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Problematizing Collaboration: A Critical Review of the Empirical Literature on Teaching Teams

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Abstract: *Twenty-six empirical studies of collaboration among teaching teams comprised of general and special educators were reviewed to determine the impact of ethnocultural diversity, gender diversity, sexual orientation diversity, and disability status diversity on collaborative teaming. Only 1 (4%) of the 26 studies acknowledged that ethnocultural and gender differences among teachers might impact collaboration. None (0%) of the 26 studies addressed issues of sexual orientation or disability status. None (0%) of the 26 studies addressed issues of racism, sexism, homophobia/ heterosexism, or ablism. The author recommended researchers investigate collaboration, empirically and critically, to develop an empirical discourse that recognizes and empowers teachers of color, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender teachers, teachers with disabilities, and other teachers with distinct group identity.*

Collaboration can be conceptualized as a dynamic, interactive, and nonhierarchical process characterized by power sharing and equity among two or more partners who collectively set goals, make decisions, and solve problems through negotiation, cooperation and consensus building. Genuine collaboration is a creative process that generates synergy, resulting in outcomes that are different from and better than those solutions produced by individual team members working in isolation (Dettmer, Thurston, & Dyck, 1996; Thomas, Correa, & Morsink, 1995). Equity and equality among collaborating partners, however, can be undermined by conscious and unconscious forms of prejudice (e.g., racism, sexism, homophobia/ heterosexism, and ablism) among team members (Thayer-Bacon & Brown, 1995). Equity and equality can also be undermined by *false consciousness* (i.e., denial of one's own oppression) (Lather, 1986). Teams that reinforce and reproduce systems of privilege/ oppression based on ethnocultural identity, gender, sexual orientation, and/or disability status are collaborative in name only; that is to say, there can be no genuine collaboration without equity, without equality, and without respect for difference.

Collaboration among professionals who provide special education and related services to students with special needs and their families is important for a number of reasons. First, federal laws directly mandate and/or support collaboration (*Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990,* PL 101–336; *Education for all Handicapped Children's Act of 1976,* PL-142; *Education for all Handicapped Children's Act Amendments of 1986,* PL 99–457; *Individual with Disabilities Education Act of 1993,* Part B, PL 101–476; *Rehabilitation Act of 1973,* PL 93–112, Sec. 504). Second, collaboration can facilitate and support the inclusion of students with special needs in community based, general education schools and classrooms (Cook & Friend, 1996).

Third, complex structural changes among families and communities, demographic shifts, and the related social problems that characterize contemporary American society necessitate collaboration (Dettmer et al., 1996). Finally, collaboration is an essential component of special education in a multicultural society (Obiakor, Schwenn, & Rotatori, 1999).

General and special educators often collaborate as members of teaching teams who develop, implement, and evaluate educational programming for students with special needs. Welch, Brownell, and Sheridan (1999) reviewed the literature on teaming in the schools and noted that numerous terms have been used to describe the simultaneous presence of two or more educators in a single integrated learning environment who share responsibility for the delivery of instructional services to students with special needs. Welch et al. further noted that many of these terms have been used synonymously. The terms *collaborative teaching, coteaching, team teaching, cooperative teaching,* and *pull-in programming* have been used to describe various collaborative arrangements among general and special educators. For the purposes of this review of the literature, collaborative efforts among general and special educators will be referred to as *team teaching,* and will be operationally defined as the simultaneous presence of two or more educators in a single inclusive learning environment who share responsibility for the development, implementation, and evaluation of educational programming for students with special needs.

Reinhiller (1996) reviewed 10 empirical studies on teaching teams comprised of general and special educators. She noted two factors, inclusion and student diversity, resulted in increased collaboration. Reinhiller found that team teaching arrangements benefited students with and without disabilities. Reinhiller concluded that team teaching has become widely accepted as an appropriate model for collaboration.

Collaboration is not without struggle and confusion. General and special educators represent diverse populations in terms of ethnocultural identity, gender, sexual orientation, and disability status (Thomas et al., 1995). Ethnocultural identity, gender, sexual orientation, and disability status impact worldview (Cushner, 1999) and the worldview each professional brings to collaboration impacts the effectiveness of both process and outcome (Thayer-Bacon & Brown, 1995).

