Championing Equity & Social Justice-Based Pedagogies

Appreciating Paul Gorski

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This article is the third in a series of narrative studies of leaders in the field of multicultural education researched and written by Cheryl Hunter and several of her graduate students at the University of North Dakota. The first in the series featuring Marybeth Gasman appeared in the Fall 2017 issue, the second featuring Gloria Ladson-Billings in the Spring/Summer 2018 issue, and other articles will appear in future issues of *Multicultural Education*. Hunter and her students demonstrate how incorporating the personal narratives of prominent multiculturalists and practitioners with their scholarship helps us understand the depth of the scholar's writing, the complexities of such scholarship, and the passion surrounding both their work and their lived experience. The project of narrative inquiry combines qualitative research methods, including interviews, with multicultural education, thus producing a series of biographies that offer a window into the history and development of multicultural education and its concepts.

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Introduction

As the current presidential administration of the United States seeks to energize the public by championing rigorous trade wars against powerful market economies to maintain dominance in the global economic marketplace, the U.S. educational system seems to further erode at the proverbial seams of our social fabric. This erosion no doubt will have devastating consequences in times to come, because a true globalization and competitiveness in the marketplace "requires at its core a stable, equitable and a regenerative educational system that is sustainable, accessible to all children, and beneficial to future economic growth" (de Silva et al., 2018, p. 23; Stiglitz, 2010).

In an ever-increasing shift in demographics where the United States sees its diversity grow, the concept of multicultural education is not new. Historically speaking, the idea of multicultural education in the United States was first born as an idealistic response to the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s and began minimally to take root in the early 1970s (Bennett, 2001).

The civil rights movement eventually developed into a Black Power movement, which in turn paved the way for the recognition and impact of other minority groups, including women. This was followed by the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954, in which the clause "separate but equal" from *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 was deemed "inherently unequal" (Sunstein, 2004, p. 102). This landmark reversal "triggered rising expectations and aspirations for equal opportunity and social justice, especially in public education" (Bennett, 2001, p. 171). The need for a truly multicultural education was in the making.

National Events Leading to Increased Multiculturalism in the United States

Unfortunately, for most educational authorities after the civil rights movement, multicultural education did not mean appreciating or valuing cultural diversity in children and accomodating their needs. Neither did it mean that the educational system needed to be reformed through *reflective pedagogy* to enhance student engagement, despite fervent demands by many ethnic groups.

Reflective pedagogy called for having "curricula to reflect their [children's] experiences, histories, cultures, and perspectives" (Banks & Banks, 2010, p. 6). Instead, what multicultural education meant for the governing educational authorities was establishing a system of culling and labeling all those who were not Anglo-European.

As a result, a disproportionate number of our nation's African American, Native American, and Latino children and youth were placed in special education facilities for the "handicapped or culturally disadvantaged" (Bennett, 2001, p. 171). These divisive educational policies energized ethnic groups to push for community control of schools and revision of textbooks that reflected the diversity of the American people.

As a result of this push by ethnic minorities for revamping of the educational system, schools and educators hurriedly developed courses and programs. These courses and programs too often lacked educationally sound learning material to benefit ethnically diverse children within the U.S. educational system. Moreover, not only did these newly created courses focus on one dominant ethnic group's celebrations representative of the civil rights movement but the courses "developed and implemented during this period were

usually electives" (Banks & Banks, 2010, p. 6) that had no real impact on overall educational objectives and fell well short of a multicultural educational vision.

However, in this somewhat grim public educational sphere, some rare individual educators rose to the challenge of championing multicultural education through social justice and inclusive pedagogy. One such individual is Paul Gorski, formerly a professor at George Mason University and currently founder and lead equity specialist at the Equity Literacy Institute (equityliteracy.org). Through his relentless pursuit of social justice, and his fervent advocacy for equity and fairness in education for all students, we are fortunate to see the pendulum of righteousness swing for the educational betterment of minority students, at least in the spaces where Gorski teaches. Beyond his teaching, however, Gorski's critiques related to matters of social justice education have now gained national and international prominence.

