Advancing Anthropology and Education Perspectives in Public Policy

Report of the Council on Anthropology and Education Ad-Hoc Task Force 2007-'08[1]

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Background: Task Force Context and Purpose

The Council on Anthropology and Education (CAE) Task Force on Advancing Anthropology and Education Perspectives in Public Policy was constituted in late fall 2006 by CAE President Perry Gilmore. The immediate impetus for the Task Force was a November 26, 2006 *New York Times* article by Paul Tough on successful high-poverty schools which characterized low-income families as "culturally disadvantaged." This article, and a subsequent one by Tough on June 10, 2007, seemed to snap the public debate back to the 1960s, where characterizations of students of color, and African American children in particular, were cloaked in the language of educational and cultural deficit and disadvantage (Ladson-Billings 2007). CAE members kept this discussion alive on the listserv, posting several editorial responses to the *Times* on the list. While lauding these individual efforts, the question for CAE became, "How do we, as an organization representing vast knowledge about human learning and educational (in)equity, assemble a rapid response to misleading yet widely accepted media commentary such as that in the *New York Times*?" How do we position our field to take an effective and proactive public policy stance? The fact that the discourse of deficit and disadvantage continues as the leitmotif of U.S. education policy (represented, for example, in the No Child Left Behind [NCLB] Act of 2001), makes these concerns all the more timely and important.

The Task Force has also been informed by recommendations from the CAE Mission Committee and the recently revised CAE Mission Statement calling for an explicit focus on social justice in educational-anthropological work. As the Task Force was formed, CAE President Perry Gilmore simultaneously constituted an Ad Hoc Committee on Policy to identify and trace scholarly efforts in anthropology and education policy, suggest strategies to insert anthropological perspectives in contemporary educational policy debates, and recommend ways in which CAE might be more policy and practice relevant (P. Gilmore, H-Net List email, February 21, 2007).

As we move toward NCLB's reauthorization, and in light of ongoing public discourse reifying the twin constructs of biological race and the inheritability of intelligence (e.g., Fraser 1995;

[1] This report was presented to the CAE Executive Board and at a Roundtable Session at the 2007 Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Washington, DC.

Herrnstein and Murray 1994; Rushton 1999) the insertion of anthropological perspectives in education policy is crucial. The Task Force's work is a proactive response to this wider policy context and to a renewed and refocused CAE mission intended to engage that context in ways that challenge, confront, and transform social and educational inequities.

Task Force Charge

The Task Force's formal charge, as laid out by the CAE president, is to serve "as a proactive initiative for the development of anthropology and education perspectives and research in public and scholarly arenas" (P. Gilmore, email, February 12, 2007). Consistent with the CAE mission (old and new), the Task Force was asked to recommend activities that resist "the persistent and pernicious deficit explanations of school failure…of disenfranchised peoples,…and the reductive notions of culture that underlie these views" (P. Gilmore, email, December 22, 2006). Specifically, the Task Force was charged with:

1. Planning and implementing a session at the 2007 AAA meeting.
2. Preparing a brief (1-2 page) CAE position statement.
3. Developing a set of recommendations for CAE's continued efforts in the area of educational anthropology and public policy. (P. Gilmore, email, January 25, 2007)

Task Force Activities

In February 2007, the Task Force "met" via a whole-group teleconference, with CAE President Perry Gilmore and President-Elect Norma González on the line, to discuss our charges and outline a plan of action. The Task Force co-chairs subsequently met with and/or consulted by telephone and email with individual Task Force members to discuss how particular activities would be carried out. The following activities have been completed or are planned for completion within the next 2-3 months:

1. **Organizing a roundtable at the 2007 AAA Meetings.** "Advancing Anthropology and Education Perspectives in Public Policy" is scheduled for 1:45-3 p.m., Saturday, December 1, in the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel Balcony B. The roundtable session brings together educational anthropologists and education policy activists to discuss the role of anthropological research in informing contemporary education policy:
    a. What body of knowledge has the field of educational anthropology produced that might inform current education policy debates surrounding "racial"/ethnic, linguistic, and cultural difference?
    b. What are the implications for educational equity and social justice?
    c. What are the recommendations for future CAE policy-related activities?

    The session includes presentations by Task Force members and discussant James Crawford, former *Education Week* columnist, past-president of the National Association for Bilingual Education, author of numerous scholarly volumes on bilingual education and English language learners (see, e.g., Crawford 1992a, 1992b, 2000 2004a), and current director of the Institute for Language Education Policy. It is also our goal to generate discussion and feedback from CAE members and others in attendance to inform "next steps" in CAE policy activism.

