21st Century Diversity, Educational Equity, and Transformative Change

Suniti Sharma and Althier M. Lazar

Abstract This chapter serves as an introduction to the book, *Rethinking 21st Diversity in Teacher Preparation, K-12 Education, and School Policy: Theory, Research, and Practice*. In engaging with diversity, the authors of this book lend a fresh perspective to how we understand diversity in K-12 contexts by considering not just what diversity means but also how it matters, where, for whom, and to what effects. The authors comprise a diverse intellectual and global mix of education faculty, school leaders, policy researchers and K-12 teachers. How the authors identify, articulate, and respond to diversity from distinct theoretical orientations, research methodologies, and teaching philosophies is also a response to the age-old debates: What is the purpose of public schools? Who is being served by public schools? Whose knowledge counts? Who defines what knowledge counts and for whom? Where does K-12 diversity fit into these conversations and debates? How do we prepare teachers for teaching K-12 diversity? The authors' response to these questions is timely and offer diverse perspectives on how to rethink teaching and learning aimed at educational equity and equal opportunity for all students.

Keywords Diversity · Educational equity · K-12 education · Teacher preparation · Identity and power · School policy

1 Diversity and Educational Equity

In the field of education, the term 'diversity' is an ever-changing and evolving category, concept, approach and vision. Competing discourses on diversity point to its growing complexity as a response to the demographic changes across K-12 schools and institutions of higher education. As a concept, diversity has become synonymous with cultural difference measured in terms of divergence from White, Anglo cultural identity associated with Western European societies and widely accepted as

S. Sharma (✉) · A. M. Lazar
Department of Teacher Education, Saint Joseph's University, Philadelphia, PA, USA
e-mail: ssharma@sju.edu; alazar@sju.edu

the normative frame of reference. Any difference from this normative framework is considered a deviation and falls into the catch-all term, diversity. As a category, diversity denotes the politics of identity along specific lines of difference, namely, race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. In academic discourse, such differences are operationalized as 'self,' and 'other' wherein the self is the quintessential White, heterosexual, middle class, able-bodied, English-speaking male while all else is the diametrically opposite, diverse other. As an approach, diversity is positioned as a social and institutional challenge; one that is in need of a working solution. Such solutions are coded in educational policy and implemented in school practice through ESL classrooms, alternative schooling, and the school-to-prison pipeline. As a transformative vision, diversity encompasses a theoretical concept for engaging with difference, a political category for addressing inequities, an approach to complex demographic changes and a pathway to educational equity, inclusion, and social justice.

Embedded in each of these frameworks for understanding diversity is the assumption of an identity of the self and the claim to power and privilege that comes with it. Conversely, identifying the 'self' points to the diverse 'other' and the problematic assumptions that accompany it. As educators and researchers, whether we view diversity as a category, concept, approach or vision, definitions are critical as they shape our understanding of a network of associated terms, processes, and outcomes in education. The positions we take in how we define diversity is enacted in our practices with consequences for all participants and stakeholders invested in education futures. When educators question each of these frameworks, they are also problematizing the dominant discourse on diversity that operationalizes a network of associated terms such as – assimilation, acculturation, multiculturalism, standardization, achievement gap, English language learner, equal opportunity, educational equity, and social justice.

In engaging with diversity, the authors of this book, *Rethinking 21st Century Diversity in Teacher Preparation, K-12 Education, and School Policy: Theory, Research, and Practice*, lend a fresh perspective to how we understand diversity in K-12 contexts by considering not just what diversity means but also how it matters, where, for whom, and to what effects. The authors comprise a diverse intellectual and global mix of education faculty, school leaders, policy researchers and K-12 teachers. How the authors identify, articulate, and respond to diversity from distinct theoretical orientations, research methodologies, and teaching philosophies is also a response to the age-old debates: What is the purpose of public schools? Who is being served by public schools? Whose knowledge counts? Who defines what knowledge counts and for whom? Where does K-12 diversity fit into these conversations and debates? How do we prepare teachers for teaching K-12 diversity? The authors' response to these questions is timely in the current political climate when the inclusion of cultural, racial, ethnic and linguistic diversity is under siege by the political discourse of making America great through protectionist policies that threaten minority presence across the United States.

Positioned within competing visions of the American educational experience teacher education and educational leadership programs continues to emphasize

multicultural, multilinguistic, multiethnic diversity as critical to preparing teachers and school professionals for 21st century classrooms. In contrast, policy and practice in many K-12 public schools especially those serving multicultural, multiethnic, multilingual and racially diverse populations articulate diversity in the language of the achievement gap, English language learners, special education and the school-to-prison pipeline (Winn and Behizadeh 2011). This gap between teacher preparation on the one hand, and educational policy and classroom practice, on the other, is reflective of how the field of education responds to diversity in contradictory ways that celebrate diversity, recognize the pluralism of cultural difference, and also expect assimilation, acculturation, and universalization.

