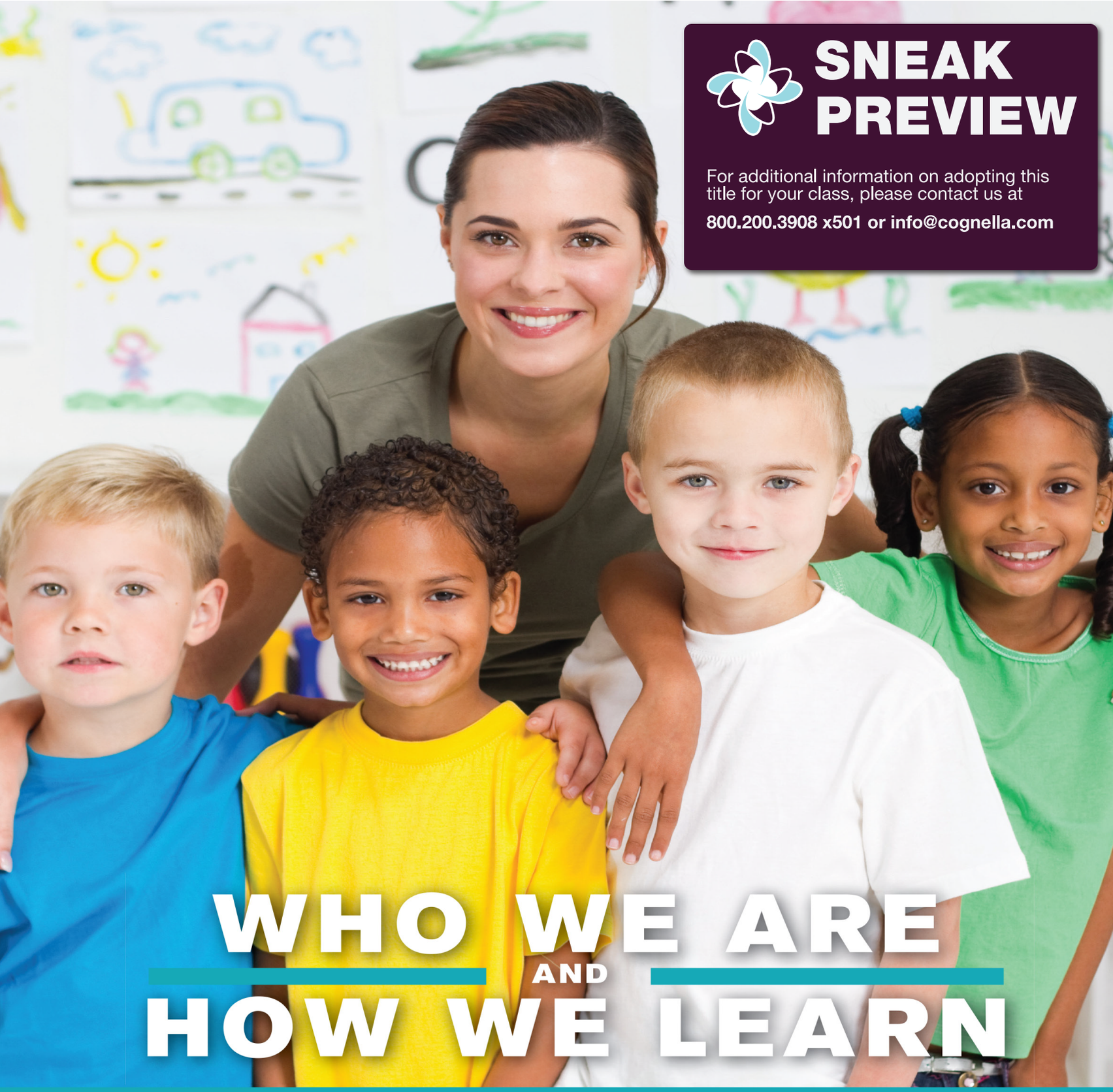

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WHO WE ARE AND HOW WE LEARN

EDUCATIONAL ENGAGEMENT AND JUSTICE FOR DIVERSE LEARNERS

FIRST EDITION

WRITTEN AND EDITED BY

Jose Lalas, Angela Macias, Kitty M. Fortner, Nirmla Griarte Flores
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FOREWORD

Education continues to be a central point of political conversation in the United States and abroad. Over the years, multicultural education and social justice concepts in education have begun to make headway in the educational discourse. In 2014 and 2015, the themes at two major conferences reflected this continued thrust for educational justice. At the University Council Education Administration in 2014, the conference theme was "*Righting Civil Wrongs: Education for Racial Justice and Human Rights,*" and at the American Educational Research Association conference in 2015, the theme was "*Toward Justice: Culture, Learning, Language, and Heritage in Education Research and Praxis.*" In continuing the push for social justice in education, the American Educational Research Association 2016 annual conference theme is "*Public Scholarship to Educate Diverse Democracies.*" At this critical juncture in world history, a paradigm shift appears to be occurring in the field of education. The old paradigm which has left out historically underserved groups is being challenged by educational scholars.