2. **Drafting a preliminary Task Force position paper.** The present document, and the full papers from the roundtable session, constitute the primary material for a position paper to be submitted to the CAE executive board in early 2008. Working in collaboration with CAE President-Elect Norma González, the Task Force will seek to disseminate the position paper more widely (e.g., in a larger monograph or edited volume on educational anthropology and public policy published by CAE/AAA).
3. **Developing preliminary recommendations for future work in educational anthropology and education policy.** These recommendations will be presented at the roundtable session and, incorporating feedback from that session, included in the position paper *(see below)*.

About This Document

In the following sections, we present brief synopses of our individual and collaborative work, to be synthesized and further developed into a position paper for consideration by the full CAE membership. We emphasize that these are initial ideas; this document is a first step toward completing the Task Force's charge. We offer the document as a basis for discussion with and critique by CAE members and our larger publics, in the hope that this process will expand our individual and collective capacity for dialogue and action around the pressing education policy issues of our times.

The perspective taken here views policy not only as official government actions and texts – that is, as top-down or *de jure* – but also as *de facto* and bottom up, a complex social-cultural process mediated by relationships of power (Levinson and Sutton 2001; McCarty 2004; Shore and Wright 1997). In this sense, "policy" is something in which each of us engages every day. As Shore and Wright note in their (2001) *Anthropology of Policy*, "it is a feature of policies that their political nature is disguised by the objective, neutral, legal-rational idioms in which they are portrayed. In this guise, policies appear to be mere instruments for promoting efficiency and effectiveness" (1997:8). Our goal is to probe behind and beyond the guise.

A policy analysis of this sort demands that policy be historicized and situated, and that is where we begin. As we also hope to show, this policy perspective positions each of us as policy actors with the power to create, confront, and transform the inequities that construct and reify social hierarchies.

A Brief Critical-Historical Analysis of Anthropological Activism in U.S. Education Policy
– Teresa L. McCarty, Arizona State University[2]

I begin this history in 1954, the year the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its decision on *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, declaring that "separate but equal" has no place in the American democracy. The year is iconic of another, less momentous but nonetheless important and enduring event of particular relevance to CAE, as the field of educational anthropology

[2] This section is excerpted from a paper presented by Teresa L. McCarty at the 2007 AAA Annual Meetings, "Anthropology in U.S. Education Policy and Politics – From Desegregation to the New Segregation." Washington, DC (December 1, 2007).

took root at the Stanford Conference on Anthropology and Education organized by George and Louise Spindler in the spring of that year. This was "the formative period of our subdiscipline," George Spindler wrote 30 years later (Spinder 1984). Yet at a moment in the nation's history when 17 of the then-48 states mandated segregation and four others allowed but did not require it, the Stanford conferees – who included such luminaries as Alfred Kroeber, Jules Henry, Felix Keesing, Hilda Taba, and Margaret Mead – expressed a "strong sense that anthropologists could study [the] educative process…,but they should refrain from advocating specific policy decisions," Spindler writes (1984:4).

In actuality, anthropologists had long been involved in the formation of national policies around "race" and social hierarchy, beginning with the social Darwinism of White ethnologists used to rationalize the "separate but equal" doctrine in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896. It was the propitious alliance of German-born Jewish anthropologist Franz Boas, African American sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois, other activist social scientists, and the NAACP that would topple *Plessy* and galvanize the forces leading to *Brown* and the Civil Rights Movement (Baker 1998:167). In *Brown*, however, the Supreme Court appropriated the Boasian claim of racial equality but discarded the Boasian notion of cultural relativity (Baker 1998:187). As a consequence, equality was framed within the existing (White) social order, legally erasing biological race but leaving socially constructed race untouched (Baker 1998; see also Tate et al. 1993).

It would be nearly two decades after *Brown* before educational anthropologists began systematically investigating Court-ordered school desegregation, because there *was* no desegregation for many of those years. When research on school desegregation did begin, it focused on a narrow range of outcomes of interest to federal legislators – primarily test-based achievement results (Schofield 1991), and echoed the discourse of cultural pathology in Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* (Myrdal 1944). As the "culture of poverty" made its debut in Oscar Lewis's ethnographic case studies of five Mexican American families (Lewis 1958), government officials found ready anthropological support for these deficit views.[3]

In the context of the Civil Rights Movement, Congress passed the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 1965 Voting Rights Act, and the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act – landmark civil rights and education legislation. The on-the-ground reality, however, was that the integrated and equal education promised by *Brown* was in retreat. In special issue of *School Review* on desegregation published in 1976, Betty Showell noted grimly that more than two decades after *Brown*, race relations in the U.S. had retrogressed due to government sanctions "that, by the use of economic, social, and legal barriers,…accelerated the trend toward residential, political, and educational apartheid" (Showell 1976:415).

