

“Because We Do Not Know Their Way”: Standardizing Practices and Peoples through Habitus, the NCLB “Highly-Qualified” Mandate, and PRAXIS I Examinations

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Standardized testing, mandated by NCLB, can act as a barrier to prevent Indigenous students from entering teacher training programs and achieving “highly-qualified” certification upon exiting. Such regulations work against the nation-to-nation trust agreements that would place Indigenous teachers within Native school systems. Although experiencing difficulty, when these students analyze the epistemological underpinnings of standardized examinations, experience individualized writing instruction, and participate in exam preparation workshops, they can reach their immediate goals of teacher training as well as their long-term career goals of becoming educators in their home communities. Even under less than ideal circumstances, they can exercise self- and community-determination.

Introduction

Many scholars have demonstrated the psychological cost that participation in educational systems extracts from Native peoples from the time they enter them to the time they leave. While acknowledging the importance of attending to such possible psychic damage, Allan Luke (2004) renews an additional concern by insisting researchers not overlook the material consequence involved: primary and secondary dropout or graduation rates, post-secondary certificates/ degrees conferred, employment gained, and wages earned. Luke calls on scholars who study literacy as a social practice to conduct more fine-grained multi-level analyses of literacy discourses and practices. In a similar way, Teresa McCarty (2005) calls for a critical analysis of the “multilayered realities” experienced by “real people and institutions” regarding complex literacy practices.

Luke's contention is that only by uncovering how "micro and macro political-economic domains," intersect with home/school contexts (p. 334) can researchers determine "the degree to which literacy education as an official *modus operandi* . . . is simply a cover for cultural and linguistic homogenization and, indeed, political hegemony over indigenous peoples" (p. 332). McCarty's work compounds Luke's when she reminds us that rich and diverse literacy practices such as those found within Native communities are "imperiled" by federal and state regulations that require scripts, uniformity, and remediation (2005, p. xv). Such regulations work to standardize not only practices but peoples.

This article examines the consequences of cultural and linguistic standardization in pedagogical practice for American Indian/Alaskan Native students in the United States. It takes up Luke's (2004) and McCarty's (2005) assertions that educational policy and procedures, to varying degrees, normalize European-American dominance at the material expense of persons of color to the degree that they can be prevented from achieving their educational and career goals. Specifically, this article unpacks the implications of literacy discourses surrounding high stakes entrance examinations for Native populations who desire admittance into teacher education programs — examinations mandated under the "highly qualified" construct of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). This federally mandated program of standardized testing works against the nation-to-nation trust agreements that would place Indigenous teachers within Native school systems. Utilizing Bourdieu's (1987) notion of *habitus* as a theoretical frame and Bennett, McWhorter, and Kuykendall's (2006) longitudinal study of teacher training for underrepresented students as a springboard, this article discusses the experiences of Native students in an American Indian teacher-training program at a large university in the Intermountain West. To maintain privacy, the names of both the program and the teacher trainees who participate in it have been changed.

The purpose of this article is to suggest that requiring students pass PRAXIS I examinations before or upon entering teacher education programs is at best a difficult but surmountable gate-keeping practice and at worst a culturally and linguistically hegemonic practice that blocks American Indians' access to teacher education programs. The cultural bias inherent in standardized testing such as PRAXIS I impedes these students' success in attaining highly-qualified certification and consequently their ability to more fully enact self- and community-determination through employment gained and wages earned. For the purposes of this article, I take self- and community-determination to mean the ability to choose, despite power differentials, which courses of action — socially, politically, economically, and educationally — are best and then operationalize those actions for highest benefit. As the program in the Intermountain West demonstrates, Native students accrue benefit when they gain the necessary capital to meet their specific academic, social, and financial needs. Although experiencing difficulty, when these students analyze the epistemological underpinnings of standardized examinations, experience individualized writing

instruction, and participate in exam preparation workshops, they can reach their immediate goals of teacher training as well as their long-term career goals of becoming certified educators in their home communities.