Thayer-Bacon and Brown (1995) noted that in order for collaborations to be positive, they need to be helpful to all persons involved in the collaborative process. Dettmer et al. (1996) suggested that tolerance for diverse perspectives and worldviews regarding problems and issues is one of an educator's most important assets when collaborating in diverse settings, and noted "different viewpoints contribute diverse insights to help broaden understanding of problems and generate promising alternatives to solving problems" (p. 108). Hunter (1985) stressed that when educators show respect for other points of view, they model the cooperation that is so necessary for the future of communities, cities, nations, and the world. Thomas et al. (1995) noted, however, that cultural diversity among the professionals who must collaborate with one another to provide special education and related services to students with special needs "exacerbates the difficulty both of providing effective instructional programs and of developing effective communication systems" (p. iv). Thomas et al. further noted that cultural diversity refers not only to African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and other ethnic and/or linguistic minorities within the United States, but also to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals, religious minorities, persons with disabilities, the homeless, the poor, and to all others "who possess distinct group identity and should be respected for their diversity" (p. 164).

Thayer-Bacon and Brown (1995) noted that collaborators need to feel safe to speak, and to believe that their voices will be heard and their efforts valued. They suggested that collaborators who work in settings characterized by diversity must understand the impact of history on traditionally oppressed groups in the United States. In order to include the voices and perspectives of each person participating in the collaborative process, and to fully benefit from the contributions that he

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or she might bring to the collaborative effort, group members must consider the possible impact of historical developments on individual members of the collaborating group. Collaborators should be aware of racism and the oppression of people of color (Trask, 1999); sexism and the oppression of women (Dworkin, 1993); homophobia/heterosexism and the oppression of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals (Sears, 1996); ablism and the oppression of persons with disabilities (Abberley, 1987;); and other forms of oppression and injustice that might silence and/or marginalize individual team members, and/or cause them to feel invisible, unheard, and afraid.

Previous reviews of the literature on collaboration in the schools have not addressed the issue of diversity among collaborators, nor have they examined the impact of racism, sexism, homophobia/heterosexism, and/or ablism on collaborative processes and outcomes (cf. Cosden & Semmel, 1992; Lloyd, Corwley, Kholer, & Strain, 1988; Nelson, Smith, Taylor, Dodd, & Reavis, 1991; Reinhiller, 1996; Welch et al., 1999). The purposes of this review of the literature are to: (a) identify empirical studies that examine collaboration among teaching teams comprised of general and special educators; (b) determine which (if any) of these studies examined the impact of ethnocultural diversity, gender diversity, sexual orientation diversity, and/or disability status diversity among team members on collaborative processes and outcomes; (c) determine which (if any) of these studies examined the impact of racism, sexism, homophobia/heterosexism, and/or ablism on collaborative process and outcomes; (d) *problematize* the empirical discourse surrounding collaborative teaching (Cannella, 1997, p.12); (e) reconceptualize collaboration in the schools, and empirical studies that examine these collaborations, as struggles for social justice and human rights; and (f) present suggestions for continued research on collaboration among professionals who provide special education and related services to students with special needs.

Methods

Selection Criteria

Studies selected for this review of the literature met the following criteria:

1. The studies examined collaborative processes and/or outcomes among general and special educators who worked together in a single learning environment and who shared responsibility for the development, implementation, and/or evaluation of educational programming for students with special needs.
2. The studies utilized empirical methodologies. For the purposes of this review, empirical studies were operationally defined as those that: (a) included an explicit statement of purpose; (b) identified dependent measures; and (c) reported and discussed outcomes based on these measures.
3. The studies were published in refereed journals.

Search Procedures

Computer searches, ancestral searches, and personal inquires were conducted to identify studies for this review of the literature.

Computer Searches

A search of the Educational Resources Information Clearinghouse (ERIC) database yielded 23 studies that met the search criteria. A Boolean search was conducted using pairs of descriptive key words coupled with the publication type descriptors *journal article* and *research report.* The key word descriptors used in the Boolean search are listed here with the number of abstracts generated in parenthesis: *special education* and *collaboration* (58), *special education* and *teacher collaboration* (40), *special education* and *team teaching* (16), *early intervention* and *collaboration* (7), *special education* and *teaming* (3), *early intervention* and *teacher collaboration* (2), *special education* and *cooperative teaching* (2), *special education* and *coteaching* (2), *early childhood special education* and *team teaching* (1), *early intervention* and *team teaching* (1), *inclusive preschool* and *supportive learning* (1), *inclusive preschool* and *team teaching* (1), and *special education* and *supportive learning* (1). Other descriptors were used but did not yield any citations.

