

Epilogue – Moving Forward

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The articles presented in this special issue offer an introspective examination of urban education. Collectively, they highlight the importance of an interdisciplinary approach towards improving institutions of higher education located in urban geographical spaces, and supporting Black girls, womyn, and Black boys who each face unique and complicate issues of societal violence and trauma. The articles presented in this issue attempt to fill this gap in the literature by returning to the roots of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Black Feminist Epistemology (BFE) studies (Bell, 1995; Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Tate, 1997). The sum of the articles zero in on a difficult and often dark topics: How do we best serve trauma-exposed students in education settings; and how do researchers form mutually beneficial partnerships with historically victimized community stakeholders without pillaging them only for research purposes? The authors featured here present their research across multiple levels of academia (K-12, higher education, teach preparation, etc.) and trauma types (race-based, gender-based, psychological, and physical). In every instance, the focus has been on developing skills in educators (both pre-service and current professionals) that can counter the impact of trauma on students of color, and construct frameworks that prevent the infliction of trauma. These articles not only push an important issue into the limelight of education research, but serve as a reminder of the purpose of CRT and BFE: to *intentionally* disrupt systems of oppression and discrimination, both legal and educational, that continue to inflict trauma on marginalized students across this country (Baily & Graves, 2016; Collins, 2013).

In striving to ameliorate the systemic issues facing educators, it is imperative that cogent, yet critical research and discourse is conducted that focuses on solutions, rather than affirming deficit-based ideologies. A significant issue that these articles address is the under-researched impact of trauma - especially gender-based trauma – that is inflicted upon students of color as a result of their social identity. While there is plenty of literature available that voices criticism of social systems of oppression and discrimination that continue to inflict psychological harm on marginalized students, there is still a need for literature that discusses how educators and education system can better facilitate the healing process for these trauma-exposed students. Additionally, it would neglectful if educators did not introspectively examine how the curriculum, practices, and pedagogies within education systems can inflict trauma on students of color. Furthermore, how do we begin to expand or redefine age old, but still relevant theoretical frameworks and conceptual frameworks to address the needs of digitally native children; whose access to technology and information potentially exposes them to trauma in various forms? How does the exposure to social media complicate trauma, and how does education play a role in perpetuating or remedying trauma? These are but a few questions necessitating that researchers probe into various outlets (i.e., student voice, narrative inquiry, etc.) to define exactly what issues these questions highlight and what solutions can be implemented to reform these questions. While there is a strong tendency when discussing urban education to lean towards past struggles and challenges, the authors contributing to this special edition have shown the limitless opportunities and possibilities in urban education – that are waiting for the next wave of scholars bring these opportunities into fruition.

References

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