In K-12 discourse, instructional goals, school mission, and educational vision articulate firm commitment to diversity and equity which is a criterion for measuring their institutional effectiveness. At the same time, categories point to a determinate norm that claims to honor diversity through programs such as affirmative action but renders impossible the attainment of such claims. For example, the federal government recognizes categories of race, class, and gender to be able to gather data for addressing inequities through policy initiatives and affirmative action. Accordingly, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2003 requires state-funded schools to report test scores along with student demographics with the rationale of addressing educational inequities suffered by racial, ethnic, gendered and linguistic minorities. What is problematic with categories defined in policy or the implementation of affirmative action to address inequality and discrimination reaffirms the dominant group and culture as the institutional norm. The legal use of categorical terms such as race, class, and gender protect diverse others/group identities from discrimination; however, social and political usage draw lines of inclusion and exclusion between majority and minority. The blurred lines between the legal, social and political use of categories enable education to uphold the dominant culture's power and privilege circulated through related discourses such as normalization and standardization which in reality become instruments for assimilation, exclusion, and oppression.

Whether the expectation from diversity is assimilation into the proverbial melting pot, a celebration of pluralism or standardization of the curriculum, each of these responses sets in motion a series of processes with social and material consequences for those who are at the receiving end – diverse others. In this sense, traditional response to diversity is not a move toward educational equity but a systematic, hierarchical structuring of differences normalizing differential treatment under the rhetoric of diversity, educational equity and social justice (Au 2009). The critical question to ask is, how might the field of education rethink diversity as a practice of equity and social justice? Diversity in education cannot be separated from equity and social justice; however, it is fraught with complexity and specificity that demand unpacking of historical injustices accompanied by a complex series of culturally grounded responses, frameworks, and pedagogies.

In *Rethinking 21st Century Diversity*, the authors engage with diversity to offer a complex range of theoretical responses, methodological frameworks, and pedagogical transformations that offer unique insights into diversity in educational contexts. Specifically, the authors provoke the question, what theoretical, pedagogical, epis-

temological and methodological promises, perils and provocations do 21st century diversity in K-12 education incite? Each chapter expands our knowledge of diversity that goes beyond traditionally understood categories such as race, class and gender differences. While the authors recognize race, class, and gender as critical intersections of cultural differences, they advocate inclusive education for 21st century diversity in K-12 classrooms that also include the experiences of new refugees from Africa, students who are multilingual learners of English, Native American women, Muslim youth, and students whose intersectional differences propels them into the school-to-prison pipeline.

2   Discourses and Trends in K-12 Diversity

Demographic discourse is one measure of studying the scope of complex diversity that demand renewed response from the field of education. Based on school census data of 2015, the National Center for Education Statistics (2015) projected that 50.4 million students would attend public elementary and secondary schools in the fall of 2016. This projected number would constitute 24.6 million White students, 7.8 million Black students, 13.3 million Hispanic students, 2.7 million Asian/Pacific Islander students, 0.5 million American Indian/Alaska Native students, and 1.5 million students of two or more races. These numbers of non-White students in K-12 urban public schools are projected to continue to rise through 2025 (National Center for Education Statistics 2016a, b).

Research across the social sciences documents segregated urban schools with a high percentage of racial and ethnic minorities who are predominantly African American, Hispanic or Latino are at the receiving end of urban blight, gentrification and low socio-economic prospects (Anyon 2005). Also, many urban public schools serving culturally non-dominant communities are inadequately funded, poorly equipped with technology, and spend little on school and family services such as counseling and language resources for parents who do not speak English when compared with suburban schools serving predominantly white students (Lipman 2011). Students from underserved communities mostly ethnic, racial, religious and linguistic minorities are likely to have teachers who completed an alternative certification program rather than a rigorous four-year teacher education program, more likely to be taught by substitute teachers, and most likely to experience school closure (Darling-Hammond 2006). The existing inequities are further exacerbated by national and global events that have implications for local communities and schools.

Recent events in Charlottesville provide evidence of blatant legitimizing of hate group speech by White nationalists and Nazi sympathizers proclaiming "White Lives Matter" which continue to spew hate against racial and ethnic diversity in the name of preserving the First Amendment. Other national events, however disparate they may seem that contribute toward discourses on diversity in education include the terror attack of 9/11; hurricane Katrina, the economic recession of 2008, first Black President of the U.S., followed by a divisive 2016 presidential election. In the

global arena the Arab spring; the violence in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria; genocide in Somalia, Sudan and Central African Republic, drug and gang wars in Mexico, and civil unrest in many parts of Latin America continue to be felt in local communities.