Dissonance

As an example of intersecting micro and macro domains such as Luke mentions, consider the following two scenarios of cultural dissonance with their possible material consequences. Scenario one: On the first day of a new semester, a foreign exchange student from Germany enters a U.S. university writing classroom. As an introduction to the course, the instructor asks all students to write out the procedure for scrambling eggs. The instructor intends this in-class assignment to be a fun way to attend to basic rhetorical skills of audience, purpose, and perspective. Most students smile and gamely begin writing. The student from Germany looks around, embarrassed. *Scrambled eggs? What does that mean?* She speaks fairly fluent English. She has completed many writing assignments before this one, but today she cannot complete the task because she is not familiar with the concept. Her sheet of paper remains blank (Anna, January 11, 2006, personal communication).

Scenario two: An American Indian elementary school teacher and her students practice to take a national basic skills test. Together, they confront a mathematical story problem concerning a farmer needing to paint six sections of fence. Twenty-eight eighth graders draw six squares on their scratch papers and then sit puzzled. *What does a "section of fence" mean?* On the reservation where they live family land is allotted in sections, but fences are typically constructed of barbed wire. Fences, in the students' experience, are not *sections* of wood or vinyl. They cannot figure out the answer to the problem because they are not familiar with the cultural setting (Gayle, January 8, 2006, personal communication).

As these examples demonstrate, all knowledge — even that considered “basic” to discourse — is socially and culturally constructed. Meaning is specific to local context. Yet, in both scenarios teachers and students bump up against assumptions of supposed universal knowledge in testing situations: audience and purpose in the first case and geography and area in the second. Assuming basic or common knowledge in these two instances had consequences that impacted students at the moment and might have consequences for them and their communities in the future. Perhaps the first case is more benign. The student had already achieved access to the university and despite experiencing curriculum through English as a second language, she felt comfortable enough in the classroom to quickly move past a minor setback. It was a low-stakes assignment, after all. In the second case, once the teacher explained the “sections of fence” concept, students were able to complete the problem. Tellingly, however, in the second instance the students groaned about how “stupid” they were not to have known what “sections of fence” meant beforehand, even though they had never experienced such a phenomenon, or had only been exposed to it abstractly. Their teacher interprets the situation this way:

I told them not to blame themselves [but] they often do that. They will make comments like, that, sometimes, they have no excuse . . . [T]hey tell me stories from fourth grade when they learned that and they should [have] known, but they always blame themselves for not knowing . . . Somehow we are taught to blame ourselves for not knowing what the rest of the world knows. But I understand where this comes from. I hear how teachers. . . compare us to the rest of White America and how we should know these things and from then on we feel like we have to catch up to the rest of America because we do not know their way. (Gayle, January 8, 2006, personal communication)

The ability to “know” in these two scenarios is not dependent upon intellectual ability; the knowledge represented is neither basic nor universal. In testing situations, the way students acquire and demonstrate knowledge has cultural and racialized implications. Federally mandated testing situations, like those required by NCLB, aggravate the dissonance experienced by Indigenous students. Regardless of either hegemonic aim or absence of intention, deep issues of language and power are at work within educational settings.

Language, Power, and Habitus

Scholarly investigations into the relationship between language and power have made important contributions to knowledge of how and why language is used in educational settings (Collins, 1993, Fairclough, 1989; Ivanic, 1998; Lea & Street, 1999; Shaafsma, 1998). They have informed educators’ understanding of how power is simultaneously extended to and withheld from certain populations under certain circumstances. They also indicate that the obstacles students of color face upon trying to gain entrance into disciplinary communities within academia, with their particular values and rules for behavior and interpretation, are daunting. Students are expected to already know or quickly come to know established cultural and discursive conventions, which are implicit to insiders. So engrained are these conventions that they seem to require no explicit instruction (see Baquedano-López, 2000; Heath, 2001; and Philips, 2001 on socialization practices). The “rules” are invisible to those who have a place within the dominant structure of power and who have already experienced its accouterments (Delpit 1997) because they are strongly embedded in the collective educational psyche. This, as Bourdieu (1977) suggests, is an example of educational habitus.