This article is the third in a series that explores the lives of leading multicultural educators and how their lived experiences have impacted the perspectives and theories of multicultural education. As with the previous articles in this series, this article employs narrative inquiry as a methodological lens for understanding the works of the featured multicultural scholar.

Gorski continues to make inroads that impact multicultural education across the United States by championing equity–based and social justice–based pedagogies in various learning spaces to address the importance of diversity in education. This article takes the reader through various stages of Gorski's life that highlight his personal experiences as a grounding source for his advocacy of an effective multicultural educational program in our ever-shifting demographics.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative research, the methodology utilized in this study, builds on the idea of ordinary storytelling (Schegloff, 1997); it is a method of research that puts the personal story at the center of a study to create a more holistic and embodied story (Glesne, 2016). This form of qualitative research is characterized by the use of a person's biography, which "revolves around an interest in life experiences as narrated by those who live them" (Chase, 2011, p. 421).

Although literature has utilized and analyzed narrative for some time, it has more recently become a common method

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for research in the human sciences, and it "provides a way to systematically study personal narratives of experience" (Riessman, 2005, p. 5). As Chase (2011) has defined it, narrative as a methodology has a

> distinct form of discourse: as meaning making through the shaping or ordering of experience, a way of understanding one's own or others' actions, organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time. (p. 421)

Thus, when a participant shares her story, the researcher uses analytical strategies to make meaning from the story (Riessman, 2005).

The purpose of narrative inquiry is to understand how the participant "links experiences and circumstances together to make meaning, realizing also that circumstances do not determine how the story will be told or the meaning that is made of it" (Glesne, 2016, p. 185). Furthermore, it is important that the narrative researcher be able both to hear the stories a person tells and to look for deeper stories and meanings of which a participant might not be aware. As Bell (2002) suggests, "Participants construct stories that support their interpretation of themselves, excluding experiences and events that undermine the identities they currently claim" (p. 209).

In this way narrative research combines listening to a story and understanding how the way a story is told and presented is part of the narrative itself. These stories provide the researcher with a "window into people's beliefs and experiences" (Bell, 2002, p. 209). Therefore a narrative methodology allows researchers to understand and examine the ways which people use their own stories to create meaning and make sense of their experiences. It also opens up an opportunity to examine how people present the stories and experiences they share (Glesne, 2016), becoming "both phenomena under study and a method of study" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 4).

When a story is examined in its entirety, including the way it was structured and told, the researcher is able to view the story as a larger narrative piece, and while doing so, the researcher is "imposing meaning on participants' lived experience" (Bell, 2002, p. 210). Thus narrative inquiry involves a form of collaboration between the participant who shares her story and the researcher who interprets and retells the story.

Clandinin and Caine (2008) argued that there are two ways in which narrative inquiry can begin: "listening to individuals tell their stories and living alongside participants as they live their stories" (p. 543). The most widely used method is telling stories, often through interviews and conversations between participant and researcher (Clandinin & Caine, 2008). This was also how the current study began, and these conversations allowed the researchers to talk to Dr. Gorski about his own stories and experiences.

In this study, Gorski's work and research focus are examined in the context of his own life experiences. The emphasis is put on understanding his personal stories (experiences) holistically, connecting them with his research and work. The use of a narrative approach allows for a richer understanding of the issues that Gorski has focused on in his work, research, and projects as a multicultural educator.

Paul Gorski: An Encounter With Racism

Paul Gorski's pathway into multicultural education was not accidental but intentional. Growing up as a privileged youth in terms of being from the macrocultural membership in the United States, he was exposed early in life to the racial divide that existed between African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and the White populace.