The intent of this this series, *Multicultural Education and Social Justice,* is to galvanize critical scholarship that can contribute to making schools and communities more responsive to the needs of historically underserved groups. The series is not intended to be a discussion of cultural artifacts but to disrupt the status quo that has limited people's abilities to reach their full human potential. As such, concepts in critical educational theory are at the center piece of the series.

What makes the series unique is that it produces critical scholarship through the publication of textbooks. Typically textbooks attempt to use a kinder, gentler language to attract the largest number of readers. Contrary to textbooks that are driven by a *for-profit* mentality that locks out critical discourse and that skirts around the real issues, the textbooks in this series stir emotions, causing it readers to reflect and act, forming *praxis* to rethink education and schools. Additionally the series seeks to produce scholarship that stretches across the education spectrum to eradicate the "isms" that limit human beings from knowing themselves.

In this inaugural volume, *Who We Are and How We Learn-Educational Engagement and Justice for Diverse Learners*, the contributors have compiled a much-needed textbook that will contribute to the transformation of teaching, learning, and leading in schools. This textbook is timely in that it aligns with the contemporary educational movement that is galvanized around concepts of diversity and social justice.

The editors have brilliantly structured the book around critical social theory to intentionally produce a book that is "analytical, critical—even emancipatory sometimes … " The contributors to this volume superbly engage the reader by reminding us that those shaping educational policy should take into consideration the voices of those they seek to educate: thus its title, *Who We Are and How We Learn*, suggests that we can't effectively teach students that we don't know. Lalas succinctly notes, "Knowledge about the student and how they learn is key in educating them properly, effectively, equitably, and justly." Drawing from the revolutionary work of Paulo Freire and others, the contributors demonstrate why there is a need for critical scholarship that not only critiques but offers ways to effectively address the educational challenges in the twenty-first century.

At the forefront of these educational challenges are issues of diversity, equity, and social justice in education. The older Western-centric lens that has dominated the educational discourse will no longer be able to effectively educate the masses for the new world that is on the horizon. James Banks (2014), a leading educational scholar, highlights that the traditional canon will continue to be challenged in the twenty-first century. He then questions the role of educators in making a decision to work for the transformation of schools so that they are just and equitable for all students.

The contributors in this volume use qualitative research to offer its readers a more nuanced understanding of how to implement diversity and social justice concepts in education. At the end of each chapter are reflective questions and small case studies to combine theory and practice. The book offers much insight for educators—teachers, counselors, educational leaders, and others concerned about the plight of education for historically underserved groups.

Reference

Banks, J. (2014). *An introduction to multicultural education* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Dr. Jose Lalas is a professor of literacy and teacher education at the University of Redlands. He has been involved in teacher education for twenty-six years as a faculty member in both public and private universities (fourteen years at CSU Dominguez Hills; currently, twelve years at University of Redlands). He earned his Ph.D. from the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington. Prior to his teacher education experience, Jose was a junior high school classroom teacher. He has served as an associate dean, director of teacher education, and coordinator of credential programs. In addition, he also directs the University of Redlands' Center for Educational Justice, a forum that sponsors research efforts, policy symposia, and critical awareness training on issues related to K-16 education and leadership for social justice.

In addition, Jose is very active in the California Council on Teacher Education (CCTE). He has served CCTE as a member of the board of directors and is currently the chair of the Special Interest Group on credential coordinators and a member of the awards committee. He participates in the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing institutional review teams for university accreditation purposes. He co-authored two published books: *A Teaching and Learning Framework for Social Justice* (2006) and *Instructional Adaptation as an Equity Solution for English Learners and Special Needs Students: Practicing Educational Justice in the Classroom* (2007). His research agenda includes critical literacy, authentic student voices, teacher education, adaptation pedagogy, and second-language acquisition. His most current research work focuses on student engagement and the achievement gap and the influence of social and cultural capital, social class, funds of knowledge, language, and poverty. He works with doctoral students conducting dissertation research studies on K-12 issues and leadership in K-12 schools.

Jose Lalas is currently an elected school board member of the Corona-Norco Unified School District, a seat that he held from 1990 to 2003 and from 2008 to the present. He has served as a member of the Corona-Norco Unified School District for twenty years.

