in school. Regular scaffolding failures will certainly undermine their academic success, and the consequent disconnect may foster negative attitudes toward schooling, not in general, but *as it is being made available to them*. By contrast, the same organization and contingencies are generally effective for scaffolding learning for white children from comparatively affluent backgrounds.

This is the sense in which U.S. schools can be said to be culturally insensitive to many black and brown students. This typically goes unnoticed because most people view instruction as a neutral activity in which teachers convey the information and ideas that students absorb or don't, depending "on their hard work and talent." Acknowledging culture and its role in schooling enables an essential reframing of students' too frequent difficulties. Not least because it locates the onus of change squarely with educators and policy makers rather than on already marginalized children. Unfortunately, even many educators have not learned to think of institutions as cultural entities.

Culture and Education Infrastructure

People also tend to view schools as culturally neutral, when in fact, institutions of education (and all institutions) are, consciously or not, configured to reflect and enforce values, practices, and beliefs consistent with the needs, views, and priorities of the people, place, and time by and for whom they were created (Hurley & Hurley, 2011; Meşeci Giorgetti, Campbell, & Arslan, 2017). Like deep structure culture among groups of people, these orientations can be determinedly self-maintaining. Imms and Byers (2017) describe individualism in education wherein faculty and administrators set curriculum and manage classroom activities presuming that the ideal learning experience involves each student doing independent, often competitive work. Activity, emotion, and movement suppression are also among the cultural patterns emphasized in Euro-Western education (Boykin & Noguera, 2011). Even the built environment, in shaping people's movement and physical proximity patterns, conveys cultural directives (Sankofa, Hurley, Allen, & Boykin, 2019). Further, because of how institutional processes and priorities are configured, persons acculturated to the controlling ethos will be better positioned than others to steward them with the appearance of competence. In this way, institutions participate in recruiting leadership and staff who will affirm and extend the embedded values and priorities.

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A Case in Point: Ghana

Coming back around, if it is true that many efforts toward EFA involve the implementation of schooling patterned after UA models, a strong case can be made that the schools will be culturally insensitive to children they should serve. The generalizability of the U.S. example to other contexts is not entirely speculative. There is significant documentation that the processes described are well underway in Ghana, for example. Scholars like Dei, Adjei, Edu-Bandoah, and Opoku-Amankwa have detailed micro-level processes by which Euro-Western values, knowledge, and priorities are being reproduced in that country. Their work describes classroom dynamics that map disturbingly well onto the U.S. pattern described. To begin with, many Ghanaian children already get little confirmation for the academic worth of knowledge, values, and behaviors that are salient in their home and community cultural lives. For example, Adjei (2007, p. 1049), describing his own education to illustrate larger trends, writes about how "Indigenous knowledge was not only ignored in schools, but were also systematically undermined and dismissed as fetishizing, primitive, and superstitious." Such pathologizing is, as mentioned, well known to the U.S. context. Moreover, because they are so often misrecognized as superior to local forms, Euro-Western values serve a critical gatekeeping function whereby academic success is made contingent on students' accepting and displaying them. Adjei goes on to describe this tension.

> Because the education system is closely tied to employment, privilege, and social prestige, I had to sacrifice the rich indigenous knowledge I received from my grandparents and community [in favor of the] Western knowledge . . . disseminated in school.
>
> (Adjei, 2007, p. 1050)

In fact, with the imposition of English-only policies, academic success was made transparently contingent on cultural assimilation to the point where many Ghanaians view learning English as one and the same with education itself (Edu-Buandoh, 2012). The power of this pressure is evident elsewhere in Africa. For example, Islamic communities in The Gambia resisted the imposition of Euro-Western values by forming Mohammedan schools in which to educate their children, but after independence "found themselves at a disadvantage because they did not have the requisite education and skills to participate in the political and economic processes of the [reshaped] society" (Mfum-Mensah, 2017, p. 50).

