

**Examining the Impact of Teacher Identity and Community Culture**

Madalyne L. Heiken

Teacher Education Program, University of Denver

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Dr. María Salazar

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To represent my identities, I created a zine (see Appendix A). My zine captures who I am as a teaching artist, theatre maker, advocate and person. All of these identities will influence the way I interact with and teach my students at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Early College (DMLK). The students at DMLK are a force to be reckoned with. I created an interactive virtual Peace Room to share and exemplify students' innovations, social justice, and community engagement (see Appendix B). By integrating hyperlinks into the Peace Room, I am able to refer to these symbols and remind myself of the exceptionality of DMLK's students and community. I also created a tangible toolkit I can refer to when applying my learning to the classroom.

### **I & Community Symbols**

I have a huge passion for theatre which is exemplified in the pictures of the first play I directed. I feature images of protest posters and photos with Representative Serena Gonzales-Gutierrez to demonstrate the crucial role advocacy plays in my life. Lastly, I share a photo of the DSST: Byers Drama Club, because the experience solidified my passion for teaching. As for the virtual Peace Room, I use symbols that relate to the DMLK community. First, there is the book vending machine that is unique to DMLK and emphasizes the school's innovation. Then there is a pair of headphones and a microphone as an ode to the student-led podcast *Know Justice Know Peace: The Take*. I also include a yoga mat to symbolize the prioritization of student mental health and social-emotional well-being at DMLK. Social media posts highlight how involved students and staff are in the broader community.

### **Compare & Contrast I & Community Quilts**

At first glance, these quilts seem quite different. Not only are they different mediums, they also present different graphics. My zine consists entirely of photographs; whereas, the

virtual Peace Room is made with clipart and social media screenshots. However, when I consider what these graphics symbolize, I realize that I'm more similar to the DMLK community than I anticipated. Both quilts demonstrate a strong sense of resistant capital (Yosso, 2005). This appears in the zine through the protest signage and in the Peace Room through the "Know Justice, Know Peace" sign. Yosso (2005) describes resistant capital as "cultural knowledge of the structures of racism and motivation to transform such oppressive structures" (p. 81). While I am a white woman and my students are of primarily diverse races and ethnicities, we resist dominant and oppressive learning structures and narratives.

Both quilts exemplify *critical consciousness* (Freire, 1970), which is defined as the act of "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 1970, p. 17 as cited in Salazar, 2013, p. 131). The student podcast is a strong example of this; however, DMLK's youth and educators also collaborated with DPS to create a more inclusive history curriculum (Haggard, 2020). Students saw injustice, and they took action to correct it. I demonstrate critical consciousness in my advocacy work with Representative Serena Gonzales-Gutierrez to assist juveniles in paying court-ordered restitution. Because of our critical lenses, students and I will be able to partake in serious conversations surrounding social justice, which can deepen students' learning and expand their worldviews.

Lastly, I use theatre and art as a way to fully embrace people's humanity. DMLK welcomes students' humanity by prioritizing students' mental health. Both of our approaches demonstrate *humanizing pedagogy* (Salazar, 2013) which is when educators honor students' full humanity by affirming their ambitions. This includes assisting students "in dealing with obstacles to their ambition" (Salazar, 2013, p. 129). Obstacles could include a student's psychological health. Therefore, DMLK staff are trained to be trauma informed and to support

the mental well-being of young people. It is critical for me to be cognizant of the content I integrate into my lesson planning, because I do not want students to be triggered to the point they cannot learn, retain content, or engage fully.

### **Implications for Teaching & Learning**

My students and I have varying *funds of knowledge* (Moll et al., 2013). We have developed different practices and knowledge from our families and lived experiences. My students might be more adaptable to “changing social, economic, and political circumstances” (Moll et al., 2013, p. 174). I have more knowledge on social-emotional skill building so that could enhance students’ cognitive abilities and social awareness. My whiteness positions me in the master narrative which is damaging to Black, Indigenous, youth of color and CLD students. Therefore, I must be intentional in centering experiences and texts that counteract that damaging narrative. I must also amplify youth voices by promoting cultural competency in my lessons as Bareti (2019) and Lozenski (2012) suggest. Additionally, because I am critical of the systems I am a part of, I will challenge student thinking through inquiry. This will enhance students’ cultural and critical consciousness so they can expand their community engagement and disrupt power systems. Lastly, because of my work regarding the school-to-prison pipeline, I am accustomed to the deficit language that is used. Therefore, I will be intentional in emphasizing the potential of each young person and utilize asset-based language.

### **Toolkit for CLD Learners**

When creating my toolbox, I used quintessential teacher symbols to depict the dispositions, knowledge, and skills I’ll bring to best serve emergent bilingual youth (see Appendix C). I was struck by Salazar’s (2017) poem and the impact of deficit language on young people, which is why asset-based thinking is an important tool for me. The video “Bilingual/Dual

Language Education - Families" (SEAL, 2018) emphasizes the damaging aspects of an English-only education on CLD learners, which includes pulling students away from their home languages and cultures. Therefore, I'll include texts that represent my students and are "culturally appropriate" (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018, p. 77). This can help students better connect with their families and build stronger familial capital (Yosso, 2005).

Leung (2018) speaks in a Ted Talk about the double standards regarding bilingualism. They share how L1 English speakers are praised for learning another language, but L1 non-English speakers who are learning English are ridiculed and stereotyped. I can prevent this from happening by encouraging the use of home languages and challenging the master narratives present in the literary arts. As modeled by Dr. Salazar, I want to establish structures, build community agreements, and practice repetition to help support young people's learning.

Lastly, I include my initials on the lid of my box to remember the impact of my identities and my biases when teaching. I continue to explore my role as a white educator, which includes understanding anti-racism and teaching through that lens. I must also tap into my own identity strengths and what that can offer my students. When my students and I embrace our cultures and treasures in the classroom, we can find our shared humanity and live more fully.

# Appendix

## Appendix A: Image of I Quilt



## Appendix B: Image of Community Cultural Wealth Quilt



Appendix C: CLD Toolkit