This early exposure to racial division served as a precursor to how Gorski became interested in advocacy for social justice and multicultural education. His interest in such advocacy was captured in an in-depth telephone interview by Matthew Torgerson, a graduate student at the University of North Dakota, in 2015. Several of the following excepts are from that interview.

Born in Washington, D.C., and growing up in Forest Ridge in Sterling, Virginia, in the early 1970s, Gorski lived in a homogeneous working-class housing development. However, his closest friends were from diverse backgrounds, and often Gorski biked his way through other parts of Sterling to connect with them.

Initially, as a White male growing up in a predominantly White neighborhood, questions about social justice, cultural identities, inequities, and macro/microaggressions never entered Gorski's mind. However, he remembers vividly his first encounter with racism, albeit involving his father:

> My dad and I were standing in the front yard. I was probably seven or eight years old. A father and son walked by us, and they were wearing these turbans. I believe they were Sikh and I can remember my dad kind of spewing hate, and he never would have said something out loud to them but waits until they walk by and turns to me and says something like, "This is America. When you come to America, you should act like an American." And now, of course, I can look back at that and say, "Well that's ridiculous," because he's complaining about their religion or nationality. So, they very well could have been born in the U.S. But just that anger, that hate. I just remember how uncomfortable it made me and that's when I had this very good memory of saying "I'm not going to become like that." (Gorski, interview, 2015)

Gorski firmly believes that many factors in personal lives contribute to the character of a person. Moreover, he believes that a person's personal and relational experiences affect how a person thinks, responds, and behaves in the greater community. Gorski later recalled how unfair he thought his father's reaction to seeing a person of color with his son was. Consumed by unfounded assumptions, Gorski's father allowed his fears to override a sense of compassion for those who did not share his values or resembled a familiar image. Therefore it is not unusual that Gorski stated in his interview,

> From a very early age, I associated prejudice with misery. My dad was not a happy person, and I always felt like there was a cancer inside of him. (Gorski, interview, 2015)

It is perhaps these unmitigated circumstances in Gorski's early life that caused his eventual segue into understanding racism and working in the field of multicultural education.

A Narrative on Whiteness and Multicultural Education

Some of his early brushes with racism are well documented in his essay "A Narrative on Whiteness and Multicultural Education" (Gorski, 2000). In this essay, Gorski mentioned a situation that he found to be unnerving and described how events leading up to his nonaction made him angry inside. To put it into perspective, this specific incident involved two of his good friends during a ride home from an event. These two friends were from two different ethnic backgrounds, where one was White and the other was African American.

The uncomfortable situation arose when his White friend, Rich, started complaining about his ex-girlfriend, who had begun to date an African American, and referred to her as a "nigger lover." Gorski remembered feeling very troubled and hurt by the comment, because as he mentioned later in his writing, Aaron, the mutual friend in the backseat, was an African American:

> It was horrible, just so painful. I dropped Aaron off and didn't confront Rich at all. I just took him home. As I drove home, I remember this incredible pressure filling my body until I just burst into tears. I wasn't even crying because I knew Aaron was hurt. I was crying because I realized that there was a piece of Aaron's existence—a considerable piece—that I had no concept of, and probably didn't want to have any concept of. I always thought we were so alike, inseparable, and in some ways, we were. But this incident suddenly placed a race on Aaron for me. (Gorski, 2000, p. 1)

During the time of his youth, Gorski was one among many who had not experienced social or cultural depravations when he was growing up in Virginia. This is because he was born into the dominant White culture that was responsible for its deeply rooted socioeconomic and cultural norms and patterns, which were pervasive within the macrocultural society. Gorski was an unwitting operant, albeit subconsciously, within that macroculture. Therefore, when he came head-to-head with events that were racial in nature and deeply troubling, he did not have the skill set to address those issues to his satisfaction.