Ancestral Searches

An ancestral search involves reviewing the reference lists of previously published articles

to identify studies relevant to one's topic of interest. Two previously published reviews of the literature on collaboration among general and special educators were located (Reinhiller, 1996; Welch et al., 1999). Ancestral searches of the reference lists from these 2 reviews were conducted. A total of 15 studies were located using this search procedure.

Personal Inquiries

The author contacted 2 professors of special education at the University of Hawaii—Manoa who were conducting research in the area of team teaching. Two additional articles that met the selection criteria were located using this search procedure (McCormick, Noonan, & Heck, 1998; Noonan & McCormick, 2000).

Coding Procedures

The author reviewed the 26 studies. A coding form was developed and used to categorize the data presented in each study. This coding form was based on the following variables: (a) collaborator demographics; (b) dependent measures; and (c) outcomes.

Results

Twenty-six studies met the selection criteria and were included in this review of the literature. The results were recorded and categorized using the previously described coding procedures.

Collaborator Demographics

Demographic data for general and special educators were recorded and categorized according to (a) ethnocultural identity, (b) gender, (c) sexual orientation, and (d) disability status.

Ethnocultural Identity

Racial and ethnocultural categories are socially constructed, and social definitions of those categories have changed over time (Parham, 1993). Cushner (1999) noted *ethnicity* "is culturally defined according to the knowledge, beliefs, and behavior patterns shared by a group of people" who share a common history and speak the same language, while *race* "refers to the clustering of inherited physical characteristics that favor adaptation to a particular ecological area" (pp.46–47). MacIntosh (1992), and many others have observed that, in the United States, racial and ethnocultural categories have been determined, to a large extent, by skin color, which some Americans consider to be very meaningful, significant, and important. These authors noted that skin color has been and continues to be used as a criterion for extending or withholding privileges and opportunities to individuals in American society. Ethnocultural identity is both self-ascribed and appropriated; that is, one defines one's own ethnocultural identity; one's ethnocultural identity is defined by others; and one can change one's ethnocultural identity in order to adjust to different social contexts. Only 4 (15%) of the 26 studies described the ethnocultural identities of the collaborating teachers.

Gender

Many people believe there are only two genders: male and female. Butler (1990) and others, however, have argued that gender is not a biologically predetermined characteristic, but, rather, a socially constructed phenomenon. These authors note the existence of hermaphrodites, transgender individuals, individuals who consider themselves to be both male and female, and individuals who consider themselves to be neither male nor female. Cushner (1999) described the dominant view of gender in the contemporary United States as *bimodal*; that is to say, most contemporary Americans recognize and accept only two gender identities: male and female. Cushner noted, however, that in some societies, other gender identities are recognized and accepted. The Lakota Sioux, for example, recognize four gender identities, including: (a) anatomical males who possess "masculine" characteristics and engage in traditonally "masculine" behaviors; (b) anatomical males who possess "feminine" characteristics and engage in traditionally "feminine" behaviors; (c) anatomical females who possess "feminine" characteristics and engage in traditionally "feminine" behaviors; and (d) anatomical females who possess "masculine"

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characteristics and engage in traditional "masculine" behaviors. Cushner wrote

> The role of the female-identified male in Lakota society is called *berdache,* and is accorded high honor as possessing multiple traits and characteristics. *Berdache* tend to be teachers and artists, and if a *berdache* takes an interest in one's child or children, it is considered to be an advantage. (p. 50)

Only 9 (35%) studies identified collaborating teachers by gender, and all 9 of these described teachers as either male or female. None (0%) of the 26 studies included in this review of the literature identified collaborators as *transgender* or *other.*

Sexual Orientation

Categories based on sexual orientation are socially constructed, and social definitions of these categories have changed over time (de Laurentis, 1991). Most contemporary Americans describe their sexual orientation as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and/or transgender. Others view their sexual orientation as shifting and fluid; still others claim to be asexual, or without sexual orientation. de Laurentis and others have used the emancipatory term *queer* to describe nonheterosexual orientations. Cushner (1999) wrote "because sexuality is frequently linked to one's deepest, most meaningful experiences (both religious and interpersonal), persons who deviate from socially approved norms are often socially ostracized and sometimes physically abused or even killed" (p. 50). Sears (1996) and many others have observed that, in the contemporary United States, it is *nonheterosexual* people who are ostracised, abused, and killed because their sexual orientations deviate from the socially approved norms of the dominant heterosexual majority. None (0%) of the 26 studies included in this review of the literature identified the sexual orientation of the general and special education teachers.