Dr. Margarita Vance is a professor at Collin College in Plano, Texas, and a member of the Texas Community College Teachers Association . She is currently serving as a faculty advisor for Students in Entrepreneurship and Economic Development , a Collegiate Entrepreneurs'

Organization, and a mentor and academic coach to developmental students at Collin College. She has taught as an associate faculty member at the University of Redlands in Redlands, California, and at Drury University in Springfield, Missouri. She served as department chair for the business administration and retail management programs at Central New Mexico (CNM) Community College in Albuquerque, New Mexico. During her tenure at CNM, she was the recipient of the Teacher Excellence Award from the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs . Dr. Vance has fifteen years of professional work experience in higher education. She earned her master of business administration from the University of Redlands in Redlands, California, and was inducted as a member of the Whitehead Leadership Society. She also received her doctorate from the University of Redlands in Redlands, California. Dr. Vance has presented at conferences on issues of cultural capital and student engagement. Her research interests include cultural and social capital, funds of knowledge, bilingual education, and multicultural education.

Dr. Ayanna Blackmon-Balogun is a professor of literacy at the University of Redlands and a public school administrator. She has been in public education for the last twenty-one years and began her tenure as a first-grade teacher, teaching five- and six-year old students the joy of reading. She has educated every grade within the K-12 setting and currently serves as an assistant principal at Frisbie Middle School in the city of Rialto, California. She earned her doctorate from the University of Redlands in Leadership for Educational Justice after a unique learning and teaching experience with males in a single-gendered class. She has reviewed proposals for *American Educational Research Association* for several years and presented at several conferences on cultural responsiveness and its effects on writing and on the significance of gender and culture in the classroom. In addition, Ayanna is very active in her community and at one point served as a school board member in the city of Fontana. She is a member of Teachers College Record and a member of the International Literacy Association. During the summer months, she enjoys writing poems, daily devotionals, and children's books. Her first children's book was published in 2009, entitled *Because I Love You So Much: The Influence of Motherly Love.* For the past four years, she has also enjoyed being a contributing author to *Zoe Life Inspired: A Daily Devotional.* Ayanna is a wife and mother of two children, Ashanti Devon (twenty-one) and Genesis Moriyat (ten), and a host of Frisbie Falcons. She is passionate about the work she does and believes it is a calling to serve students and her community.

Dr. Nirmla Griarte Flores is a cohort advisor for the School of Education, University of Redlands (UofR), at the Temecula satellite campus. She also mentors the teacher candidates with the Teacher Performance Assessment tasks. In addition, she is an adjunct faculty member of the UofR, teaching courses such as Language and Literacy, Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools, as well as Multiple Subject Methods and Curriculum. She earned her doctorate degree with a major in Educational Leadership for Social Justice from the UofR. In addition, she serves as a university supervisor for teacher candidates who are in the process of completing their student teaching assignments.

She has also presented at various staff development and teacher training events/workshops/conferences held at the California Association for Bilingual Educators (CABE Regional and National), American Educational Research Association, California Association of Professors of Educational Administration, and the Corona-Norco Parent Advisory Council. In addition, she has co-facilitated a variety of educational forums organized at the School of Education (UofR) and the Institute for Educational and Social Justice.

Her presentations involved issues on parental involvement, social justice, diversity, equity, closing the achievement gap, and teachers helping teachers.

Dr. Kitty M. Fortner is an adjunct professor at the University of Redlands' School of Education. In addition to teaching in the Pre-Service Teacher Program, she supervises student teachers and interns. She has been involved in K-12 education for twenty years in public and public charter schools. She received her doctorate in Leadership for Educational Justice from the University of Redlands. Kitty works with the University of Redlands Center for Educational Justice sharing information with school leaders, teachers, and policy makers on how best to serve diverse students. She began her educational career as a classroom teacher in an elementary school, working with low-income, second-language students and their families. She has served as a lead teacher, BTSA support provider, RTI Coordinator, and SPED Administrative Designee as well as a master/mentor teacher assisting new and veteran teachers in better serving students and their families. Before her work in higher education, she founded two charter schools in Southern California. Her passion is to provide students with the best learning experience for their needs. She believes that leadership plays an imperative role in the fostering of academic success for all learners.

Dr. Angela Macias is an Assistant Professor at California State University, Dominguez Hills. She has been a Southern California educator for ten years, teaching middle school, high school, and college. She graduated with an Ed.D. in Leadership for Educational Justice from the University of Redlands. Her research focused on funds of knowledge concerning working-class Latino students and student engagement. She presented this research at the American Educational Research Association conference and the California Bilingual Education conference in 2012. In addition to teaching secondary English, she also teaches education courses, college English courses, and leads professional development on culturally relevant instructional strategies. Macias is actively involved in contributing to local educational issues as the chairperson of Civics and Technology for Youth and by running a series of free conferences called Teachers Helping Teachers through the Center for Educational Justice at the University of Redlands.