Road Less Traveled

Gorski's early brushes with racism and his deep compassion for his friends can be seen as his choice for taking a road less traveled in his quest to address issues surrounding multiculturalism. According to philosopher and economist Amartya Sen, unless one is willing to step out of one's comfort zone to question and empower oneself to learn, understand, and value another's well-being, one is generally relegated to behaviors that inadvertently disenfranchise others. This disenfranchisement of others allows certain freedoms of members of the mainstream (macroculture) to maintain their status-quo (Sen, 1999).

From this perspective, it is evident that Gorski's deep regret after the night's incident when he was an (un)witting participant of racism evolves into his sense of personal remorse of his inaction. As he became more exposed to the blatant inequities existing in his realm of influence, Gorski took the road less traveled to make a difference in community-wide multicultural education driven by a social justice framework.

Race and Racial Prejudice

When it comes to social injustice toward people of color, Gorski feels that attending high school was the first time he truly became aware of race and racial prejudice. By his own account, being a White male, Gorski never had to think about race or the social and political issues that arose along with it:

> Because I have never been subject to discrimination on the basis of my race, I have the luxury of being able to easily disengage or distance myself from a discussion on race or racism. (Gorski, 2000, p. 1)

In his early years, as with many people who identify with a group in power, Gorski separated himself from conversations about race:

> That is the ultimate luxury of Whiteness; the ability to see myself as neutral and thus excuse myself from any responsibility for addressing racial issues in education, society in general, and most importantly, myself. (Gorski, 2000, p. 1)

Gorski's intentional progression into multicultural educational advocacy was steady yet measured. There was so much he felt he did not know about the sociocultural divide of which he was a part. Ultimately, it was while he worked on his Ph.D. dissertation on "Racial and Gender Identity Development in White Male Multicultural Educators" that he became interested in social justice and education.

Through continued mentoring by his faculty mentor in issues of social justice and by gaining opportunities facilitating multicultural workshops in local schools,

and at times teaching multicultural educational classes at the university, he was afforded an invaluable glimpse into a whole new world of which he knew very little:

> All the graduate students would work together on that class, and we would be the facilitators for the small groups, so a lot of time was spent doing that, and then, later, I became a mentor to other people who were coming up to be facilitators. So, there was that, and then, I was going out into local public schools, doing workshops on social justice. I just got this invaluable mentoring from that whole process. There would not be a "me" without having gone through that. I think I was a TA for the multicultural education class, like seven times, and the mentoring I got through that was everything to me. (Gorski, interview, 2015)

Gorski's immersion in his dissertation work coupled with his teaching assistant responsibilities in multicultural education seem to have created fissures of opportunities to make differences in the lives of those who are disenfranchised. His genuine interest in caring about equitable education for all students began to impact how he envisioned local educational settings and content.

Multicultural Pavilion

The evolution of the World Wide Web offered new opportunities for Gorski to reach a great many people with the touch of a few keys of his computer. This new technology allowed him to reach out to wider communities of people to provide information about the value of multicultural education. Gorski named his newly minted information highway the Multicultural Pavilion:

> When I first started, when I was a master's student, the World Wide Web blasted out onto the scene, and I learned how to make websites. I created this website called the Multicultural Pavilion that still exists actually. It was like the first multicultural education website, and that really helped me establish myself. (Gorski, interview, 2015)

This web-based Pavilion was one of Gorski's first major contributions to the area of multicultural education. It gave access to myriad resources in equity and social justice educational frameworks for teachers, activists, and the general public. This contribution laid the foundation for Gorski to be seen as an influencer in the field of multicultural education.

Subsequently, Multicultural Pavilion was awarded the 2001 Multicultural Media Award by the National Association for Multicultural Education.

The establishment of Multicultural Pavilion was only the beginning for Gorski in his quest to share his knowledge of culturally relevant pedagogy to equalize the educational field for all students. Several years later, he created another award-winning website called EdChange, and, later, Equity Literacy Institute, with an eye to shifting existing paradigms harboring deficit ideological mind-sets.