It was in this post-*Brown* political environment that the anthropology of education emerged as a formal sub-discipline within the field of American anthropology.[4] By this time, there was growing disillusionment with government-funded experimental desegregation research. By an act of June 23, 19972, the Education Division of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare created the National Institute of Education (NIE), which funded six long-term ethnographic studies or urban desegregated schools. Reporting on this research at the 1977

[3] For contemporaneous anthropological critiques of the culture of poverty, see Eleanor Leacock's (1971) edited volume, *The Culture of Poverty: A Critique.*

[4] This is not to suggest that the anthropology of education developed solely in the U.S. But given the focus of this history and the Task Force charge, it is this branch of the sub-discipline's genealogy that is traced here.

AAA Meetings and a special issue of *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, Dorothy Clement affirmed a now-widely recognized truth: "[S]imply placing black and white students together does not…produce an end to stigmatization,…or…to differential educational experiences" (Clement 1978:246). As John Ogbu noted in his commentary on this session, these studies raised again the question of whether and how a "nonracist school [can] emerge within a racist community" (Ogbu 1978:291).

These NIE-funded studies were harbingers of a major artery of educational anthropology that fluoresced throughout the next decade and continues to this day. As Gilmore and McDermott describe the academic and political climate of the time, "Researchers of all kinds were suddenly asking, 'What is ethnography?'" (2006:201). NIE funded the precursor to the annual Ethnography Forum at the University of Pennsylvania, organized by Perry Gilmore in 1978, as well as studies of language and literacy such as those directed by David M. Smith and Dell Hymes in West Philadelphia schools (Gilmore, cited in Hornberger 2002; see also Hornberger 2004). These and other sociolinguistically oriented studies (e.g. Heath 1983; Philips 1983[1993]) were "committed to…a social justice and activist agenda," Gilmore relates (in Hornberger 2002). To paraphrase Signithia Fordham's (2004:155) description of the reception to her own classic article with John Ogbu on "the burden of acting White" (Fordham and Ogbu 1986), ethnographic research during this period "caught the public imagination."

In 1974, the U.S. Supreme Court heard a class-action suit brought against the San Francisco School District alleging that 1,800 Chinese American students were being denied an equal education because they did not understand the language of instruction. *Lau v. Nichols* represents the "other shoe falling" after *Brown*, arguing that school integration does not ensure equality of opportunity if students are not proficient in the medium of instruction. *Lau* came on the heels of the 1968 Bilingual Education Act (Title VII of the ESEA), which, in the interest of equal educational opportunity, provided federal support to assist non-English speaking students in mastering subject matter while they learned English.

The rise and fall of bilingual education in the U.S. over the next 20+ years presented a policymaking window of opportunity that paralleled *Brown*. Just as anthropological/ethnographic research showed the fallacy of simplistic numerical solutions to desegregation (see, e.g., Ladson-Billings 2004; Tate et al. 1993), it also showed the fallacy of measuring the effectiveness of bilingual education by looking solely at language (and test scores) without taking culture or power relations into account. During the early period of federally funded bilingual education, anthropological research on "culture and the bilingual classroom" received considerable attention and government support (e.g., Trueba et al. 1981). Among other paradigm-shifting work in this area during subsequent years, educational ethnographers worked directly with state departments of education to conduct bilingual education research (e.g., the California State Department of Education's [1986] *Beyond Language: Social and Cultural Factors in Schooling Language Minority Students*); collaborated with local schools to implement bilingual-bicultural education programs (e.g., Lipka et al. 1998; McCarty 2002; González, Moll, and Amanti 2005); developed cross-cultural teacher preparation programs such as that at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (Barnhardt and Kawagley 2005) and the University of Arizona's American Indian Language Development Institute (McCarty, Watahomigie, Yamamoto, and Zepeda 2001); and provided recommendations for policy implementation such as Cazden and Leggett's (1976) *Culturally Responsive Education: A Response to LAU Remedies II* and the voluminous federal testimony leading to passage of the

1990/1992 Native American Languages Act and the 2006 Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act.