Habitus, Bourdieu (1977) asserts, is an embodied state, a “system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of *perceptions*, *appreciations*, and *actions* and make possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks” (p. 83). It is assumed that all people acquire valuable credit (information) through participation in educational systems, which is then converted into economic gain in the form of employment. According to Bourdieu (1987), however, that simple exchange does not account for how social factors such as race and culture influence the ways one does or does not access the system in the first place. Nor does it acknowledge the symbolic power attached to the right to name what constitutes legitimate

knowledge in relation to those factors. Teacher education programs do not so much assist those who have less cultural capital acquire more, as *reward* those who *already have* a significant amount and then help them acquire *additional* status and privilege. In this way, Bourdieu (1986) reminds us, the “structure of the distribution of the different types and subtypes of capital at a given moment in time represents the immanent structure of the social world” (p. 241). Because this is so, culturally implicated differences, as Swartz (1997) says, “shape academic achievement and occupational attainment” (p. 190), a situation often overlooked when teacher education programs attempt to fulfill NCLB requirements.

The power asserted by those with cultural capital is effectively demonstrated when we look at the effect of NCLB on elementary education teacher training programs. One key provision affects teacher-training programs in that it mandates “highly qualified” teachers. In a general sense, according to the authoritative governmental resource, *NCLB: A toolkit for teachers*, this means that potential teachers must have a bachelor’s degree and full state certification, but it specifically means teachers must demonstrate “competency, as defined by the state, in each core academic subject he or she teaches” (U.S. Department of Education [USDE], 2007, p. 8). The *toolkit for teachers* emphasizes that the federal government accords “significant flexibility” to states in implementing the ways existing teachers may demonstrate competency (p. 10). That flexibility, however, only applies to existing or experienced teachers. As the guidelines state, standardized testing is required of *all potential* elementary teachers (USDE, 2007, p. 12, emphasis added). The only option given by state governments to higher education institutions is whether to test potential teachers as an institutional determinant, thus qualifying the candidate for admission into a particular teacher-training program, or whether to admit, teach, and then test when candidates exit the program.

PRAXIS I

The test primarily used as a determinant is the Educational Testing Services’ (ETS) Pre-Professional Skills Assessments or PRAXIS I test. According to ETS (2007), PRAXIS I is used to “measure *basic* skills in reading, writing, and mathematics” and to evaluate individuals for entry into teacher education programs (<http://www.ets.org/praxis>, emphasis added). It is offered in either computer- or paper-based format. According to the PRAXIS Overview (2007), the combined, computer-based test is 4.5 hours long, with a 15-minute break midway. The time limit for each section is as follows: reading (75 minutes), mathematics (75 minutes), writing (38 minutes), and (essay) writing (30 minutes) (<http://www.ets.org/praxis/portal>). The Overview cautions test takers to “pace” themselves because their score will be based on the number of questions answered correctly (<http://www.ets.org/praxis/portal>). Considering the time allowed, PRAXIS I test takers have very little time to consider answers. Although extra time is given to students who qualify as second language speakers, the exam

context presupposes native English-speaking skills and conventional writing proficiency. It assumes a high-quality K-12 educational background, which in turn presumes fluent knowledge of predominantly White cultural norms and terminology (Bennett, et al., 2006, p. 535; see also Kantor & Lowe, 2006, p. 486).

Such criteria are not equally available for all students. Banks (2001) notes that 28 percent of the U.S. population is made up of people of color “with the numbers expected to grow to 38% in 2024 and 47% in 2050” (cited in McCarty, 2005, p. xvi). Additionally, significant proportions are “English language learners who speak more than 150 languages” (Banks, cited in McCarty, 2005, p. xvi). Indeed, Suárez-Orozco (2001) claims that “more than 3.5 million English language learners are presently enrolled in U.S. schools” (cited in McCarty, 2005, p. xvi). Defining PRAXIS I as an evaluation of basic skills under these terms seems to belie reality for a good portion of that total student body, and consequently for those students attempting to enter the field of elementary education in the future. It assumes a high percentage of persons of color with enough cultural and linguistic capital to graduate from secondary institutions, qualify to enter university systems, and then remain in them long enough to apply for upper-division programs.