Deficit Ideology

Deficit ideology, otherwise named "the scornful gaze," a term coined by Gorski, refers to policy makers atop the country's socioeconomic pyramid gazing down to fix the disenfranchised through using evaluatory methods and scales such as the achievement gap to substantiate educational outcomes of low-income and marginalized student populations, resulting in the revictimization of these groups.

Revictimization is due to the fact that these groups of students are already coming from unequal socioeconomic and educational settings, where much-needed basic resources are scarce compared to public schools in wealthier neighborhoods and, of course, in private settings.

Navigating Deficit Ideology Through Educational Change

According to Gorski, the deficit ideology is based on long-held unproven sociocultural myths that equate poor student achievement with their parents' disinterest in their children's higher educational aspirations among the marginalized groups (Gorski, 2012). Gorski further stated that instead of the policy makers looking into revising policies that create equality in educational funding and access to better schools and resources, policies are being created to widen socioeconomic gaps for the poor by making it increasingly difficult for them to compete in all spheres, including that of education.

This ever-widening gap is especially evident when it comes to educational achievement among African American students. As quoted in de Silva et al. (2018), Bell (2002) stated that "little attention is given to multiracial, multicultural, or multiclass issues" (p. 25) that alienate a positive school experience for many racially diverse students. Bell affirmed that "America is a White country and Blacks, particularly as a group, are not entitled" (p. 25) to concerns, resources, or even empathy that would be extended to a similarly situated White—a statement that Gorski firmly believes to be untrue.

EdChange

Gorski has continued to do increased work in social justice through activism within the educational system. In this regard, his educational website EdChange has given educators, community leaders, and the general public the tools and resources to start conversations about equity and social justice.

EdChange is open to a diverse group of contributors who share their expert knowledge on poverty, teachers of color, conflict resolution, equity in schooling, teacher activism, animal rights, environmental justice, and creating communities. These contributors, who are educators, practitioners, and theorists, are working together to create a positive change in our society through educational information access:

> Collectively, EdChange has decades of experience providing workshops, presentations, assessment, training-of-trainers, and other forms of consulting and staff development for P-12 schools, colleges and universities, community organizations, government organizations, and others. (EdChange, 2015).

Equity Literacy as the Cultivation of Skills and Consciousness

Gorski's other website, Equity Literacy, is intended to focus the learning process for students and staff alike toward concentrating on the inequities that plague our current education system. "Equity Literacy is the cultivation of the skills and consciousness that enable us to recognize, respond to, and redress conditions that deny some students access to educational and other opportunities enjoyed by their peers" (Gorski, 2017, p. 1). The framework relies on four abilities of educators:

> Recognize bias, discrimination, and inequity; respond to bias, discrimination, and inequity in a thoughtful and equitable manner; redress bias, discrimination, and inequity, not only by responding to interpersonal bias, but also by studying the ways in which bigger social change happens; cultivate and sustain bias-free and discrimination-free communities, which requires an understanding that doing so is a basic responsibility for everyone in a civil society. (Gorski, interview, 2015)

In a podcast interview (Krutka & Milton, 2016), Gorski iterated that the

"Big Idea" behind equity literacy is "looking at knowledge and skills required to make a threat to the existing inequity by a sphere of influence." He further explained how current policies and pedagogy sustain oppressive ideologies because they have failed to recognize and address inequities by understanding the circumstances of oppression within marginalized communities.

Hence the idea of implementing multicultural or inclusive educational strategies in school systems has fallen into a pattern of superficial cultural and food-fest celebrations that further oppress these already marginalized communities.

Gorski on Being a Threat to Inequity

Gorski highlighted food drives, cookie sales, and family involvement nights as examples to underscore this point of oppression. He stated that it is wrong for educational administrators and teachers to see marginalized parent communities' inability to support these programs as an indication of their disinterest in their children's education.