INTRODUCTION

There is a tremendous promise and opportunity to improve the student achievement of American K-12 students, including the early college- and career-bound young adults across the variety of available educational experiences and established disciplines. As the "smartest kids in the world" are reported to be found in faraway places such as Finland, Poland, South Korea, Japan, China, Singapore, and other parts of the world (Ripley, 2013; Tucker, 2014, 2011), and "achievement gap" in the United States between whites and Asians on one side and Latinos and African American school-age students on the other is a perennial challenge (Howard, 2010), educators are actively seeking explanations and remedies in order to make education more effective, equitable, and academically rigorous for all students. Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, and LeMahieu (2015), who wrote a book on "improvement paradigm," challenged our public schools to advance three aims: improved academic effectiveness, greater cost efficiency, and enhanced human engagement. For academic efficiency, numerous programs, approaches, and strategies abound and are being implemented, including such current innovations as Common Core, social-emotional learning, digital multimodal literacy, content area academic language, STEM, and expanded use of technology as in E-books and tablets. States and local school districts have instituted local control funding formulas and other initiatives to meet mounting financial burdens and for greater fiscal efficiency. While education researchers, academicians, and practitioners continue to do their serious work of attempting to better understand the challenges faced by educational institutions and communities in providing opportunities for all students to learn, they rarely collaborate on concrete matters that explicitly integrate education theory and practice in a comprehensive manner in K-12 settings to solve specific classroom problems and enhance human engagement.

Who We Are and How We Learn: Educational Engagement and Justice for Diverse Learners intends to present an effective integration of theory, research, and best practice for improved student engagement. My co-authors and chapter contributors are all active K-12 practitioners and researchers—two administrators, four classroom teachers, one counselor, two former special education teachers, one educational administration professor, and a teacher

education professor. We all agree that all well-intentioned school and classroom innovations are only going to work if we know who our students are and how they learn. Knowledge about the students and how they learn is key in educating them properly, effectively, equitably, and justly.

Thus, in this collaborative book for teachers, counselors, administrators, and education professors, we have attempted to integrate theory, research, and practice to foster a perspective that recognizes and respects the inherent social and cultural contexts and characteristics of any interaction and decision-making events that occur in the place we call school. All the chapters of the book have a set of conceptual frameworks, similar to what Jean Anyon called "theoretical arsenal of powerful concepts" (Anyon, 2009, p. 2). Six chapters of the book are drawn from completed doctoral dissertations of my co-authors, whom I chaired as part of the thematic dissertation research that I personally designed and they participated in as doctoral students entitled *Social and Cultural Capital, Social Class, Funds of Knowledge, Language, and Student Engagement in Selected Settings: A Narrative Inquiry.* We employed critical social theories in creating the conceptual framework that guided each study that was later developed into a chapter of this book. This intentional effort produced dissertations that are analytical, critical—even emancipatory sometimes—and sensitive to the practical needs of students, teachers, administrators, counselors, parents, and staff in schools and classrooms. Aside from providing research-based information to improve student learning and engagement, the research and field-based findings are explicit in their thorough analysis, conclusion, and implication toward equity, access, and educational justice. The underlying thread that dominates the exploration, discussion, analysis, findings, conclusions, and recommendations in each chapter is educational engagement and justice for student success.

Engagement and Motivation

It is important to understand that student success depends on how engaged students are in the classroom. According to Newmann (1992, p. 12), engagement is "the student's psychological investment in, and effort directed toward, learning, understanding, or mastering the knowledge, skills, and crafts that academic work is intended to promote." It implies that for any engagement with curriculum to succeed, teaching and learning must go beyond the acquisition of basic skills and concepts through rote memorization and must engage students in critical thinking, analysis, synthesis and evaluation of data, and personal and societal decision-making. Of course, students could be engaged if they are attending school regularly, avoiding chronic absenteeism, participating in school activities actively, feeling a sense of school belongingness, and not dropping out of school. It is imperative to think about student engagement as requisite to any school reforms and innovations. What does student engagement really mean? Is it synonymous to motivation? What factors influence student engagement?

It is very tempting and natural to think and use the terms motivation and engagement interchangeably. However, current scholars view these two terms as different: student engagement may occur because of motivation; engagement is action, and motivation is the intention to do something; engagement is defined by observable, action-oriented behaviors, while motivation is considered an internal process that carries an intention. According to Reschly and Christenson (2012), student engagement is action-oriented and has been found to be helpful in preventing student dropout and fostering high school completion. Skinner

and Pitzer (2012) asserted their view of "engagement as the outward manifestation of motivation" (p.22). The common unifying factor about motivation and engagement is the notion that both are influenced by context and individual differences and link to student outcomes. For example, according to Skinner and Pitzer (2012), student engagement in the classroom context with learning activities driven by certain curriculum may be motivated by the teacher and positive interaction with peers, friends, and classmates. The school and/or classroom contexts and student engagement promote the development of academic assets such as learning, coping, and resilience. School administrators and teachers have to be very intentional in providing students with learning activities and engagement in social institutions such as community and family, school content areas and extracurricular activities such as sports, clubs, and other academic projects, and challenging curriculum in the classroom that emphasizes critical thinking and other metacognitive strategies such as learning from the text, self-monitoring of understanding, questioning the author, and critical analysis.