The economic crash of 2008 has brought many families below the poverty line. Hurricane Katrina affected 120 schools out of 126 in the region following which 16 schools closed for good, 30 were reorganized, and students changed an average of five schools in the next 10 years (Kamenetz 2015). The drug war in Mexico, violent crime in Central America and civil unrest in Latin America have led to increased immigration into the U.S. accompanied by a parallel increase in resentment against immigrants. The Arab spring along with the war on terror in the middle east and parts of Africa have displaced thousands of families giving way to the refugee crisis and subsequent backlash against refugees.

Besides national and global events, ideological beliefs, political power, social bias, institutional policy, and public perceptions are intimately related and have the potential to reinforce discrimination against cultural diversity and difference and widen the equity gap. The case of Flint is a troubling example of how multiple discourses translate into intentional racism and discriminatory policies against underserved communities with devastating effects on specific minoritized groups and the education of their children. In Flint, Michigan, water supplied to mostly Black and Hispanic communities and the schools that serve them, contained high levels of lead with full knowledge of local officials. Of those affected, 51% were African Americans, 16.6% were Hispanic, and 2.4% were White although African Americans comprised 14%, Hispanics 4.4%, and Whites constituted 76.6% of Michigan's population. Equally troubling, lead poisoning affected large numbers of children who were subsequently diagnosed with irreversible health issues such as physiological and neurological damage as well as behavioral problems and learning disabilities that have led to students' school expulsion (Guyette 2016). Flint is not alone; the American Civil Liberties Union Racial Justice Program (2017) has active cases and ongoing court-enforced settlements against institutional racism, segregation, and criminalization of children of color in public school districts through school disciplinary practices that are discriminatory and unjust.

School disciplinary measures indicate the teaching profession is implicated in discriminatory practices against minoritized students urging educators to be mindful and reflective of their classroom interactions. A state-wide longitudinal study on seventh-grade public school students across Texas conducted through 2000, 2001, and 2002 found that 60% of students in the study experienced school suspension or/and expulsion, or/and detention which disproportionately affected African American and Hispanic students and significantly increased their chances of dropping out or being incarcerated (Fabelo et al. 2011). Only 3% of the disciplinary decisions were based on student behaviors for which state law mandated suspensions and expulsions; the rest were discretionary decisions of administrators and teachers. The report concluded Texas reflected a national trend on how school disciplinary policies are misused against minoritized youth and recommended policymakers across the country convene educators, juvenile justice experts, and child welfare

professionals to examine school policies and practices, end unfair practices and develop equitable approaches to education.

Calling for equitable school policy, Valenzuela (1999, 2002) notes the history of schools in the U.S. and their educational practices continue to be subtractive of the cultures, experiences, and languages of students and children of color. In her study of Mexican immigrant students and Mexican American high school students' school experiences Valenzuela (1999) holds school structure, policy, and day to day classroom practice responsible for erasing students' culture reflected in how and what students are taught. She argues that cultural assimilation, a covert goal of schooling, is subtractive of the cultures of Mexican-origin youth contributing to their experience of educational disaffection and low academic achievement. Valenzuela provides evidence that the Texas framework on educational policy, standardized testing, and school accountability for reform is not informed by the cultural history or ethnic experiences of students but used for social control in the larger project of assimilation rather than as analytical categories of difference for addressing inequities or designing culturally responsive pedagogies.

Outside obvious discrimination in schools, minoritized youth are disadvantaged in other insidious ways. For example, the Charter School Movement operating under the guise of educational reform and school choice claims to benefit diversity but admits students on a highly selective process that lacks transparency (Simon 2015). Although legislation approval for most charter schools is granted for working-class communities that serve African Americans and Latinos, the selection process ensures the population of these schools does not reflect the demography of the neighborhoods in which they operate (Simon 2015). Public schools, on the other hand, are legally obliged to educate all students regardless of their cultural background, home language or grade level.

Discriminatory enrolment practices in schools are an outrage against the communities in which they are located making a strong case for advocacy and action to reinstate the 'public' back into public education. Several scholars critique the current trend of school privatization and the charter school movement for promoting neoliberal educational practices that are driven by economic exploitation rather than economic equality (Hursh 2009; Lipman 2011). Instead, Lipman (2004, 2005) conceptualizes a transformative framework for rethinking public schooling as a democratic practice of educational and economic equality centered on real issues that impact students' lives followed by systemic action to resolve some of the most pressing concerns in education.

