

Module 3 Critical Reaction  
EAD 822  
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In recent history there has been a massive increase in oppression and prejudices of minorities in the United States. The root of the prejudices are stemming from the living situations of the students, carrying over to actions within the community, and finally end up being carried through by the school system. These three areas are key to recognizing the oppressive nature of American society towards minorities, not only within education, but also in all facets of society. With the guidance of Lisa Delpit, Rose Brewer, Nancy Heitzeg, Tamar Lucas, Rosemary Henze, Ruben Donato, Sofia Villenas, Donna Deyhle, Joseph Flessa and select videos it is clear to see the problems minorities are facing each day in their homes, communities and most importantly their schools.

One of the biggest problems facing America each day is poverty. It is something that is fed into the minds of each American when they get home from work and turn on the news. Each day there is some form of criminal activity being brought to the public's attention and most of the time it is within a poverty stricken, or low-income area. The sad truth is that the low-income areas are where most minority students live because that is all their family can afford. Within the low-income neighbourhoods there are more than likely lower opportunity schools for the children of that community to attend. John Powell spoke in the clip, *Opportunity is Racialized: John Powell*, about these high poverty areas and how low-income black families are more likely to live in the aforementioned community than a low-income white family. Powell also mentions that only 25% of those minority students will complete high school. Those kinds of numbers are unacceptable for educators to believe, let alone accept. With the graduation rate of minorities being that miniscule, there needs to be some causes that lead to that number being so low. Flessa adds, "These demographics realities mean that more than half of children growing up in cities and presumably attending school in urban public school districts lack the health care, housing stability, and neighbourhood safety to which only higher income families have access to" (Flessa, 2009). With all the problems that low-income families already face financially it is unfair to see that the strains of the community now add to the pressure of everyday life.

High poverty communities in the United States have had the stigma of being known as some the roughest areas throughout the country. Unfortunately the families that are forced to live within these areas are subjected to being stuck with the prejudice of the community around them. As mentioned before, a majority of families within the communities are minorities, but society began to develop that way at the end of the civil war forcing minority groups to the bottom of the social ladder. Brewer gives an example, "They are not included, and were not intended to be included, under the word 'citizens' in the Constitution, and can therefore claim none of the rights and privileges which that instrument provides for and secures to citizens of the United States. On the contrary, they were at the time considered as a subordinate and inferior class of beings, who had been subjugated by the dominate race, and, whether emancipated or not, yet remained subject to their authority and had no rights of privileges but such as those who held the power and the Government might choose grant them" (Brewer, 2008). A little lengthy, but it gives a good idea of how the post-slavery area was being approached by the white community having to treat blacks as "equals".

Since the white race was still oppressing a "free" race laws were being created to keep the minority groups down, which eventually lead to the prejudices and high incarceration rates for minorities. Within the clips from *Incarceration Nation* and *Crips and Bloods: Made in America* audiences are given the statistics of the American incarceration system. Statistics like 3 out of 4 Americans in prison for a drug related charge is black even though the use of drugs

between both races is even. It's the prejudices of the post-slavery era American's that are still being used in society today, and the worst part is that it has crept into the classroom.

It is awful to see that the social prejudices of people from different races and cultures being carried over into the school system not only among the students, but also from the teachers as well. In the *2009 NNOYMY Conference – Pauline Lipman*, Lipman discusses that the minority children within military based schools refer to their branch of service as a “gang”. It is small details like that which allow the prejudice of minorities to reach the schools because a gang is commonly connected to a group of people involved in criminal activity, but now the American Military is beginning to see some glimpses that schools have been dealing with for a long time now. The military students prejudices is just an example of a small issue of prejudice being brought into the topics of schooling, whereas the biggest contributors to prejudices are the teachers. Teachers spend all day with their students, and each student is from a different home and the teacher has no real idea of how each student was brought up, but all the teacher has is the speculation of how each culture has raised children. Delpit recorded responses from the teacher, of a student she had been observing, “That’s amazing, since he can’t sit still in it. He just says anything sometimes. In the mornings he’s OK; after nap he’s impossible”, “He’s probably never allowed to talk at home. He needs communicative experience. I was thinking of refereeing him to a speech therapist”. “It’s unfortunate, but I don’t think he even knows what family means. Some of these kids don’t know who their cousins are and who their brothers and sisters are” (Delpit, 2006). It’s awful to think that the reader does not need to know what Delpit said to realize that the teacher has already made prejudices about the minority students in their classroom.

Teachers have prejudices, which allow them to make excuses, which Villenas & Deyhle (1999) speak about, that allow the teacher to use the parents as a scapegoat for their lack of effort. Lastly, administrators even do their part to allow prejudices to slide within the schools. Lucas, Henze & Donato explain, “LM [Language Minority] students were not a major factor in overall student achievement. Second, with certain exceptions, most researchers did not consider language to be an important factor in student achievement” (Lucas, Henze & Donato, 1990). The fact that researchers and administration was not considering language a key factor into a student’s academic achievement is ridiculous. The reasoning behind it was to allow the school to be seen as higher performing by not including the minority student’s scores because of the prejudice that they perform on a lower academic level.

Oppression and prejudices have always been apart of American culture, ever since the first European stepped foot on North America to even now with how people speak about the President. These prejudices carry over into all aspects of society because past members of society have allowed that to happen, the worst part is that it has infiltrated the education system. With society constantly changing there is a possibility that in the future these problems will no longer exist. Will it be within our lifetime? Some would like to think so, but it is a long up hill battle to erase the memory of the many years of oppression and prejudices against minorities within the United States. In order to move forward the first step has to be in the direction of education and closing the achievement gap between races and cultures, and working towards a better academic future for all, not just the few.

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