In 2001, the U.S. Congress revamped the 1965 ESEA, renaming it the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (Public Law 107-110) – and erasing the word "bilingual" completely from official policy discourse.[5] NCLB's goal of eliminating educational disparities by holding schools accountable is laudable, yet it is one of the most problematic pieces of education legislation in U.S. history. Ethnographic research has been barred from this policy discourse by NCLB's insistence on random clinical trials as the "gold standard" of education research. Nevertheless, both qualitative and quantitative research have begun to document NCLB's pernicious effects, as a cascade of recent academic and professional journals on the law attest (see, e.g., theme issues of *American Educational Research Journal* [September 2007), *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* [March 2007], *Harvard Educational Review* [Winter 2006], *Language Arts* [April 2007], and *Journal of American Indian Education* [December 2007]). Summing up this growing body of research, James Crawford states that NCLB's high-stakes accountability system is "likely to do more harm than good for students who are now being left behind" (2004b:1).

In sum, over the past 100+ years, anthropology has been both an agent of social justice and complicit in its obfuscation and denial. We are now at a policy cross-roads, facing a widening pedagogical divide (Cummins in press). To reiterate a question raised more than 20 years ago by then-CAE President Courtney Cazden (1983), can our ethnographic research "go beyond the status quo"?

The following sections of this report, excerpted from the 2007 Roundtable presentations of Task Force members, suggest potential moves forward by the Council and its members.

Challenges and Possibilities for CAE Policy Activism – Gloria Ladson-Billings, University of Wisconsin–Madison [6]

Over the last year a significant number of issues have provoked the ire of members of the Council of Anthropology and Education (CAE). Among them have been two articles by *New York Times Magazine* writer, Paul Tough. Like many of my colleagues I wanted to discuss the problems with Tough's analysis and develop a strategy for responding to him (and others like him). However, over time I have recognized three major problems with that approach. The first problem is that substantive discussions are great for the academy but problematic for mass media outlets. The level of detail that such discussions require cause intelligent but busy lay people to discount them as adequate vehicles for action.

The second problem with our approach is that it rarely comes as the kind of quick turnaround that daily and/or weekly Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor that major newspapers and news

[5] The Bilingual Education Act was renamed the English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act; students formerly labeled "limited English proficient" were renamed "English language learners." See Skutnabb-Kangas and McCarty (2007) for an analysis of these terminological changes.

[6] This section is excerpted from a paper presented at the 2007 AAA Annual Meetings by Gloria Ladson-Billings, "Making Public Our Concerns with Public Schooling and Other Public Issues." Washington, DC (December 1, 2007).

magazines require. As an association we cannot talk every issue to consensus, write several drafts of a response, and then believe that a month later some daily or weekly editor will want to publish our responses. Dailies and weeklies are in the business to sell papers and speed and fast turnarounds are their stock and trade.

The third problem is in speaking with one voice. Even though CAE has vested interests in issues of equity, diversity, and social justice, it would be wrong to presume that we all think the same way about these issues. So when a statement is made and is represented as a statement from CAE, how representative can such a statement be? We are not monolithic and as a council we can probably parse *ad nauseum* any statement that sets out to represent us. Thus it may seem that as an organizations we are paralyzed to respond to these salvos that Tough and others regularly toss. However, I would argue that there are other ways to respond that we should consider if we want to have our voices heard in the larger public arena.

The first thing we can do is set our own agenda. Rather than always being in the reactive moved we can begin to move into more proactive stances. What are the issues we want to engage? What are the issues around which we have some agreement? What are the issues that educational anthropology can bring some clarity on? We already know that African American male students have abysmal academic performances in the nation's public schools. We already know that there is school-to-prison pipeline that targets students of color. Surely we can say something about these developments. I am sure that a small group of CAE members can meet to decide a method for agenda-settings and identifying good writers among us to begin to shape position papers. Setting our own agenda does not signal that we do not care about the sensational stories that find their way in the news dailies and weeklies. But, it does mean that we are not rudderless and tossed about by every passing pundit,

I am also suggesting that although we are members of CAE, we remain citizens who have both the right and responsibility to write back whenever we can. In response to a recent local newspaper article on how White students were "disadvantaged" by the school district's transfer policy because the district considered race as a factor in deciding which schools they could enter, I invoked my civic rights as a citizen and responded immediately. Any one of us could have (and should have) responded to Tough's errors and omissions by writing brief, cogent letters to the *New York Times* without the imprimatur of CAE.

Finally, we may need to identify a leadership group who is vested with the authority to write when statements and reports are so egregious that they cannot be left to stand unchallenged. We have to entrust them to write the brief, hard-hitting Op-Ed pieces that engage larger publics and inform them of our work.