Educators invested in rethinking K-12 schools aimed at educational equity recommend preparing teachers and school professionals with competencies for working with culturally diverse students. In a study of peer-reviewed articles published from 1985 to 2007 on preservice teachers' perceptions of cultural diversity, Castro (2010) notes preservice teachers struggle to develop a complex understanding of diversity issues, lack critical consciousness on equity and privilege issues and fail to recognize structural and institutional barriers to equity. Castro also notes, many preservice teachers are unable to identify oppression, hold diversity responsible for the challenge of teaching in urban schools, exhibit lower expectations of African

American and Native American students, maintain strong beliefs about meritocracy and individualism, and prefer teaching in White suburban schools. According to Castro's research, on a superficial level, preservice teachers support social justice but lack critical consciousness of the ability to be self-reflexive of their White identity and challenge racism.

In her critique of the prevailing approach in social justice education in schools of education across the U.S., Applebaum (2010) holds "white privilege pedagogy" (p. 4) for being complicit in promoting inequality and ignoring how race, privilege and power combine to maintain White identity as the status quo. Applebaum advocates "white complicity pedagogy" (p. 4) wherein teacher education students and faculty acknowledge their complicity, understand how whites benefit from the system, and facilitate cross-racial dialogue. Similarly, Darling-Hammond (2001) recommends teacher education programs focus on transforming the mindset of future teachers by creating experiences that help them identify privilege and exclusion, recognize structural and institutional racism, and conduct an in-depth analysis of systemic inequities affecting the realities of diverse populations. Darling-Hammond rejects traditional approaches to teacher preparation and recommends schools recruit qualified teachers with content and pedagogical knowledge combined with cultural competency for teaching particular cultural or ethnic groups.

Ladson-Billings' (1995) framework for teacher preparation focuses on developing culturally responsive teaching competencies in future teachers so that they can work with students from different cultures and backgrounds. According to Ladson-Billings, teacher preparation programs should educate future teachers to be able to help students whose educational, economic, social, political, and cultural futures are uncertain; teach in the real world rather than teach in an unrelated way; legitimize and include students' life experiences in classroom curricula; develop a broad conception of literacy; participate and engage students to resist the status quo; and acknowledge their own politics in teaching and learning. Affirming Ladson-Billings' advocacy for culturally responsive teaching, Nieto (2012, 2013) elaborates culturally responsive teachers develop a mindset and disposition that respects and honors students' cultures, experiences, and histories which is reflected in their curriculum, teaching approaches, and expectations they have of students. Nieto recommends preparing teachers who engage in critical self-reflection on how their values, biases, and strengths affect the effectiveness of their teaching of students from diverse backgrounds and can enact curricula, pedagogical, and dispositional changes to make teaching and learning culturally responsive.

According to Boyd et al. (2016), teacher preparation programs are more "'about'—about theories, about people, about schools without involving our students in the act of social justice" (p. 172). Rather than focusing on the 'isms,' such as racism or classism, Boyd suggests five components to preparing teachers to teach for educational equity and social justice: Preservice teachers examine autobiographical experiences to interpret new information through their personal, socially constructed lenses; engage with systemic injustices and the social construction of identity in relation to how and what we teach; critical analysis of media to understand how dominant knowledge is maintained; analyze why and how students

struggle with classroom content; and, directly engage in research and social justice projects.

When rethinking frameworks in teaching and learning, Lather (2004) and Dimitriadis (2012) remind educators to pay close attention to how we conduct research and engage in social justice education in the light of the evidence-based research movement established by the National Research Council that narrowly defines what counts as scientific research in education. Lather calls this move a "conservative attack on education" (p. 3) by neo-liberal states and academic capitalism to restore the social and cultural order predating demographic diversity. According to Lather, the federal government's move to legislate a narrow definition of the scientific method and what counts as scientific research is aimed to curb proliferation of research methodologies emerging out of cultural studies and related fields associated with giving voice to diversity and the production of alternative knowledge outside the status quo in what counts as school knowledge.

Advocating scholarship that values knowledge from the social science, Lather (2004) advocates, a "counter science" (p. 5) or counter-narratives to the dominant narrative in education. We hope the chapters in this book provoke thought that complicate the dominant narrative in education, offer counter-narratives that resist the status-quo and invite readers to rethink our approach to diversity in teacher preparation, K-12 education, and school policy. We also hope the chapters open theory, research and practice to the possibilities in different perspectives, methodologies, and approaches necessary for working through complex issues when preparing teachers for 21st century K-12 classrooms.

3   Theoretical Discourses on Neoliberalism, Coloniality, and Decolonization of Knowledge

The first section of this book, *Theoretical Discourses on Neoliberalism, Coloniality, and Decolonization of Knowledge*, addresses teaching and learning in relation to the politics of culture, power, and global diversity from different theoretical approaches that inform education. Diversity as cultural identity circulates as a political signifier of difference that is reinforced through each of these discursive sites – society, schools, law, media, education – what Foucault (1977) calls, technologies of power. In spite of laws against racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination inequalities based on race, gender, and class differences persist within institutional practice showing the continued gap between how diversity is theorized and policed and how it is practiced.