Rather, Gorski says, in most cases, these parents do not have the financial resources to pay for fund-raisers or childcare to support such programs. Instead of resorting to the further oppression of already marginalized groups, Gorski suggests that policy makers, administrators, and teachers come together to deconstruct or upset the *master narrative* based on Eurocentric and White homogeneous ideological values and, instead, include a people-based focus in current pedagogy.

This means curricula that reflect the community and its human rights issues. When curricula reflect the community, and the community can understand and address oppressive ideologies, inequity then becomes threatened within the educational sphere.

Gorski's more recent involvement in environmental racism and animal rights is by no means a latent idea. Although he does not lay claim to being an expert in either one of these areas, he does, however, argue that these issues are related to social justice and equity issues that transcend the educational sphere:

> I was starting to see different justices . . . and how their goals are all intertwined. So yes, there's only one planet, and environmental degradation hurts all of us but the most immediate impact it's having is on the people who are already the most disenfranchised. And so, it's starting to see those connections. Perhaps the most dangerous kind of racism now is environmental racism, and it's causing all kinds of havoc all over the world. The biggest threat to people in poverty is the environmental stuff. And then the animal rights piece, just seeing how all of these things are kind of interrelated. I'm trying to help people see; I'm trying to understand myself and help people see how all these systems are interrelated. (Gorski, interview, 2015)

In cementing his argument, he further posited that

> if you take any industry or corporation that is doing damage to the environment, through that damage to the environment, they are also doing damage to humans and also doing damage to animals. If you take any industry that's doing damage to animals, they are almost always doing damage to humans and the environment as well. (Gorski, interview, 2015)

In his article "Consumerism as Racial and Economic Injustice: The Macroaggressions That Make Me, and Maybe You, a Hypocrite," Gorski (2014) expanded on the idea of the importance of understanding the interrelatedness between social justice, environmental racism, and animal rights. To explain this interrelatedness, he used the concept of macroaggression.

According to Gorski, macroaggression is "the participation in or compliance with big, systemic forms of oppression rather than interpersonal forms of bias or discrimination" (p. 6). An example of this type of macroaggression participation may be the purchase of a drink from a multinational such as the Coca-Cola company. Unfortunately, school systems actively sustain these macroaggressions by supporting sales of these major companies to their students, which further oppresses marginalized student communities.

To clarify this point of complacency by policy makers, Gorski (2014) cited discrimination pertaining to the Coca-Cola company. In 1999, the Coca-Cola company was accused of discriminatory treatment of African American and Latino workers. When the company was investigated, it was found that Black employees were making on average $26,000 less a year than White employees (Miah, 2000). As Gorski (2014) mentioned, several Black and Hispanic workers who were employed at bottling plants in Elmsford and Maspeth, New York, were also suing Coca-Cola for what they described as an "endemic culture of racism" (p. 11; see also Greenwald, 2012).

In his paper, Gorski (2014) stated,

> This is just the tip of the exploitation iceberg. . . . When it comes to boosting profits by violating, or condoning the violation of, the human rights of poor and working-class people of color all over the world, Coca-Cola appears to have few peers. (p. 11; see also Zacune, 2006)

Recently, Gorski mentioned how his work in multicultural education and direction was greatly influenced by scholars like Gloria Ladson-Billings and Christine Sleeter. Right now, he says, "I'm really influenced by some of my contemporaries and younger scholars who are bringing unique perspectives and critical lenses, like Cheryl Matias, Wayne Au, and Rita Kohli" (Renuka de Silva, interview with Paul Gorski, October 2018).

By reading his articles, and listening to him speak and engage in conversation, it is evident how much he cares about our students and their well-being. According to Gorski (2016), to address the challenges of inequity in our educational system, however, we as educators need to move beyond the barriers and call them out by name, thus becoming a *threat to inequity*.

Winds of Change: A Look at Critical Pedagogy of Place

Gorski's relentless pursuit of advocacy for multicultural education in the United States through an equity framework has brought to the forefront a dire need for recognizing the rapidly changing demographics in the country. In every state, in some more than others, a great number of people no longer fit into the Eurocentric Christian model. The contemporary United States is populated by a cultural and socioeconomic diversity never before seen or experienced.