We have been given a wonderful set of skills that allows us to look deeply into the human condition and we have a social obligation to use those skills to improve people's lives. We can do more than just talk about it.

Opening a Door for Activism in Indigenous Education – Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy, University of Alaska and Arizona State University[7]

On April 30, 2004, President George W. Bush signed Executive Order (EO) 13336: American Indian and Alaska Native Education. In the EO, Bush noted the unique relationship between Indigenous nations and the U.S. government, and stated that the U.S is "committed to [tribal] sovereignty and self-determination." The EO opens the door for educational anthropologists to have a voice in the education of Indigenous children. Given the extensive research of educational anthropologists and scholars from related fields in Indigenous education, what kinds of policy statements can we make to schools of education and teacher education programs for better preparing teachers to work with American Indian/Alaska Native students?

We expect some teacher education students (namely those of color) to learn multiple cultures, epistemologies, and ontologies; why can't we expect others to do the same? We need to teach our teachers to be flexible, adaptable, and able to adjust. One of our tasks as a group is to assist in writing policy that addresses teacher preparation and how to integrate a discussion of culture that really works. What can we do about setting policy where pedagogy and curriculum are concerned (see, e.g., Ladson-Billings 1995)? One good example: The Alaska Native Knowledge Network (1998) has developed its own cultural standards for curriculum. They have adopted these curricular standards to complement the standards set forth by external governmental agencies in order to ensure that local cultures and languages are represented in school curricula. Unfortunately, getting Alaska to adopt these and implement them has been a much larger challenge. How then can we address not only the writing of policy, but its implementation? A culturally responsive curriculum:

- Reinforces the integrity of the cultural knowledge that students bring with them.
- Recognizes cultural knowledge as part of a living and constantly adapting system that is grounded in the past, but continues to grow through the present and into the future.
- Uses the local language and cultural knowledge as a foundation for the rest of the curriculum.
- Fosters a complementary relationship across knowledge derived from diverse knowledge systems.
- Situates local knowledge and actions in a global context. (Alaska Native Knowledge Network 1998)

So, we have a lot to say about how schools of education can assist pre- and in-service teachers in better meeting the needs of their Indigenous students. In addition, our research/policy must be driven by the "3 R's" of Indigenous education: reciprocity, responsibility, and relationships/relatedness. CAE can reiterate these, demonstrate their power with our research, and continue to call on policymakers to do better. Our role as a unit is to be active; we must continue to press forward until we see changes happen. Otherwise, on the 100th anniversary of the (1928) Meriam Report (a scathing indictment of federal Indian policy; see Meriam et al. 1928), we will still be addressing the same issues for Indigenous children.

[7] This section is excerpted from a paper presented by Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy at the 2007 AAA Annual Meetings. Washington, DC (December 1, 2007).

A number of scholars have noted the limited nature of conclusive evidence supporting culturally responsive schooling for Indigenous youth, yet there is increasing evidence of how students' academic performance is impacted by efforts at culturally responsive schooling (Aguilera et al. 2007; Apthorp et al. 2002; Demmert 2001; Demmert and Towner 2003; Lipka et al. 1998; Yazzie 1999). Clearly, more and better research and teacher training are needed if we hope to change the schooling experience for Indigenous youth in the United States. And we need to do this research with and for Indigenous communities – this is part of the active nature of this work.

Still, we are left with numerous questions. What does culturally responsive schooling look like in practice in various contexts? We must engage in sustained investigations at the same time we are assisting in writing and influencing policy if Indigenous children are going to be both academically strong and be connected to their communities. If we can't take practice and put it into policy or take policy and put it into practice, we face enormous dilemmas:

1. Native teachers can't teach native students.
2. Native students can't learn, regardless of who is teaching them.
3. Indigenous students must assimilate in order to succeed academically.

Research and Public Policy on Youth Activism – Julio Cammmarota, University of Arizona[8]

The public policy shift from "protecting youth from society" toward "protecting society from youth" disproportionately impacts working-class youth of color (Polakow-Suransky 2000). Instead of dealing with social and economic problems through the curriculum or other programming, schools increasingly implement punitive measures that increase hostilities between students and exacerbate tensions between youth and the police who reside within their schools. If the purpose of education and youth development is the attainment of emotional, interpersonal, social, intellectual, psychological, and spiritual health and wellness for everyone involved, how might public policy better support these goals?