As the authors of this section suggest, any research that engages with diversity and educational equity works with the theoretical and methodological assumption that diversity operates on multiple registers in local, national and global contexts and circulated in educational discourses and school practices for organizing knowledge. Therefore, research and analysis of cultural diversity or response to the politics of identity should be on multiple registers that match the complexity, intersectionality,

and heterogeneity of what it means to be diverse. The authors deconstruct the language games that reassert dominant cultural norms, address the silencing of Native American women's voices in the field of education, advocate decolonizing of educational theory and research, and explore the phenomenon of what it means to be a student of English as a second language. Each author problematizes the dominant discourse in education by examining how the intersection of culture, power, and global diversity redefines our understanding of diversity and difference as markers of inclusion and exclusion and advocate educators go against the grain, if need be, to cultivate inclusive spaces that are multicultural, multiethnic and multilingual.

In chapter 2, *Not Everyone Gets a Seat at the Table!: The Language Games of Diversity and How to Subvert Them*, Jonathan Mark Torres and Nicole Capriel Ferry, rethink diversity by reading the silences of history wherein double readings and misreadings are forms of retrieval of excluded and subalternized knowledge as a practice of teaching and learning. Decentering the dominant discourse on diversity, Torres and Ferry offer a provocative reading of how social justice movements are positioned in the language of equality and inclusion to become co-opted to ensure white-supremacist, patriarchal, heterosexual and capitalist dominance. With this reformulation of conservative agendas under progressive rhetoric that serves racist, xenophobic, and sexist ends, Torres and Ferry prompt educators to develop pedagogies that convey the importance of diversity and equality while at the same time critique the language games played by those who use progressive narratives as a Trojan horse of social justice. At the same time, the possibilities in resistance, agency, and transformation are realized when we prepare future teachers for the growing complexity of interdiscursive language games by empowering them to navigate educational settings that are becoming simultaneously more diverse and exclusionary.

From a research perspective, in chapter 3, *A Political Ontological Approach to Decolonization of Ethnographic Research in Education*, Jairo I. Fúnez-Flores and JoAnn Phillion, advance the conversation on the inclusion of diversity beginning with the decolonization of knowledge that is traditionally valued in education, particularly, the production of knowledge in the field of educational research. Fúnez-Flores and Phillion argue educational research perpetuates deficit perspectives toward the cultural other; therefore, teacher preparation programs must decolonize knowledge and prompt preservice teachers to unlearn their assumptions and beliefs about diversity. According to Fúnez-Flores and Phillion, a political ontological ethnographic approach carries many implications for education research that informs knowledge valued in K-12 contexts and how "other" stories and enactments emerge. Fúnez-Flores and Phillion call on schools, colleges of education, and the research community to be able to disrupt the homogenizing force of traditional forms of knowledge production, co-construct knowledge across cultures, and engage in decolonization as an ongoing project of educational research.

Combining research and classroom practice, in chapter 4, *Embracing the Otherness of Others: An Approach for Teacher Educators to Assuage Social and Political Tribalism*, Sonja Varbelow challenges the current political climate of divisiveness and partisan discourses that have erupted in the present time. Varbelow

argues that although many scholars view partisan politics as a consequence of the 2016 presidential election campaign; such divisive sentiments and ideologies are hardly new grounds in the search for social identity, domination, and power. According to Varbelow, to understand how segregation exists in spite of increasing globalization, educators must engage future teachers in examining the origins of their bias and offer learning experiences with opportunities for analyzing bias and bridging differences across cultural divides. Using several examples from diverse, interrelated fields such as psychology, anthropology, and education, Varbelow offers analyses of personal and societal bias in contemporary times, explores the purpose of education, and delineates an approach to combating bias and developing an awareness that includes engagement of the self to understand the diverse other.

In chapter 5, *Decolonization, Counter-Narratives and Education of Two Native Women in Higher Education*, Angela M. Jaime and Taylar Stagner speak of the lived experience of navigating the complex terrain of diversity in education as Native women educators. According to Jaime and Stagner, unlike the discipline of American Indian Studies which has contributed to advancing the history of Native people, the field of education lags behind with little or no inclusion of Native voices and experiences in classroom content and pedagogy or conversations about diversity in higher education. This troubling absence of Native voices and experiences is visible in the perpetuation of the stereotyping of Native people reflected in textbooks used in schools and colleges and diversity discourses in educational contexts. Jaime and Stagner offer several examples of school textbooks that present inaccurate information about the Native history and portray the diversity among Native cultures and experiences as a master narrative of a homogeneous population. The authors recommend educators preparing teachers for K-12 classrooms engage preservice teachers with Critical Race Theory (CRT), theories of decolonization, and increase their awareness of microaggressions against Indigenous people as a starting point for provoking change toward greater inclusion of diversity in educational contexts.