In a climate of diversity such as this, a mere Band-Aid solution from atop the educational pyramid (i.e., the scornful gaze Gorski has referenced) with the introduction of celebratory multicultural appreciation days as a means of giving recognition is meaningless to students and ineffective at best in creating empathy and compassion. Inequity in education is a symptom of inequity in the socioeconomic structures that represent our Constitution rather how the Constitution is interpreted by those in power.

For equity in education to take a firm hold, we need to look at the critical pedagogy (originally evolved from critical theory) of place that offers a "much-needed framework for educational theory, research,

policy, and practice" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 3).

With today's diverse multicultural platforms, placed-based pedagogies offer a way for citizens to engage socially and ecologically in the spaces they occupy. Therefore critical pedagogies are needed "to challenge the assumptions, practices, and outcomes taken for granted in the dominant culture and in conventional education" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 3). Critical pedagogies offer a pathway to move beyond the discourse of the achievement gap, accountability, and economic competitiveness with good reason.

In critical pedagogy, *place* becomes "a critical construct not because it is in opposition to economic well-being (it is not), but because it focusses attention on analyzing how economic and political decisions impact particular places" (p. 3). In other words, "*place* foregrounds a narrative of local and regional politics that is attuned to the particularities of where people actually live, and that is connected to global development trends that impact local places" (p. 3).

Therefore, according to Henry Giroux (2004), "pedagogy must always be contextually defined, allowing it to respond specifically to the conditions, formations, and problems that arise in various sites in which education takes place" (p. 37). This contextualization of education is not a new concept and has certainly been addressed by educators such as Paolo Freire, Peter McLaren, Nicholas Burbules, and bell hooks. What Giroux is advocating in his work is the need for

> progressive educators to engage their teaching as a theoretical resource that is both shaped by and responds to the very problems that arise in the in-between spaces/places/contexts that connect classrooms with the experiences of everyday life. Under such circumstances, educators can both address the meaning and purpose that schools might play in their relationship to the demands of the broader society while simultaneously being sensitive to the distinctive nature of the issues educators address within the shifting contexts in which they interact with a diverse body of students, texts, and institutional formations. (p. 37)

Giroux has further posited that the greatest threat to our children does not come from lowering educational standards, rigid testing measures, or privatized choice schemes but from our society, which

> refuses to view children as a social investment, that consigns 14 million children to live in poverty, reduces critical learning to massive testing programs, promotes policies that eliminate most crucial health and public services, and defines masculinity through the degrading celebration of a gun culture, extreme sports and the spectacles of violence that permeate corporate controlled media industries. (p. 45)

For Gorski, all these structural inadequacies are systemic and together amount to social injustice. Unless those who are at the top of the policy/administrative pyramid come down to the level of the communities, policy makers will continue to fail to address the real needs of our students. Without understanding the problems and challenges of marginalized communities, students in those communities will continue to be oppressed and their educational mobility restricted multilaterally, impacting their lives multidimensionally.

Conclusion

Gorski is a teacher, author, and recognized leader in the field of multicultural education. Coming from a background of privilege, Gorski became increasingly aware of the issues surrounding multiculturalism while growing up in Virginia. But it was while working on his PhD dissertation that Gorski became interested in social justice and education. In addition to teaching, lecturing, and writing, he has developed several web-based platforms that have contributed greatly to the field of multicultural education and made him a valued voice in the field.

These platforms have provided a place for educators, students, activists, community leaders, and others to access resources in multicultural and equity and social justice education, and a place for contributors to share their knowledge through workshops, presentations, assessment, and staff development tools for use by schools, community organizations, and government agencies. Through these contributions and his commitment to promoting curricula that reflect the community and human rights issues, thereby upsetting the master narrative, Gorski has emerged as a powerful voice in the field of multicultural education.

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