A more effective public policy approach acknowledges the concern for public safety, but avoids a focus on punishment and control. Rather, community stakeholders should identify the ways in which broad social, political, and economic forces both create and limit opportunities for youth. Although young people cannot vote, they are important community stakeholders and thus should be active in the policy development arena. Based on research from five teams across the U.S., we have identified six guiding principles for youth development and educational policy and practice that enhance young people's civic and political engagement:

1. Young people from all backgrounds must have the opportunity to develop leadership capacities to appropriate power for self-determination.
2. Youth policy must account for and nurture the interconnected aspects of racial, ethnic, spiritual, sexual, and linguistic identities.
3. Justice and equity are means for achieving emotional, interpersonal, social, intellectual, psychological, and spiritual health and wellness for all members of society.

[8] This section is excerpted from a paper presented by Julio Cammarota and Chiara M. Cannella at the 2007 AAA Annual Meetings, "Research Collaborative on Youth Activism: Briefing Report on Youth Bill of Rights." Washington, DC (November 29, 2007).

4. Youth participation requires that adults commit to their own transformation and development in tandem with constructive behaviors and genuine contributions to young peoples' opportunities.
5. Youth engagement in activities to analyze, address, and mitigate structural racism is a crucial strategy for both youth development and productive social change.
6. Young people's creative and cultural expressions are vital for activism to increase equity and social justice.

Based on what we know about youth, and from data collected from our coordinated participatory action research projects, youth along with their adult allies have developed five key rights necessary for effective civic engagement and educational change:

1. Youth have the right to education and community involvement that affirms their processes of identity formation.
2. Youth have the right to rich environments free of threats and punishment in which to learn subject matter that encompasses the full spectrum of human experience.
3. Youth have the right to develop genuine relationships of caring and respect with adults, teachers, and community leaders who prioritize young peoples' best interests.
4. Youth have the right to representation by adult advocates for their interests in the face of social institutions that fail to meet their responsibilities.
5. Youth have the right to have input into institutional policies that affect them, their families, and communities.

Effective democratic practices will come from strategic alliances with young people that incorporate youths' social assets into public policy design. The principles outlined above provide simple but important guidelines for evaluating how youth policy can be made less punitive and instead serve as a social investment in young peoples' strengths and potential. The Youth Bill of Rights allows for key stakeholders to identify more accurately those resources that young people are entitled to in a democratic society. Furthermore, access to these resources is the only way that America's youth will be successful in their efforts to create a more just society.

Constructing Ethnographies of Policy – Kris D. Gutiérrez, University of California Los Angeles

Broad educational policies like No Child Left Behind and its constitutive reforms rely on gross demographics about students and their abilities to facilitate the implementation of curricular and assessment programs that are key elements of sweeping national reform. Such reforms bring "marketplace" principles of accountability, efficiency, quality, and choice to the educational agenda and rely on two seemingly contradictory practices: (1) the implementation of a "sameness as fairness" framework that provides the rationale for its colorblind, one-size-fits-all polices and practices (Gutiérrez and Jaramillo 2006), and (2) the sorting and labeling of students in which new devices once again marginalize groups of students and categorize them by racial, ethnic, and linguistic groups as a means of distributing educational treatments categorically. In their conceptualization and practice, these policies and their instantiations promote a normative view of children living in poverty, their learning needs, and their communities' practices, and, in doing so, normalize the underachievement of non- dominant students and their dramatically

inequitable learning conditions.

These conceptualizations of non-dominant communities often work hand and glove with reductive and static notions of culture and poverty to construct and employ deficit, classist, and racist explanations of the "underachievement" of non-dominant students that help ensure new forms of segregation and inequity. Of course, attributing "underachievement" to deficits in cultural communities preserves the myth of a meritocratic educational system as a neutral and colorblind institution. By utilizing a pseudo-equity framework, those in power detach themselves from current and historical discriminatory practices in the schooling of non-dominant students. Their "innocence" intact, no fundamental structural change in the legacy of cultural, social, and institutional racism and inequity in the United States is required

As anthropologists of education, we can assume an instrumental role in challenging reductive notions of culture and cultural communities and generalizations about cultural communities and their practices. But this work must begin with the way we conduct our own work. For example, a focus on understanding developing individuals and changing communities involves developing some initial hunches about patterns and seeking confirmation or disconfirmation to extend what is known. We would ask: what is known
about the practice under scrutiny? about the history of the practice and its local instantiation? and the relation between a community's practices and the routine practices of individuals? We would check our assumptions about an individual's familiarity with the focal practice, as well as seek further information about whether and how an individual might participate in the practice. The push then would be on generating more work that characterizes the dynamic patterns of individuals' participation, building on historical constellations of community practices, continuing and transforming across generations.