Disability Status

Categories based on the concepts of *ability* and *disability* are socially constructed and have changed over time (Skrtic, 1995). Cushner (1999) wrote "ability and disability are culturally defined according to society's view about what it means to be physically, emotionally, and mentally 'able'" (p. 46). In the contemporary United States, categories of ability and disability refer to a wide range of physical, intellectual, and emotional characteristics, including, but not limited to (a) intelligence, (b) emotional stability, (c) sensory and neurological functioning, (d) mobility, and (e) health. Disability status refers to the presence of disabilities or the lack thereof. One can be a person *with* disabilities or a person *without* disabilities. Like ethnocultural identity, gender, and sexual orientation, disability status is both self-ascribed and appropriated. None (0%) of the 26 studies included in this review of the literature identified the disability status of the collaborating teachers.

Measures and Outcomes

The 26 studies included in this review examined numerous dependent measures, including (a) teacher satisfaction with particular collaborative models, (b) direct observation of teacher behaviors, (c) teacher perceptions of administrative support for collaborative programming, (d) teacher perceptions of students with disabilities, (e) teacher attitudes toward inclusion, (f) academic achievement among students with and without disabilities, (g) student social behaviors, (h) students' perceptions of their educational programs, (i) students' perceptions of their peers, (j) students' perceptions of their collaborating teachers, (k) referral rates for special education services, and (l) inclusion rates at an elementary school that implemented a collaborative resource program. Reported outcomes were based on these measures, and were recorded and categorized accordingly. None (0%) of the 26 studies examined the impact of diversity on collaborative processes and outcomes. None (0%) of the 26 studies examined the impact of racism, sexism, homophobia/heterosexism, or ablism on collaborative process and outcomes

Discussion

This review of the literature was undertaken to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of ethnocultural diversity, gender diversity, sexual orientation diversity, and/or disability status diversity on collaboration among teaching teams comprised of general and special educators?
2. What is the impact of racism, sexism, homophobia/heterosexism, and/or ablism on collaborative processes and outcomes?

Only 1 (4%) of the 26 studies included in this review acknowledged that ethnocultural and gender differences among teachers might impact collaborative processes and outcomes (Noonan & McCormick, 2000). None (0%) of the 26 studies addressed the issues of sexual orientation or disability status. None (0%) of the 26 studies examined systems of privilege/ oppression based on skin color, gender, sexual orientation, and/or disability status. The initial research questions, therefore, remain unanswered.

Privilege/Oppression and Public Education

The United States continues to be characterized by value systems, sociopolitical conditions, and institutional structures that privilege some groups and oppress others. McIntosh (1992) argued that privilege has been and continues to be a powerful force in creating and maintaining hegemonic social structures. She suggested that oppression can be understood and explained as a concomitant of privilege. Values, conditions, and structures that contribute to *racism* maintain white privilege through the oppression of people of color (Trask, 1999). Values, conditions, and structures that contribute to *sexism* maintain male privilege through the oppression of women (Dworkin, 1993). Values, conditions, and structures that contribute to *homophobia/heterosexism* maintain heterosexual privilege through the oppression of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals (Sears, 1996). Values, conditions, and structures that contribute to *ablism* maintain "able-bodied" privilege through the oppression of persons with disabilities (Abberley, 1987).

McIntosh (1997) suggested that privilege is a covert phenomenon, and that the "workings of invisible, formerly unacknowledged systems of unearned advantage are still scarcely known to the people of the United States" (p. 224). She noted that skin-color privilege, gender privilege, heterosexual privilege, class privilege, and colonial privilege remain forbidden subjects in general thought and public discourse, and argued that the phenomenon of privilege cannot be recognized within the American ideology of meritocracy, democracy, and the individual as the primary unit of society. McIntosh further noted that those who benefit most from systems of privilege are often kept most blinded to the existence of these privilege systems.

American schools are, in many ways, microcosms of American society. The value systems, sociopolitical conditions, and institutional structures that characterize American society and contribute to racism, sexism, homophobia/heterosexism, and ablism are reinforced and reproduced within the public schools. One would not, therefore, expect collaborations that take place within public school contexts to be free of these systems, conditions, and structures, nor would one expect collaborating general and special educators to be unaffected by or incapable of racism, sexism, homophobia/heterosexism, and/or ablism (Apple, 1996; Silin, 1995; Skrtic, 1995).