If the cultural values being promoted are incongruent with those many Ghanaian children learn in their homes and communities, the pressure to assimilate will challenge their sense of belonging in school and lead to psychological tension. Navigating competing expectations may also bring students into conflict with home and family. Again, Adjei: "I realized that I was being removed psychologically and cognitively from anything that had to do with my local upbringing and culture" (Adjei, 2007, p. 1050). As predicted, such children find themselves chronically penalized as, for example, "good students"; that is, those who are able to display the values and behaviors demanded "get praised and applauded," while others may get ridiculed or even physically punished by teachers for their mistakes, including, for example, the inability to

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communicate effectively in English only, or for arriving late because of family obligations (Opoku-Amankwa, 2009, p. 126). Persistent scaffolding failures resulting from these dynamics will undermine students' academic success. The consequent disconnect will foster resentment and negative attitudes, to the point of "putting some of the students off going to school . . . [at all]" (p. 132). Moreover, because few of the gatekeepers are prepared to distinguish students' resisting assimilation (or acting white) from their attitudes toward learning and high achievement, it will be seductively easy to conclude that underachievers simply "don't have what it takes" or have mysteriously developed a "culture of opposition" to schooling.

These processes are enabled by the guise of neutrality that allows Euro-Western schooling to be misconstrued as a fair and appropriate gatekeeper whose criteria are talent and effort. Once achieved, this perception even misleads individuals to cooperate in relegating indigenous languages, culture, and knowledge to illegitimacy in the hopes of being among the few who attain the promised better quality of life (Ajdei, 2007). Opoku-Amankwa's analysis also illustrates how punishing "weak" and rewarding "good" students, reproduces "the uneven distribution of cultural capital amongst the students, which also reproduces the social structure" because under such circumstances, the children of uneducated or economically weak parents have lower chances of success (p. 46).

These analyses nicely illustrate the day-to-day processes by which Western-style schooling serves as cultural domination and reproduces social stratification, but all stop short of considering how the same processes necessarily play out among Ghanaian identity groups. Of course, children and their families aren't randomly economically or educationally "successful" or "weak." Neither are such positionalities generally determined by "merit." As such, the processes at work will inevitably exacerbate the stratifications that already disadvantage those marginalized on the bases of identity status. Just as schools in the United States are very well structured to scaffold learning for affluent white children, so will Euro-Western style schooling create unfair advantages for the already dominant groups in Ghana and elsewhere, as the children of "successful parents" receive not just the standard advantages of a well-resourced upbringing, but advantages specific to thriving in Euro-Western schooling. These include access to English but also experience, via travel and technology-assisted home delivery, with the same Euro-Western perspectives, values, and content demanded in their schools. This specialized cultural capital will lend to identity-based merit monopolizing (Lampert, 2013).

This part of the analysis is important. Without it, it is possible to contort what has been described here into appealing narratives of development and modernization. Using the language of development, cultural domination can be glossed over and justified as a kind of "tough medicine" that will usher nations onto the world economic stage by actualizing their "best and brightest." Of course, such reasoning is most appealing to those who stand to gain; those already most acculturated to Euro-Western values, who will least mourn further erosion of traditional cultures. Such framing skillfully masks otherwise foreseeable negative consequences and, by evoking national identity, even enables courting support from those likely to suffer them. Ghana is not unique in this. Neither the United States; the lessons are far broader. Similar things are or will be unfolding in other nations considered here and more that are not mentioned.

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What Is There to Be Gained From Such Reframing?

Returning to the U.S. example, analyses of culture in education also offers pathways forward. Because it is held as imperative that teachers and students build on existing competencies, some scholars have endeavored to incorporate students' cultural assets into pedagogy. The empirical research on CSP is intriguing.

By now it is documented in dozens of studies that CSP can facilitate academic achievement for minoritized students. Qualitative research has demonstrated that CSP affords elaboration of the social capital, positive emotional energy, shared goals and engagement potential that students bring to classrooms and other benefits like reduced disruptiveness and truancy (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Milner, 2017).