Some teacher training programs specifically recruit underrepresented, minoritized students into the field of education. Indiana University’s merit-based academic support program is one example. Instituted in 1997 within the School of Education, its target population is students who wish to teach in urban or culturally diverse suburban schools. Its goal is to “increase the number and strengthen the preparation of preservice teachers of color who will teach in those areas” (Bennett et al., 2005, p. 533). From 1997 to 2001, the rate of acceptance into the program was 81 percent. With the advent of NCLB, new students were required to take and pass PRAXIS I examinations upon entrance. At that point, the number of students admitted into the program dropped to 36 percent. Several factors account for the decrease, including a change in the ETS format of the PRAXIS, raising the “cut” or passing score of the test, omitting equivalency options, and changing from exit to entrance examinations. It is important to note a continuing need to call any standardized test into question (see Freedle, 2003; National Research Council, 1999). As Anastasi (1988) states, “No single test can be universally applicable or equally ‘fair’ to all cultures, and every test tends to favor individuals from the culture in which it was developed” (cited in Bennett et al., 2005 p. 541). Furthermore, such tests do not predict teaching performance. The Indiana researchers found that while there is great diversity within “minority student” admission test phenomena, there are also similarities. They note that increased admission test scores tend to bar minority student access to teacher training programs. They also note that SAT scores predict PRAXIS I success (making PRAXIS I redundant) and that test success is connected to race, culture, class, and gender. Most importantly, they found that intervention preparation is effective (Bennett et al., 2005).

PRAXIS I and Teacher Training Programs for American Indians

In research concerning Indigenous populations, it is important to underscore the connection between policy at the federal level and practices on the state and local level. Title VII of NCLB (20 USC 7401) declares, "It is the policy of the United States to fulfill the federal Government's unique and continuing trust relationship with and responsibility to the Indian people for the education of Indian children" (NCLB, 2002, p. 115 STAT. 1907). Title VII (NCLB, 20 USC 7402) therefore relates to the improvement of educational opportunities for Indian children in that the federal government commits to "the training of Indian persons as educators and counselors and in other professions serving Indian people" (NCLB, 2002, p. 115, STAT. 1908). With these provisions, professional training grant money from the United States Department of Education's Office of Indian Education has been made available. In 2002, three colleagues in the Department of Education of a large research university in the Intermountain West applied for these grant monies and consequently developed a center for the study of empowered students of color and within it a teacher training program for American Indians (TTAI).

The TTAI program prepares American Indians/Alaskan Natives to become educators in their home communities. After undergoing a careful selection process, 12 students each year enter educational programs such as teaching and learning, educational psychology, and special education. While pursuing degrees, they receive tuition, a stipend, a laptop computer, and a printer for use while in the program. They are provided health insurance, dependent assistance, books, training fees, tutoring services, closely supervised programs, and moving expenses. The hope is that students will be able to focus more completely on their studies if financial, academic, social, and emotional concerns are minimized. In return, participating students must teach in Indian-serving schools (as defined by the Office of Indian Education) for the same number of months they receive educational support. Because this is a "payback" program, if they fail to achieve licensure they must reimburse the federal government for services received during the program. This is, of course, a financial risk to students, their communities, and the institutions that support them. Consequently, it is imperative that they accomplish all the steps that lead to certification. Fortunately, their qualifications make this very likely, but not easy.

Swartz's (1997) reading of Bourdieu, which suggests that education's primary function is to "conserve, inculcate, and consecrate [dominant] cultural heritage," informs the data I collected as a researcher at the TTAI site (p. 190). "Dominant" is an addition to the quote, but even without the insertion it is understood to which culture the line refers, that is, Euro-Western cultural heritage. I became involved with the TTAI program in the summer of 2006 when I was hired as a research assistant, writing instructor, and mentor. My experiences as a person of the dominant culture working with Indigenous teachers-in-training have led me to engage in critical ethnography. I question whether policies and

practices that are theoretically informed by White, mostly male, middle-class, urban, Euro-Western axiology and epistemology can adequately serve non-White, typically female, working-class, rural, Indigenous teacher trainees. Like Carspecken (1996), I find such policies and practices often “unfair, unequal, and both subtly and overtly oppressive for many people” (p. 7). Yet I have discovered that students and allies in programs like TTAI might problematize these policies and practices to effect change.

My research at this site originally focused on the ways this group of teacher trainees approach and complete writing assignments within the rather exacting parameters of institutional and departmental conventions. Having been a teacher of university-level writing courses for the past nine years at a variety of institutions, I came to this site with questions concerning how writing theory and practice intersect with explicit social justice platforms within systems of higher education. Research for the study presented in this article is designed to look at such intersections but is particularly focused on the writing of PRAXIS I exams. These are cause for increasing concern because of how NCLB policy in this regard impacts students participating in the TTAI program. Specifically, I was interested in documenting the ways in which these students react to situations of imposed power as asserted by those with cultural capital. I hoped to find enactments of self-determination.