Emancipatory Research and Collaboration in the Schools

Namenwirth (1986) noted "scientists firmly believe that as long as they are not conscious of any bias or political agenda, they are neutral and objective, when in fact they are only unconscious" (p. 29).There is no value-free social science. Science is power, and all research findings have political implications. The questions asked, and those that remain unasked, reflect the values and beliefs of the researcher, and usually represent the ideologies and worldview of dominant sociopolitical groups. The questions asked, and those that remain unasked, can promote emancipation and social justice *or* reinforce the status quo and maintain systems of privilege/oppression. Empirical research contributes to emancipation and social justice *or* to privilege/oppression, with or without the conscious knowledge of the re-

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searcher, and regardless of his or her intent (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Lather, 1986).

Trask (1999) and others have argued that the subjugation of oppressed peoples (e.g., the poor, women, Native Hawaiians, African Americans, homosexuals, and persons with disabilities) is so all-pervasive that the oppressed are often unaware of their own degradation. Friere (1970) described this phenomenon as *false consciousness.* When the awareness of oppression (i.e., *critical consciousness*) begins, so, too, begins the struggle for liberation. Lather (1986) reconceptualized social science research as a struggle for social justice and human rights. She argued for the development of an emancipatory social science that would explicitly critique the status quo and transform false consciousness among the oppressed into critical consciousness. This emancipatory social science would awaken within the oppressed the "militant dignity on which all self-respect is based" (Dworkin, 1993, p. 198).

Critical Theory and Collaboration

Critical theorists study the historical problems of privilege/oppression as they exist in social institutions in order to transform these institutions and emancipate the oppressed (Morrow & Brown, 1994). Critical theorists in the field of education have argued that the schools can become public institutions where forms of knowledge and values are taught for the purpose of educating young people for democratic empowerment, resistance, and hope, rather than for the purposes of conformity, subjugation, and assimilation (Kincheloe, 1991; Lather, 1991). In recent years, critical theory has interacted with poststructuralist, postmodern, cultural studies, and feminist discourses. This interaction, or blending of discourses, has allowed the relationships between knowledge and power to be examined from the perspectives of previously marginalized groups, including women, African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, Native Americans, Native Hawaiians, the poor, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered individuals, persons with disabilities, and persons living with HIV/AIDS (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

Critical theorists in the field of education have examined textbooks and curricular materials, school and classroom structures, pedagogical practices, teacher/student relationships, assessment and evaluation procedures, and segregated special education programs to better understand the ways in which educational institutions reinforce and reproduce systems of privilege/oppression based on skin color, gender, sexual orientation, disability status, and socioeconomic status (Ah Nee-Benham & Heck, 1998; Apple, 1996; Artiles & Trent, 1994). Critical theorists have yet to examine collaboration among general and special educators, and empirical research has not yet documented the impact of racism, sexism, homophobia/ heterosexism, and ablism on collaborative processes and outcomes. Systems of privilege/oppression that are reinforced and reproduced through collaborative teaming in special education settings, therefore, remain invisible, hidden, and ignored. If researchers were to investigate collaboration in special education settings, empirically and critically, they would contribute to the development of an empirical discourse that recognizes and empowers teachers of color, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender teachers, teachers with disabilities, and other teachers who possess distinct group identity. Such a discourse, however, remains, at present, latent and unrealized, existing only in the realm of possibility.

Problematizing Collaboration

Postmodern thinkers, such as Foucault (1970) and Derrida (1981), have suggested that knowledge, reality, and truth are constructed by human beings, through language, in multiple forms that are forever changing (Derrida, 1981; Foucault, 1980). Foucault believed that language simultaneously creates knowledge and limits alternative knowledge forms. Ethnocultural identity, gender, sexual orientation, and disability status are socially constructed phenomena that also influence the construction of knowledge (Cushner, 1999). Identity and experience are, therefore, determined by the language realties created in particular cultural (and collaborative) contexts (Derrida, 1981).

Knowledge constructs gain legitimacy when they are accepted as objective reality,

or *Truth,* by those who have the power to impose their values, beliefs, and understandings of the universe on other human beings. Increased social justice and equity for *all* human beings, therefore, requires that *all* forms of knowledge be examined critically (Kincheloe, 1991). Social justice demands that researchers in the field of education *problematize* (i.e., critically examine) "what we think we know" about collaboration (Cannella, 1997, p. 12).