Recent empirical studies on enhancing engagement in the classroom point to the role of motivation through instruction in mediating the interaction between the teacher and the students. Tasks, use of certain strategies, what students are allowed and expected to demonstrate, and the routine social culture of the classroom provide opportunities for student engagement. The study by Turner, Christensen, Kackar-Cam, Trucano, and Fulmer (2014) on enhancing students' engagement reported that motivation constructs such as belongingness, competence, autonomy, and meaningfulness are helpful in explaining why students engage or disengage in school tasks. After a three-year intervention with middle school teachers, their findings suggest that teachers who employed motivation by providing opportunities for students to experience belongingness in the classroom, competence in performing and organizing a particular task, autonomy in pursuing their individual interests and beliefs, and meaningful learning had students who were more engaged. In short, the more the teacher motivates his or her students, the greater the degree of student engagement.

A current related empirical study by Cooper (2014) underscores the role of identity development in eliciting student engagement in the high school classroom. The study identified three groups of teaching practices to engage students that have emerged from the research literature: connective instruction, academic rigor, and lively teaching. It has been demonstrated in several bodies of research that connective instruction operates at certain levels of contact—where students connect with the subject matter content that they find relevant and appropriate, where teachers connect with their students by recognizing and affirming them, and where the delivery of instruction allows connection among teachers, students, and classroom contexts through opportunities that involve students to develop competence (Martin & Dowson, 2009). In Cooper's study (2014), academic rigor is identified as a category or set of teaching for engagement practices that provide challenging work, emphasize hard work and academic success, and convey passion for content (Wolf, Crosson, & Resnick, 2005). Lively teaching is the category of engaging practices that emphasize active delivery of lessons, such as using games and fun activities, assigning projects, and doing collaborative group work (Cooper, 2014). Interestingly, Cooper's study found that while lively teaching and academic rigor are engaging practices, connective instruction shows stronger influence on student engagement. Cooper explained that "compared with academic rigor and lively teaching, which center on teachers' decisions about how to set an academic tone or present content, … connective instruction acknowledges who students are as people … The engaging element of connective instruction under this conceptualization

is that such instruction honors who the students are—acknowledging that they are particular people with particular interests, points of views, personalities, and experiences" (p. 367).

Types of Student Engagement

There are different theoretical models of describing student engagement. It is demonstrated through a variety of activities and may be described as behavioral, which shows efforts; cognitive, which shows deliberate use of strategy; emotional, which shows expression of interest and affection; and agentic, which shows attempts to contribute to learning activities (Fredericks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004). One of the most current formulations of engagement was offered by Finn and Zimmer (2012). According to them, there are four types of student engagement: academic engagement, social engagement, cognitive engagement, and affective engagement.

Academic engagement refers to observable behaviors in the classroom and at a student's home that are directly connected to the learning process, such as attentiveness and completing assignments in class and at home or supplementing learning through other academic extracurricular activities. This engagement reflects ongoing participation, focus, hard work, involvement, concentration, and/or effort in doing academic-related work at school, home, and in the community.

Social engagement refers to observable appropriate behaviors that a student demonstrates in school and in his or her interaction with the teacher and his or her classmates in the classroom, such as attending school regularly, coming to school and class on time, exhibiting kindness and a caring attitude toward other students, and not withdrawing from classroom participation in class activities or disrespecting other students. This engagement reflects appropriate interaction with classmates and the teacher, attention to relevant class activities, following directions, and speaking politely.

Cognitive engagement is the thorough, thoughtful, and purposeful effort to comprehend complex ideas in order to achieve mastery of the subject matter. Student behaviors linked to cognitive engagement include: asking critical questions; concentration in understanding challenging academic concepts; willingness to participate in dealing with difficult tasks; reading more references than the assigned material; revisiting content area materials and following through on topics that are learned previously; using self-regulation, self-monitoring, and other cognitive strategies to guide learning; and examining ideas, concepts, and events carefully by using research and other authentic sources.

Affective engagement involves an emotional response characterized by feelings of belongingness and being involved in school as a positive and caring place where activities are relevant and worth pursuing. Affective engagement provides students the enthusiasm, enjoyment, satisfaction, and pride to participate in school activities and to be resilient in dealing with peers and the challenges in doing school tasks. Affective engagement refers to the student's emotional feeling of belongingness in the school community of learners, teachers, administrators, and parents and understanding that school prepares him or her with knowledge, skills, abilities, and disposition for current and future out-of-school tasks and challenges.

The current study by Turner, Christensen, Kackar-Cam, Trucano, and Fulmer (2014) informs us that for students to be engaged in classroom learning activities, there has to be an attainment of a certain degree of comfort and confidence through classroom opportunities for students' sense of belongingness, competence,

autonomy, and meaningful learning. In addition, the work of Cooper (2014) on eliciting engagement in the classroom emphasizes the centrality of the emotional and meaningful connections of the teacher, the content, and the instruction to the learner's personal background, identity, and experiences, which relate to Pierre Bourdieu's social and cultural capital (Grenfell, 2008; Swartz, 1997; Bourdieu, 1983) as applied to describing and identifying the learner, including his or her race and social class.