Our work should model how to construct arguments that avoid overgeneralizing, statements based on single observations, simple observations of test performance or behavior under restricted or controlled circumstances beyond the situations observed. Instead, the intent is to ground observations across multiple settings and communities and to assume various vantage points to understand the complexity of human activity. The intent, especially in regard to children from non-dominant communities, would be to identify a course of action or assistance that would help insure student learning, rather than to define who a child is or that child's future potential (Gutiérrez and Rogoff 2003).

The work of anthropologists of education by definition "rises to the concrete" as documenting the frequency, density, irregularity, and exceptionality of practices helps to construct more complex and fuller understandings of phenomena. Such work also recognizes the limits of the local and attends to the historical; it seeks to account for the social and cognitive consequences of people's participation in practices, including educational treatments. In short, the work would document what works, what went wrong, for whom, and to what extent? (Erickson and Gutierrez 2002). Such ethnographies of educational policy would allow us to construct equity trails to help monitor if the "treatment" is benefiting the patient.

We could use such work to produce policy papers about important issues that persist regarding educational equity and educational policy. Consider, for example, the 1975 Students' Right to their Own Language written by a committee of the Conference on College Composition and Communication that marshaled scholarly work to address an important, yet controversial,

academic and social issue. Such documents have multiple audiences and uses and can become important resources for policy makers, researchers, and
the public interest.

Asserting a Compliant/Non-Compliant Public Policy Voice – Frederick Erickson, University of California Los Angeles[9]

I want to make two points, one in a compliant voice and the other in a not so compliant voice. First, if we are to address policy questions as anthropologists of education, we should do what we do best – tell compelling vignettes that make a clear point about the policy issue concerned – what the consequences of implementing a policy look like in everyday life, or what the everyday consequences of ignoring a policy issue are. (This is a recommendation others have made in the Anthropology Newsletter and other venues.) Consider the negative impact that Ronald Reagan had in 1980 by telling in his stump speech a phony vignette about welfare Queens who cheat the system. We have genuine vignettes to tell, and we should choose them carefully for the "moral" they can communicate.

But we shouldn't stop there, because when one presents a single vignette one can be accused of cherry picking – identifying only confirming instances – or of claiming generalization that is unwarranted. To anticipate such criticism we should also do something many of us do not usually bother to do, in reporting. That is to situate our single compelling vignette (or interview quote) in the context of the overall frequency distribution for events of that kind that we found in our study. So, for example, if we tell a vignette showing a child bored to tears and to fidgeting in a "drill and kill" remedial skill exercise, a child who the teacher suspects may be hyperactive or have an attention deficit disorder, we can show through simple frequency reporting how many other children were observed (on how many different occasions) in such skill exercises, what the full range of reactions to such a situation was by the children observed, and what the actual number of instances of each type of reaction were, as observed. And we can show the same teacher, and possibly additional ones, wondering if such kids are hyperactive. Don't just claim, "This circumstance happened a lot" –show the actual frequencies of observed occurrence. And be sure to report any instances observed that contradict the point you want to make.

In other words, don't make claims about "generalization within the case" without warranting the claims with clear evidence of relative frequency of observed occurrence. This kind of evidence-careful reporting, "hard-nosed" ethnography, is not a secret practice. It's been discussed in the research methods literature for some time (e.g., Erickson 1992; Schensul and LeCompte 1999).

The second point is more complex and controversial. The more I watch the current policy debates (within a utilitarian discourse frame of "efficiency and effectiveness" found now worldwide in the movement of "New Public Management"), the more it seems to me that the fundamental grounds of argumentation are flawed. Most important policy choices are not matters of efficiency or effectiveness. Rather, they involve basic value choices. Think of current examples: mother tongue instruction in bilingual education, equal (or larger)

[9] This section is excerpted from a paper presented at the 2007 AAA Meetings by Frederick Erickson, "What Anthropology of Education Could Say in Current Policy Discourse." Washington, DC, December 1, 2007.

expenditures of funds for inner-city schools, teaching subject matter for understanding rather than for mastery of low-level facts and skills, anti-racist curriculum and instructional practices, letting kids use calculators rather than requiring that they memorize the multiplication tables and do long division by hand, teaching about evolution, teaching the habits of the heart and mind that are foundational for democratic decision-making. Taking positions on each of these issues is not a matter of utilitarian "effectiveness" but of ideologically rooted value judgments. Sociocultural analysis can identify the ideologies beneath the various policy positions on a given issue. That is what we know how to do as anthropologists of education – we can't compete with those who make strong claims about evidence for effectiveness or efficiency.