A number of educational researchers/theorists have utilized interrogative methods developed by Foucault to reveal systems of privilege/oppression hidden within, reinforced, and reproduced by the discourse (i.e., rhetoric) surrounding their respective fields. Skrtic (1995), for example, problematized the discourse/knowledge traditions that have reinforced and reproduced systems of privilege/oppression within the field of special education. Cannella (1997) and Silin (1995) both problematized the discourse/ knowledge traditions that have reinforced and reproduced systems of privilege/oppression within the field of early childhood education. The empirical discourse (i.e., the knowledge-base) surrounding collaboration in the schools has yet to be problematized.

Skrtic (1995) explained that *all* human beings, including general and special educators, *as well as those researchers who study them,* are caught in multiple webs of power, multiple systems of privilege/oppression. Furthermore, researchers are often unaware of ways in which their research methods might contribute to the very systems of privilege/oppression that are under investigation; that is, the questions that researchers ask, the questions that they do not ask, and the conclusions that they formulate can reinforce the status quo and reproduce systems of privilege/ oppression. These same research methods, however, can be used to explicitly critique the status quo, empower the oppressed, and construct new forms of knowledge that promote social justice and honor the multiple realities and life experiences of *all* human beings (Cannella, 1997; Lather, 1986).

Reconceptualizing Collaboration

Sawieki (1991) argued "it is politically irresponsible to radically question existing theoretical political options without taking any responsibility for the impact that such critique will have and without offering any alternative (p. 99). It is not enough to simply critique and problematize. Social justice demands that educational researchers/theorists also *reconceptualize.*

Most scholars have conceptualized collaboration in the schools as a democratic process and/or a vehicle for inclusion (Cook & Friend, 1996). Some, however, have reconceptualized collaboration as a struggle for social justice and human rights. Garcia (1997), for example, argued "education for social justice is education for collaboration, cooperation and community." She wrote,

> In a multicultural and just society, we need to cultivate within ourselves the virtues of tolerance and acceptance, which teach us to live with that which is different. Thus, difference, diversity and Otherness become central to the. . .ethical perspective that underlies social justice. (p. 248)

Others have reconceptualized collaboration as a process that honors multiple realities and life experiences, and produces outcomes that reflect the knowledge constructs and value systems of those who are "culturally different" and those who are without power (Obiakor et al., 1999). Thayer-Bacon and Brown (1995), like other ecofeminists and ecoequalists who believe that social oppression leads inevitably to environmental destruction, have reconceptualized collaboration in educational settings as a struggle for social justice, environmental awareness, and world peace.

Emancipatory research that critically examines collaboration in order to expose hidden systems of privilege/oppression and emancipate the oppressed might also be conceptualized as a struggle for social justice and human rights. Education can be a powerful vehicle for radical social transformation (Stone, 1994). Empirical research that employs emancipatory methods can transform lives through the creation of new knowledge constructs (Lather, 1986).

Conclusion

There has been, in the last two decades, intense interest in collaborative teaming

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among general and special educators, as evidenced by the proliferation of textbooks and journal articles devoted to this topic (Welch et al., 1999). The descriptive key words *special education* and *collaboration* yielded some 934 entries in the ERIC database. Only 41 (4%) of these 934 entries, however, represented empirical studies published in refereed journals, and only 23 (2%) of these examined collaboration among general and special educators.

Emancipatory research involves both critical examination and reconceptualization. Critical examination (i.e., problematization) involves the location of knowledge forms that have been excluded and/or disqualified as beneath hierarchical systems (Foucault, 1980). None (0%) of the 26 studies included in this review examined the impact of ethnocultural identity, gender, sexual orientation, and/or disability status on collaborative processes and outcomes. None (0%) of the 26 studies addressed the issues of racism, sexism, homophobia/heterosexism, and ablism. These forbidden subjects were excluded from the empirical discourse (i.e., knowledge-base) surrounding collaboration in the schools. This empirical discourse has, therefore, reinforced the status quo and reproduced systems of privilege/oppression based on skin color, gender, sexual orientation, and disability status. Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender teachers, and teachers with disabilities, were unacknowledged by this discourse. They remain invisible, hidden, marginalized. Only 4 (15%) of the 26 studies acknowledged teachers of color. They, too, were marginalized by the empirical discourse surrounding collaboration.

Emancipatory research is needed to problematize collaboration in order to expose systems of privilege/oppression that are reinforced and reproduced through collaboration in the schools. This research should explicitly examine systems of privilege/oppression based on skin color, gender, sexual orientation, and disability status. This research would transform the empirical discourse surrounding collaboration through the creation of new knowledge forms that acknowledge the oppressed and encourage their emancipation.

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Note. (*) denotes studies included in review.