Framing Engagement from a Socially and Culturally Situated View

In this book, we have put forth the idea that social and cultural capital influence student engagement. Throughout the process of conducting a series of qualitative research, we have discovered that student engagement is, indeed, influenced by students' social capital and cultural capital, in which we have included the cultural notions of race, social class, funds of knowledge, and literacy.

Social capital refers to the network of relationships and social connections that provide additional opportunities or resources available for individuals who are members of the group. According to Coleman (1990), it is vested in the structure of relations between persons and among persons. Once social relations begin, the person or persons involved in the relationship may become obligated to reciprocate favors between them or among them, share sources of information, and maintain norms and sanctions to make social capital effective, functional, and dynamic. It provides students with access to resources by way of whom they already know in a particular class or by their familiarity with the teacher and the school. It is, therefore, a set of networks of social relations and resources that provide the cognitive, social, affective, and academic support that the students and their families can use to navigate through the school system. As one can gather from the studies described or implied in the chapters, social capital influences student engagement by providing students with the necessary feeling of belongingness in school as a comfortable place with friendly and supportive teachers, administrators, and classmates. It also fosters positive interaction with teachers and peers and, therefore, promotes positive social and affective growth as well as increased student achievement. Applied to schooling of young children and young adults, teachers must make sure that all students develop their social capital, including their positive and caring relationships with the school personnel and their peers, in order for them to gain a sense of belongingness to the school community and a feeling of being cared for to increase their school participation and pride.

Cultural capital refers to culturally based common practices and/or resources possessed by individuals that may put them at an advantage over others. As described in the research conducted and reported in the current book, examples of culturally based resources, materials, or practices include understanding the school tradition and philosophy of teaching, cultural awareness of the regional origins of the students in the class, knowledge about educational and school discipline practices, going to the museums and art exhibits, educational credentials of teachers and administrators, academic qualifications or degrees, access to computers, and aesthetic preferences such as taste of music, art, food, and other creative forms. Cultural capital can be acquired through social origin by way of one's family or through education or schooling (Winkle-Wagner, 2010) and could be identified easily as one's set of doing things or disposition accumulated from childhood or as a possessed set of skills, works of art, and scientific instruments that

require specialized cultural knowledge and abilities to use. Applied to educating children and young adults, teachers, administrators, and parents must make sure that all students, regardless of socioeconomic status, acquire or are exposed to cultural capital or practices that match the content and rigor of the school and classroom curriculum and instruction.

To elicit engagement, it is imperative to connect instruction to the learner's social and cultural capital that comprise his or her personal identity. As operationalized by Cooper (2004), to connect teaching to a learner's personal identity, the teacher must promote relevance, demonstrate care, show understanding of students, provide praise and appreciation, relate to students through humor, and allow students to express themselves. Sense of belongingness, special, caring relationships among peers, parents, and teachers, opportunities for meaningful learning, and the appropriate match between home and school cultural practices of rigorous curricular and instructional delivery are influential themes for fostering student engagement. Thus, this book reminds educators that there is a need for a theoretical and practical view that is "socially and culturally situated" for understanding the connections among concepts, perspectives, approaches, policies, and classroom practices related to the teaching and learning of all students, especially the diverse learners. Influenced by Bourdieu's notions of social and cultural capital, "socially and culturally situated" means viewing objects, things, and events with an eye of taking into strong consideration the impact of one's social background and connections and one's established cultural ways of doing and handling things. My co-authors and chapter contributors believe that everything that relates to teaching and learning is social and cultural because the set of knowledge, practices, dispositions, and even policies that is dealt with on a regular basis is deeply linked to who we are, how we view and work with others, and what common beliefs and practices we hang on to. All learning and teaching activities we engage in "play out in human lives, and are not solely discussed as explanatory of, but also as contributing to and even shaping human and societal initiatives and development" (Hawkins, 2013, p. 8).

In a book edited by Hawkins (2013), she tried to present through current theories, research, and best practice why and how "children who differ from the mainstream in language use, ethnicity, cultural background, socioeconomic status and dis/ability status experience school failure" (Hawkins, 2013, p. 3). She featured an exciting collection of scholars who are mutually complementary in projecting the importance of social, cultural, and historical contexts in learning, language development, and literacy education. She highlighted the use of languages and literacies between people in situated social and communicative practices. In one of its chapters, Luke (2013) stressed the balance of the role of authentic voices of participants in cultural situations for transforming social relations and material conditions and understanding critical discourse analysis. He pointed out that "all texts are potentially ideological, and hence should be the subject of critical analysis and scrutiny" (p. 145).