Work testing the integration of specific cultural themes with classroom pedagogy has found benefits for students across a variety of subject areas and outcomes (for reviews, see Boykin & Allen, 2003; Boykin & Noguera, 2011). For example, a number of studies have examined students' performance in contexts designed to engage and build on the communal, high verve and rhythmic movement orientation themes in African American culture. Communalism denotes sensitivity to the fundamental interdependence among people and to social bonds and relationships (Hurley, Leath, Hurley, & Pauletto, 2019). Hurley, Allen, and Boykin, (2009) found that AA children achieved better math performance after learning in communally structured (no reward) contexts, whereas European Americans performed best in the context that included interpersonally competitive rewards. Other work has found that communal learning benefits are sustainable across whole curriculum units implemented by retrained in-service teachers (Coleman, Bruce, White, Boykin, & Taylor, 2017).

Research examining rhythmic movement orientation and verve challenges the ubiquitous assumptions that learning is best facilitated where sound and movement are suppressed as much as possible, and material is best mastered via sustained unitary attention. Rhythmic movement orientation refers to a person's relationship with the interaction among (polyrhythmic, syncopated) music and movement. Verve indicates a person's receptiveness to comparatively dense and variable stimulation in their immediate and ambient environments. Both are integral features of AA home and community socialization and manifest as, for example, multiple activities occurring concurrently in the same space during overlapping conversations and with lively music playing. This patterning, suggest Boykin and Allen (2003), cultivates a receptiveness to variability and intensity of stimulation and a facility with movement expressiveness. Related empirical work has reported that AA children exhibit and prefer greater variability than do white Americans on behavioral measures. Schooling studies report that AA children perform better on cognitive and academic tasks presented in high than in low verve formats and in learning conditions arranged to encourage movement and interaction with music than in those where sound and movement are intentionally minimized as they tend to be in schools (Cunningham, Boykin, & Allen, 2017).

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The CSP research provides examples of culturally rooted cognitive and behavioral assets that might also be relevant in other EFA nations. For example, there is significant documentation of communalism (as ubuntu, collectivism, familism, and related constructs) in Africa, Asia, and South America (Vignoles et al., 2016). There is also some evidence that verve orientation would be relevant in parts of Africa (Hurley & Hurley, 2011) and Latin America (Hurley, Salvador, & English, 2018). The point is not to map these particular cultural themes onto global education; there are undoubtedly other themes and orientations that nations would wish to center based on local priorities and goals. Moreover, we should not assume that the pedagogies described will map directly on to any contexts other than those for which they were developed.

The point, rather, is to offer these examples as proof of concept. They testify that the pedagogies and values of Euro-Western schooling are not singularly, the most, or even inherently appropriate for education. The point is also to affirm that education that leverages and builds on the cultural assets of the students they are meant to serve will be inherently more supportive of learning than any that do not. Further, demanding responsiveness to both inter- and intranational cultural differences, CSP education stands to help narrow existing identity-based achievement gaps. In a word, it represents a shift from sorting children by their performance of Euro cultural imaginings of the optimal person, to leveraging people's culture strengths toward individual, community, and national development.

Opportunity for Global Leadership

Although CSP education has made strides in academic circles, it still has limited penetration in U.S. schools. There are a number of reasons for this. Additional research is needed to detail how it is best operationalized day to day (Bottiani, Larson, Debnam, Bischoff, & Bradshaw, 2018). Also critically needed are the means and will for implementation on the scale required. In the United States, where education infrastructures have tremendous inertia, these and all significant changes face tremendous resistance from a range of intricately intertwined, old, and also slow-moving public and private institutional forces. Some EFA nations may be nimble enough to build CSP into the infrastructures being created in the name of EFA, or at least to stage implementations on a larger scale than is feasible elsewhere. Doing so will take significant and sustained intellectual, financial, and political will and resources, but may face fewer momentum-related barriers in nations where mass transformation on a national scale is beginning or underway. The potential of CSP to help sustain heritage cultures and reduce intergroup tensions while cultivating an educated citizenry makes the challenge worthy of serious consideration. One should hope that the high and predictable social cost of not doing so outweighs other concerns.