4   Critical Research on Teacher Preparation, K-12 Classrooms, and Educational Change

In the 21st century, K-12 education has seen significant changes, notably, policy reforms introduced at the federal level that include NCLB, the CCSS, and the ESSA. Each of these reforms comes with an increased emphasis on standardized testing and accountability that has paved the way for conditional funding for public schools. Federal policy reforms have also contributed toward a significant number of urban school closings and privatization of public education with a push for more charter schools that further disadvantages students who attend the most under-resourced schools, thereby, widening the equity gap (Apple 2012). This gap is sustained by the conservative discourse on meritocracy, cultural assimilation and core knowledge without critical analysis of historical conditions and systemic injustices that have created inequities. For example, the discourse on standardized curriculum

reform initiated by E.D. Hirsch' Core Knowledge Foundation (Gewertz 2010; Hirsch 1999) and adopted by many schools across the country has served to silence diversity in school knowledge and K-12 curriculum content. Similarly, the war against social welfare, affirmative action, same-sex marriage and feminism promoted by right-wing conservative commentators such as Dinesh D'Souza (2002, 2008) attempt to roll back the hard-won gains of the Civil Rights of the 1960s. Another example of a conservative discourse that aims to curb diversity is the war against immigration that blames immigrant communities for the cause of the failure of city schools that continue to be reproduced in school policy and practice with consequences for minoritized groups and their educational futures.

In the section, *Critical Research on Teacher Preparation, K-12 Classrooms, and Educational Change*, the authors resist conservative forces that undermine diversity and continue the work of the civil rights movement of the 60s that ushered new spaces for inclusion and equity. The authors call for change in educational policy, school curricula and classroom practice to represent the hard-won cultural, legal and political recognition of various forms of diversity. The authors question the historical and specific conditions that make inequities possible and prompt inquiry into the intimate connection between the history of education, state and school policies, education's key frameworks, and practices and assumptions about self and diverse others. The importance of preparing teachers for 21st century classrooms lies not in the possibility that we move toward a single vision or unified theory of diversity. Rather, the chapters in this collection illustrate how debates in education reflect the extent of diversity in students' actual educational experiences and the need to include a multiplicity of approaches to differing knowledges and cultures when trying to prepare teachers for 21st century diversity. In the field of education, a critical place to start is teacher preparation where the majority of preservice teachers are White, with little experience analyzing their own identities and dispositions about diversity.

In chapter 6, *How Preservice Teachers Transform Pedagogical Discomfort into Multicultural Knowledge for Disrupting the School-to-Prison Pipeline*, Suniti Sharma presents a collective case study of how preservice teachers transform discomforting experiences into multicultural awareness for ending the school-to-prison pipeline. Sharma notes that traditional discourses in multicultural teacher education emphasize the inclusion of K-12 diversity in content, pedagogy and classroom practice. She also notes that contemporary political discourse on 'make America great again,' 'build the border wall,' and 'ban refugees and immigrants' are an attack on public education aimed at curbing multiculturalism across the United States. In her research and teaching, Sharma uses discomforting experiences as a tool for provoking self-reflection in preservice teachers, raising awareness of the link between K-12 diversity and educational inequities, and developing multicultural pedagogies that are inclusive of the background knowledge and experiences of all students. According to Sharma, pedagogical discomfort combined with experiential learning served as powerful tools for connecting preservice teachers to the diverse knowledge and cultural background of students and promoting self-reflexivity and equity-mindedness in preservice teachers.

Expanding the conversation on how we prepare teachers for 21st century classrooms, in chapter 7, *Bridging the gap between African Refugee Parents and K-12 Teachers: Expanding the Meaning of School Diversity*, Wangari Gichiru explores ways to bridge the gap between African refugee parents from Somalia and the Congo and US American teachers to deepen our understanding of student diversity among recent immigrants groups. Gichiru found that African immigrants reject assimilation into the dominant norms of parenting and school expectations; however, they respond positively to collaborative and reciprocal approaches when their voices are part of the decision-making process of schools. Gichiru's study is significant as it addresses a gap in the literature on the experience of involuntary immigrants, particularly, African refugees in the U.S. and complicates the notion of student diversity, which goes beyond race, ethnicity, class, and gender to include differences in family structures, parenting processes, and educational involvement.