Does Race Still Matter?

Similarly, *Who We Are and How We Learn* emphasizes the importance of social and cultural contexts in understanding and enhancing student engagement. It also includes the recognition of race as an issue in influencing the interaction among teachers, students, administrators, and parents and in understanding what students can and cannot do, especially those students who come from different racial, cultural, and

linguistic backgrounds. Theoretically and pedagogically, there is now an established line of inquiry called critical race theory (CRT) and culturally relevant/responsive instruction that all evolved from the effort to understand the low school performance of African American students (Ladson-Billings, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). According to CRT, racism still plays a role in the U.S. society, particularly in the educational system, where unfair disciplinary measures in suspending and expelling minority students, hostile learning environments, and unfriendly attitude of failing to see the value of one's personal history, racial background, and cultural experiences are still prevalent. This theory is an important foundational background in contextualizing the minority participants in all the research studies that are featured in the chapters of this book.

Starting from the effort of legal scholars such as Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, Kimberly Crenshaw, Cheryl Harris, Mari Matsuda, Richard Delgado, and many others, critical race theory (CRT) became a helpful theoretical tool for examining educational issues involving race, racism, and culture (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings and Tate, 2005). Specifically, CRT is used as a research tool in understanding the role of race in the broader context of society and its connection to student achievement. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) identified several principles of CRT in education, such as the inherence of race and racism in American society, critical examination of the problems caused by neutrality, objectivity, and colorblindness, the need to focus on the importance of maintaining a commitment to social justice, the importance of experiential knowledge, and whiteness as a property that includes the right to disposition, enjoyment, reputation, and the right to exclude (Harris, 1993).

CRT also recognizes the positive impact of "counter-storytelling," or listening to the authentic stories of minority students. Counter-storytelling serves as a tool for providing a different viewpoint on historical information found in textbooks and everyday events published in various social media. In examining the experiences of Hispanic students, Latino(a) critical race theory, or LatCrit, came about to specifically address how institutionalized racism has affected the lives of Latino and Latina students based on immigration status, language proficiency, accent, and even surname (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2001).

Both CRT and LatCrit provide opportunities for the authentic voices, experiences, and perspectives of the marginalized African American, Hispanic American, and other students of color to be heard through counter-storytelling. They afford the avenue for minority students' sense of belongingness, positive identity development, autonomy, meaningful learning, and self-confidence by challenging the dominant viewpoints and sharing their stories with others. The courageous discussion about race and social class in education and the socially and culturally situated perspectives, insights, and practices highlighted in the qualitative studies featured in this book are provocative vehicles for educational engagement and justice for all learners, including the linguistically and culturally diverse students.

Educational/Social Justice for Diverse Learners

Commonly, many educators and researchers view fostering educational and social justice in schools as simply a way of achieving equality, equity, and fairness for all children as well as recognizing, respecting, and valuing the roles played by teachers, administrators, counselors, parents, students, and other school personnel (Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Sandel, 2009). It has been asserted by current researchers and classroom

practitioners that social justice can be cultivated on students by recognizing diversity, honoring identity, encouraging individual voice, and understanding issues related to privilege, deficit thinking, poverty, heteronormativity, and immigration and humanitarian concerns (Gorski, Zenkov, Osei-Kofi, & Sapp, 2013; Macias & Lalas, 2014). In addition, social scientists have highlighted the lessons learned from how leadership for social justice has been formulated in and influenced by several disciplines that include philosophy, anthropology, Black studies, sociology, political science, public policy, and psychology (Normore & Brooks, 2014). Even school counselors now view social justice as part of their advocacy work in paying attention to the social and cultural capital of students and their families (Bemak & Chung, 2005). Other researchers frame promoting social justice as a lifelong process of engagement that involves understanding one's identity, examining how inequality affects opportunities of different people, exploring experiences and how those inform a person's unique worldviews, perspectives, and opportunities, and evaluating how schools and classrooms can operate to value diverse human experiences and enable learning for all students (Darling-Hammond, French, & Garcia-Lopez, 2002).

Brown (2004) explained that administrators and leaders for social justice need grounding in learning theories, transformative pedagogy, and reflective practice to "guide others in translating their perspectives, perceptions, and goals into agendas for social change" (p. 99). Similarly, Cochran-Smith (2004) argued for "the necessity of a social justice agenda in a democratic and increasingly diverse society" (p.168) and even proposed "inquiry as stance," or "a way of knowing and being in the world of educational practice that carries across educational contexts and various points in one's professional career and that links individuals to larger groups and social movements intended to challenge the inequities perpetuated by the educational status quo" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. viii).