Moreover, I am convinced that we should consider not trying to claim that the kind of policy-choice informing research we can do is "science" at all. Here I think of the work of Bent Flyvberg, a Danish political scientist and urban planner. In *Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How It Can Succeed Again* (Flyvberg 2001), he claims that the purpose of social inquiry to inform policy decisions should not be "scientific knowledge" – "episteme" (certain knowledge of things in general). Rather, what is needed is "prudential knowledge" – "phronesis." He calls this knowledge a virtue in that it supports right choices rather than wrong choices – good actions as distinguished from bad ones. Phronesis is situation-specific; it accurately assesses the local scene and local contingencies at work there, the particular power relations and interests that obtain among local social actors, and the value content of the choices being faced. Does this sound like good ethnographic case study?

Flyvberg says that as long as we keep trying in social inquiry to do the equivalent of social physics and chemistry we will always look like losers (our generalizations and predictions don't hold up). And what those who govern need is not scientific knowledge of things in general, but prudential knowledge of the particular circumstances at work in the setting for which they are trying to envision policy alternatives; they need to make custom-tailored policy decisions that fit exactly the situation at hand, not ill-fitting ones bought off the rack. Aristotle recognized long ago this need for particularity in social inquiry for purposes of informing governance decisions, and I believe we should rediscover it now. It will not be welcomed at the table of current policy discourse – but I believe it needs to be said there.

Toward Next Steps – Teresa L. McCarty, Arizona State University[10]

As problematic and complicated as its history, accomplishments, and challenges have been, the balance tilts in favor of educational anthropology's real and significant contributions to education policy and practice. As Fred Erickson points out in his contribution to this document, is still essential that anthropologists of education continue to do what they do best: Scratch beneath the surface of policies rendered neutral or invisible by the "legal-rational idioms in which they are portrayed" (Shore and Wright 1997) to document, through rigorous, "evidence-based" ethnographic research, the normative practices that construct and perpetuate inequities, thereby spotlighting the possibilities for positive change. At the same time, we must find more effective ways to insert ethnographic understandings into wider discourses of public

[10] This section is excerpted from a paper presented by Teresa L. McCarty at the 2007 AAA Annual Meetings, "Anthropology in U.S. Education Policy and Politics – From Desegregation to the New Segregation." Washington, DC (December 1, 2007).

engagement and praxis. This requires a vision of "culture" that confronts the diffuse power inequities that reify social hierarchies and the compensatory condition of federal education policy. It requires that we *act* on our research.

This Task Force, the Ad Hoc Committee on Educational Anthropology and Public Policy, and a session organized this year by Spindler Awardee Michele Foster, are positive steps forward. The next radical step, as Gloria Ladson-Billings suggests, involves each of us as citizen-anthropologists in our work with communities and schools. Our academic discourse needs to be aired outside the hotel salon rooms and in the boardrooms, courtrooms, and congressional hearing rooms where official policy formation takes place. In her work with urban schools in Chicago, Lipman (2005) provides a powerful example of a politically engaged ethnography aligned with teachers, students, and community members that has effectively resisted repressive local policies with global effects (see also Emihovich 2005). This work and that of so many in our sub-discipline demonstrate the promise of activist research in concert with community action, including organizations focused on youth development (see, e.g., Cammarota 2005; Cammarota and Cannella, this document).

Can ethnographic research "go beyond the status quo"? (Cazden 1983). Can we maneuver around and beyond what McDermott and Hall (2007:10) characterize as a "devitalization movement" which, by barring qualitative research from policymaking opportunities, bars new wisdom from entering the system? How can our research recapture the public imagination (Fordham 2004)? These are enormously challenging questions, and they beg the even more challenging one posed by John Ogbu some 30 years ago: Can an anti-racist education system emerge within a racist society? (Ogbu 1978:291).

There are no easy or comfortable answers. But in a political environment in which anthropological discourses are being appropriated to rationalize "color-blind" policies that legitimate a two-tier system of higher education, and where Nobel prize-winning scientists are resurrecting biologically-based bell curves, anthropologists – the intellectual and moral stewards of a science of racial equality – cannot stand silently by. This Task Force and the CAE's other social policy initiatives are important moves in the right direction. By working together and with diverse community constituents, we can ensure that the vast anthropological knowledge about learning, political race, and educational opportunity will not be "left behind."

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