An example of research addressing the absence of diverse voices in K-12 education is chapter 8, Antía González Ben's *The Song-Hunting Project: Fostering Diversity in Music Education*. González Ben argues that the domination of White, Anglo culture as the default frame of reference parallels a lack of diversity in music education in the U.S. According to González Ben, White, female, and high-income students are overrepresented in K-12 music education courses, particularly in high school, whereas students from low socio-economic backgrounds and non-native English speakers are significantly underrepresented. In her chapter, González Ben presents The Song-Hunting Project, in which students, parents, and music teachers from a dual-language elementary program create a collaborative and diverse songbook. The students record their parents singing in Spanish and English and interpret the lyrics as a way of learning about diversity and difference and building community across cultures. The Song-Hunting Project is a pedagogical example of how schools might promote diversity in school curricula and bring students, parents, and teachers from diverse cultural backgrounds into a shared space via music education.

In chapter 9, *Phenomenology as a Path to English as a Second Language (ESL) Praxis, Curriculum and Theory-Making*, Weena Gaulin explores ESL students' lived experience and discusses the politics of naming students whose home language is not English. Gaulin also examines contemporary trends in ESL teaching and offers ways to address the politics of ESL teaching and learning. Gaulin argues that ESL students comprise one of the fastest growing diverse groups on school campuses; however, educational policy and research have yet to catch up with how to respond to demographic changes in linguistic diversity. Gaulin's research explores the experience of ESL students in an intensive English program to inform teachers of instructional, curricular and theoretical practices that are culturally and linguistically responsive. In contrast to more traditional and technocratic approaches focusing solely on second language achievement and fluency measurement, Gaulin's phenomenological research offers relational insights into ESL students' lived experience – a provocative curricular promise for the success of linguistic diversity – one that K-12 schools must rethink, address and employ.

5   Transformative Practice for Teaching and Learning in the 21st Century

Scholars have pointed that educational researchers bear a responsibility to the communities served by the schools they study when they do not make diversity issues and majority-minority relations a significant part of their scholarship (Valenzuela 2002). Such forms of silences further marginalize underserved minority communities making researchers complicit in the perpetuation of social inequality. Teacher education has also been critiqued for focusing on coursework that does not include critical analysis of socio-cultural, historical and political conditions of schooling and their complicity in imparting a subtractive education to minority children (Valenzuela 2002). In advancing the conversation and addressing some of the gaps, the chapters in the section, *Transformative Practice for Teaching and Learning in the 21st Century* recenter culture as the axis of classroom interaction and provide evidence of transformative pedagogies in K-12 classroom practice that point to educational change. Transformative pedagogues go beyond prescribed curricula to develop pedagogies attentive to larger socio-cultural issues such as race, social class, and poverty and the role they play in the educational lives of students, parents, and communities and create humanizing and caring pedagogies inclusive of student and parent voice (Faltis and Abedi 2013).

In chapter 10, *Getting Comfortable with the Uncomfortable: Conversations about Race, Culture, and Transformative Pedagogy in an Urban-Based Professional Learning Community,* Althier Lazar and Danielle Nicolino advocate going beyond the scripted curricula within the current environment of accountability where most K-12 students from culturally non-dominant and under-served communities are being educated in academic content knowledge with little to no connection to their knowledge traditions, heritage or discourse patterns. Lazar and Nicolino write about the experiences of four urban teachers who participated in semester-long Professional Learning Community (PLC) designed to raise awareness of the pedagogical promise of students' cultural knowledge for effective teaching and learning. Participation in PLC prompted teachers to delve deeper into students' cultural backgrounds and use this knowledge as the foundational building block of classroom pedagogy. The authors also discovered White teachers' resistance to conversations about race, which prompted them to reconceptualize future PLCs around an initial period of trust-building followed by a long-term and recursive cycle of inquiry about self, others, and practice.

Using narrative inquiry, in chapter 11, *Teachers' Storied Cultural Tensions of Curriculum as a Standardizing Practice* Candace Schlein, Christa Wenger and Sara Crump contest the notion of a standardized curriculum and testing as a form of top-down policy mandate aimed at universalizing knowledge, homogenizing student diversity and implementing unifying measures in school policy and practice. Schlein, Wenger and Crump explore the experiences of teachers to highlight storied cultural curricula tensions and identify a systemic conflict between increase in school diversity on the one hand and the hidden curriculum of the standards move-

ment, on the other. By highlighting teachers and students' lived educational experiences in response to standardization of school curricula and measures, namely, the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSS), the authors contest policy mandates that homogenize students at the cost of diversity denying the possibility for agency and change.