Further review of research and professional literature reveals some common principles that are relevant, appropriate, and translatable to classroom teaching that involves the learner, teacher, and classroom context (Lalas, 2007). These principles imply how the learner and the teacher use their life experiences, personal beliefs, world knowledge, abilities to construct and represent knowledge, and dispositions in facilitating learning to occur in the classroom. The classroom context where the interaction, generation, and negotiation of meaningful experiences happen includes the physical classroom arrangement, classroom discipline, instructional materials, assessment instruments, assignments, and many other supplementary materials. It is through the dynamic interchange of the learner, teacher, and classroom context that teaching for social justice can be demonstrated. The common principles gathered from the research literature imply a socially and culturally situated classroom context where a classroom teacher and learner interact, share, negotiate, and generate knowledge. These principles include understanding oneself in relation to another individual or group of individuals, appreciating diversity and promoting equity, recognizing inequities and how to diminish them, equitable participation and allocation of resources, creating a caring and culturally responsive learning environment, working together as a learning community, engagement in classroom inquiry, and critical thinking and reflection (Lalas, 2007).

The Book: Socially and Culturally Situated Chapters Toward Engagement and Justice

As a teacher educator, mentor of doctoral students, school board member, and former classroom teacher with consistent connection with school-age students, I am always in the middle of making decisions and responding to inquiries about what is the best way to teach young children and youth. Every time I give my opinion, I worry about being labeled as impractical because I am theoretical; that is, I always recommend people to determine their own theoretical perspectives or the set of conceptual lenses they are comfortable wearing when confronted with challenges related to school concerns, curriculum, instruction, policy, and other services. I believe that an understanding of one's own view of the world, other people's viewpoints, and other specific concepts, approaches, and perspectives related to teaching, leading a school, and counseling entails an understanding of the context in which they were created. I think I know now, with the help of experience, my interaction with graduate students and faculty and many teachers, and my political and civic involvement in the community as a local district policy-maker, that everything one does is socially and culturally influenced by the context in which it is connected. One must be theoretical in understanding and talking about "socially and culturally situated" context to be practical!

Thus, this collection of research-based chapters includes a variety of theoretical frameworks that have been used in studying the issues and responding to research questions. My co-authors and I believe that the practical application and discussion activities we have at the end of each chapter are best understood when the socially and culturally situated research contexts, findings, and implications are read, discussed, and reflected on critically.

It will be obvious to the readers that all the chapters are recommending for practitioners to know who their students are and how they learn. Identity development of the students appears to be the common thread that connects all the lessons learned in each chapter. This introduction is lengthy because it aims to introduce the key theories, concepts, and insights that the readers will encounter in the chapters. The main concepts covered in this introduction are operationally defined and used in creating the theoretical frameworks for each chapter.

In Chapter 1, cultural capital is defined and discussed as a powerful factor in influencing student engagement. Home and school cultural capitals are studied with the help from the authentic voices of students, teachers, parents, and administrators. Chapter 2 follows the discussion of cultural capital as it pertains to funds of knowledge or family and community resources that are available at the homes and communities of working class Latino(a) high school students. Parents, students, and teachers were interviewed, and photo-voice as a technique was used by students to take pictures of objects, events, and ideas around their homes and communities. In Chapter 3, the issue of social class is defined as it relates to the experiences of African American high school students and their parents. The social class as a concept is broadly presented and interviews with parents, students, teachers, and administrators were conducted to determine how social class has impacted the academic performance of the students. In Chapter 4, an interesting framework of social and cultural domains of parental involvement is introduced. It provides parents and teachers with helpful recommendations on what parents must do to foster student engagement. Chapter 5 presents a way of doing literacy using culturally relevant and responsive instruction. Inspired by the tenets of critical race theory and culturally relevant instruction as a pedagogical approach, the curricular and instructional issue of writing as a

communication skill is explored in this chapter. Chapter 6 presents the exciting impact of social and cultural capital in the school involvement of African American parents. It documents the increase in GPA of African American students from 1.7 to 3.4 in the span of three to five years that was attributed to the strong parental involvement of the African American fathers. In Chapter 7, the influence of social and cultural capital on student engagement is explored from a school counselor's perspective. Like the other chapters, a narrative inquiry method was employed to gather the authentic voices of parents, teachers, and administrators. In Chapter 8, a model of transformative leadership is presented by a former school administrator and now a professor of educational administration. The author suggests a culture of excellent leadership that takes into account social and cultural capital, social class, funds of knowledge, and other socially and culturally situated contexts. Finally, a reprint of the article about making instructional adaptations for English language learners is included as Chapter 9. This article presents the rationale for making adaptations, discusses the different types of adaptation strategies, and demonstrates a practical technique of making adaptation. The adaptation strategies presented are also applicable to learners with special needs.

It is fundamental to view teaching, leading a school, and counseling from a socially and culturally situated perspective! Meaningful learning and caring and academically rigorous teaching can only occur if we know our students well and we are willing to develop their identities by providing them with opportunities to experience belongingness, cognitive challenges, academic competence, self-worth, and autonomy in a socially and educationally just environment.

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