Culturally Sustaining Assessment: Praxis To Advance Justice Against Isolation and Disconnection

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- Majority minority students
- No new major civil rights policies since 1970s
- Supreme Court rolling back school desegregation and voting rights
- U.S. unprepared to reconcile range of indicators in which minorities lag behind White Americans

(Cohn, 2016; Mordechay & Orfield, 2017)

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Limiting Educational Outcomes Across Difference

Education fails to support social justice

Chronic disconnections occur

Democratic participation diminishes

Leading to isolation and disempowerment

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Relational-Cultural Theory

People grow through and toward relationships across the lifespan.

Culture profoundly affects these relationships.
Significant Historical Time to Imagine Equity in Assessment

• Assessment intends to improve student learning (Erwin, 1991)
• If done without equity in mind, it can also

“privilege and validate certain types of learning over others, can hinder the validation of multiple means of demonstration, and can reinforce within students the false notion that they do not belong in higher education”

(Montenegro, Jankowski, & National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, 2017, p.5)
Asset-Based Pedagogies

• Draw on minoritized youth’s cultural funds of knowledge and frames of reference as strengths in the learning process (Jackson and Boutte, 2018)

• Promote cultural congruence to balance classroom power (Au & Mason, 1983; Irvine, 2002; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992)

• Centralizes authentic, rich cultural representation in learning as a means to invite minoritized students to engage in their education using culturally relevant/responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2009).

• Restoration of minoritized populations’ cultural values and mores is a key addition to the shift toward culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017)
Isolation is the glue that holds oppression in place. -Karen Liang

(Jordan, 2017, p. 231.)
Assessment in Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

(Paris & Alim, 2017)

Higher Education Assessment

- knowledge modalities of the minoritized cultures
- dominant perceptions of minoritized cultures

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Typology for Social Justice Assessment
(Hanesworth, Braken, & Elkington, 2018)

Institutional Transformation

- organizational vision of democratic and distributed leadership
- involving multiple stakeholders
- capacity building as an institutional priority
- new systems and processes exemplifying socially just assessments

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Social justice requires redistribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges.

• This is HARD.

• RCT provides a blueprint for mutuality, identifying boundaries as sites of interrogation.
Dominant groups determine what knowledge is valued and rank order expressions of that knowledge. Use power-over tactics to subordinate minoritized populations.

Power-with grows as it empowers others and stands in opposition to power-over, which accrues through directing and controlling others.
Interpersonal relationships must be leveraged to move institutional practices toward deconstructing hordes of power and knowledge valuation.

Relational-cultural theory provides a framework for the conversations, connections, disconnections, and resilience required for such work to operationalize social justice in assessment.
Thank you!

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References

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