With art education as a critical marker of response to diversity, in chapter 12, *Repositioning Art Education within Educational Equity in K-12 Urban Schools: A Partnership between Philadelphia Public Schools and the Barnes Foundation*, Carolyn Berenato puts art education on the front line of debates in educational policy and curricula reform. Drawing from Dewey, Berenato purports art education as central to democratic citizenship and asserts art-based education as a transformative process based on experiences that foster active engagement with cultural diversity. According to Berenato, art education as a curriculum resource is deeply embedded in inequities with a steady decline in arts education as a school policy prompted by federal and state budget cuts, emphasis on STEM education, and the discourse on accountability and standardized testing. Berenato notes that collaborations between schools and organizations that support art, such as the National Endowment for the Arts and the Barnes Foundation are pathways to transformative teaching through art-based pedagogies and cross-cultural knowledge.

In chapter 13, *Engaging Difference in the Digital Age: Learning with/from Three Somali-Canadian, Muslim, Female YouTubers*, Diane Watt, Kayf Abdulqadir, Fartousa Siyad, and Hodan Hujaleh prompt educators to reflect on the experience of Muslim students who have grown up on the American continent post 9/11 and subsequent increase in Islamophobia. While the authors speak of the perspectives of Muslim female youth in Canada, their study has implications for K-12 education in the U.S. where Muslim youth remain misunderstood and stereotyped across the social and educational landscape. Watt, Abdulqadir, Siyad, and Hujaleh provide a window into the lived experience of Muslim female students who are visible by traditional Islamic covering yet absent in school curriculum compelling them to negotiate their identities within the complex intersection of family expectations, mass media representations, and school discourse. The chapter urges educators to explore the pedagogical uses of videos shared face-to-face and online to provoke classroom conversations on local and global diversity as they intersect with race, gender, class, ethnicity, and religion.

6 Repositioning Educational Equity for Diversity

Rethinking 21ˢᵗ Century Diversity continues the conversation on diversity as a discursive and transformative site for interrogating the dominant narrative within traditional schooling, and questioning received knowledge and taken-for-granted assumptions that foreground our teaching and research practices. Each chapter in the collection repositions our response to 21ˢᵗ century diversity and educational equity to offer transformative possibilities for fighting discrimination against cultural and linguistic diversity. Collectively, the authors advocate taking risks in our

teaching to go against the grain if need be, and use our research tools to complicate how we understand and interpret politics, history, and philosophy in the present context of K-12 schools and beyond.

In chapters 2, 3 and 5, Torres and Ferry, Fúnez-Flores and Phillion, Varbelow, and Jaime and Stagner open the conversation on rethinking how we understand diversity by bringing attention to some of the most pressing issues and debates of our time – theoretical discourses on neoliberalism, decoloniality, and decolonization of knowledge play out in educational contexts. The authors remind us how conservative agendas use renewed forms of colonization to recenter Whiteness as the norm and maintain power and privilege or limit diversity through assimilation and subordination to the dominant culture.

Driven by ongoing changes in classroom diversity the authors of this book make a strong case for a concurrent shift in educational policy and school practice. In chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9, Sharma, Gichiru, González Ben, and Gaulin argue when 'diversity' is normalized in school policy as a category for labeling students who are different, education is complicit in discrimination against difference. Addressing the school-to-prison pipeline, teaching refugee populations, the absence of diversity in the music curriculum, and teaching of English as a second language signify the perils of educational policy and its failure to respond to demographic changes that affect who, what, and how we teach. The authors call upon educators, researchers, and policymakers to recognize differences among, between, and within students to reformulate school policy for equity and social justice.

This collection on rethinking 21st century diversity expands the literature on teacher education and school leadership by offering theoretical approaches, critical research, and transformative pedagogies responsive to complex cultural diversity. In chapters 10, 11, 12 and 13, Lazar and Nicolino, Schlein, Christa Wenger and Sara Crump, Berenato, and Watt, Abdulquadir, Siyad and Hujaleh make a strong case for pedagogies that promote self-reflexivity as critical tools for educators to question prejudices, stereotypes and injustices and co-produce knowledge that is contextual and relational without succumbing to deficit perspectives or universal ontologies. The authors reposition questions on what counts as knowledge within their classrooms highlighting the use of pedagogies for educational change. In recentering student experience at the core of teaching and learning, the authors urge educators to reconceptualize their teaching philosophies and classroom pedagogies aimed at equal educational opportunities for all students.

Rethinking 21st Century Diversity speaks with students and faculty committed to taking up contemporary issues in teacher preparation, K-12 diversity, and school policy and their connection to other pressing issues such as educational reform, closing the achievement gap, and transformative classroom practice for educational equity. We also hope this collection engages researchers in fresh inquiry, theorization, and interpretation of what counts as knowledge in educational contexts, where and when diversity counts, and how to make diversity count. In closing, we urge education students, teacher educators, teachers and school leaders, policymakers, educational reformers, and social justice activists to continue the complicated conversation on rethinking K-12 diversity so that educational equity is the starting point, rather than the goal of education.

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