For willing nations, preparation will involve directing resources and policies toward shaping pedagogies, processes, and infrastructure to specific cultural and national contexts and toward shaping public and policy discourses to support them. As a starting point, there is rich programmatic research examining CSP in real classrooms. The Capstone Institute at Howard University and the culture and equity project at UCLA's Center X both maintain online repositories of academic and pedagogical resources. Work on CSP is also increasingly occurring in

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other places as well. For example, there is meticulous work detailing how to implement (van Schalkwyk, 2015) and how not to implement (Nguyen, Terlouw, & Pilot, 2012) cooperative learning among students from particular collectivist societies.

Although educators and policy makers can certainly take inspiration from external sources, there is as much danger in pedagogy borrowing as in policy borrowing (Bernardo et al., 2018). Doing so would too often replace one set of inappropriate value contingencies with another and may further delegitimize local culture and exacerbate social stratification (Somé, 2017). What is needed is research and curriculum design endogenous to the schooling systems being designed or transformed. An important step toward that will involve partnering educators and community leaders with scholars and researchers to explore and catalog cultural themes and priorities at the regional and national levels, and placing those in dialogue with curricular administrative and institutional processes and goals.

In an interview, A. Wade Boykin, a founding leader of the culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) movement recalled feeling dissatisfied with the discourse blaming achievement gaps on AA children's cultural deficiencies: "So I decided to go out into the community, take a pencil and paper, and write down what I saw" (Viadero, 1996). Joseph White did a similar thing for his seminal work on the strengths of black families. From those small beginnings, both men helped to start a movement with growing global impact.

If agents of education can be empowered and resourced to work out how to engage and leverage culture toward the acquisition of essential curricular and technical knowledge, they may create paradigms for education that are desperately needed in many places. Concerning the question of how access to education is being defined in practice, they may stand to provide access to a basic education for all, defined as one that is free from assimilation contingencies, which leverages, sustains, and extends students' deep structure culture and identities, and which ameliorates rather than exacerbates identity-based social stratification. Nations who do so can hope to provide critically needed leadership for EFA and UA nations alike.

Conclusions

It is not realistic to imagine that countries can borrow everything about Euro-Western education except its role in processes of cultural domination, assimilation, and stratification. Given that education will be an important site of resistance or capitulation, some nation or nations will need to take action if the momentum is to be shifted.

Global Education For All (EFA) efforts face many critical challenges, among them issues concerning gender, sexual orientation, and ability status, not addressed here in order to center the need for culturally relevant pedagogy (CSP). Work like this is most significant if it succeeds in compelling and empowering agents of education to view a quality basic education as one that is responsive to and builds on peoples' existing knowledge and repertoires of thinking and behavior to cultivate the best in them. Only then can Education For All hope to be something other than a mechanism for cultural domination, assimilation and stratification. Only then can it promise to honestly serve global and national citizenship and economic development goals.

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Notes

1. Although the familiar terminology has been retained in this article, several scholars have persuasively reconceptualized the phenomenon as opportunity, resource, and other gaps, or even more accurately as an "education debt" owed to marginalized children (Milner, 2017).

2. The term "culturally sustaining" is used here as an umbrella expression referring to a family of related ideas including cultural asset-based, culturally relevant, culturally responsive, and others.

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3. Not as a matter of policy, but of practice (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017).

4. Linguistics evidence is unanimous that AAVE (and all dialects) is in no way deficient in supporting cognitive development.

5. In the 1970s and 1980s, scholars of the black psychology movement systematically dismantled the theoretical, conceptual, and empirical credibility of black deficiency accusations (Banks, McQater, & Hubbard, 1978).

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