Notions of self-determination are especially salient at this research site, considering research that demonstrates a correlation between the school success of American Indian/Alaska Native students and their having been taught by teachers with a similar community heritage (Klug & Whitfield, 2003). Whereas, according to NCLB, the definition of a highly qualified teacher is all about competency in academic content, most TTAI teacher trainees exercise self- and ultimately community-determination by asserting in their “teaching philosophy” statements that highly qualified means taking a child’s culture and community into consideration. One teacher trainee writes in her statement that, “Parents are the first and primary educator[s] and it is important to establish a relationship with them.” Teachers, she asserts, must maintain an “open door policy” and must “play a role in community events.” They must accept invitations to attend and participate in community celebrations and religious activities because “[i]t is important for students to see educators as part of the community to which they belong.” This is the way, she believes, to ensure that “*every child* is receiving the best possible education” (emphasis added). These statements reflect a firm stance concerning the priority of relationships in educational settings. It is ironic, then, that a federally mandated and state implemented testing program designed to boost the success of every child would actually work against facilitating it, not only in the educator-to-community relationships the teacher trainee mentions but also in the nation-to-nation trust relationships that govern the placements of just those teachers in those schools. The cultural bias inherent in standardized testing such as PRAXIS I, which requires that students pass such tests before entering a

program designed to help them achieve success, impinges on students' abilities to succeed as highly qualified educators in their communities.

To counteract such bias, faculty directors, research assistants, and staff members in the program work hard to provide access to every possible resource that will contribute to teacher trainee success within the cultural milieu of the university. We periodically schedule in-house training on issues that impact students' abilities to effectively complete requirements. A colleague and I, for example, co-teach a Writing, Research, and Epistemology seminar during the summer prior to students beginning regular course work. In this seminar, we discuss standardized writing conventions, intending to help students increase their skill level in terms of usage but also to demystify the axiological and epistemological leanings underpinning such conventions. When students understand that (sub)ordinate syntax, for example, is inherited from Greek structures far different from those they themselves value and experience, they can eventually make choices about syntactical inversions and call deliberate attention to power structures. They can begin to note social, political, and economic relationships as revealed in syntactic relationships: (sub)junctions, (con)junctions, and (ad)junctions. When employing research conventions, they begin to understand that disciplinary formats are employed to indicate membership and authority within a specified academic community. They can then use such features to advance their own participatory power. And when they make a conscious choice to privilege and cite Indigenous scholars in their academic pursuits, they can advance the power of their Native communities.

We also find it beneficial for students to participate in a PRAXIS I intervention preparation workshop. This seven-week workshop is instituted each fall semester to help TTAI students prepare for the English and Writing components of the examination required of all potential teachers-in-training. We teach (and students practice) scanning for reading comprehension. We introduce multiple-choice strategies, and the "five-paragraph-essay." When necessary, we teach vocabulary, punctuation, word choice, and parallelism, and groan over idiomatic phrases. We teach students how they should pace themselves to cover the most ground within the allocated time. During the workshops, students write numerous practice essays and take many practice tests. The critical goal, as we see it, is to help them learn how to pass the exam but do as little harm as possible in the undertaking.

Having worked together during the summer seminar and fall PRAXIS I workshop, as well as having interacted during one-on-one writing tutorials for a year, the teacher trainees and I are becoming familiar with a shared history that necessitates an ethics of care, interdependency, and responsibility. I am a North American White woman who grew up on a cattle ranch in rural Idaho situated within Shoshone and Bannock territory. As a first-generation college student, I have spent a good portion of my life closely tied to educational institutions. American Indian teacher trainees in the TTAI program also come from mostly rural tribal lands from Montana to Minnesota. Most are also the

first of their families to attend college, and each cohort brings a different configuration of languages and backgrounds with them. At this site, I am hired to bring academic insider knowledge from dual disciplines to bear on weighty issues that impact Indigenous students. I know, however, that in this community I am an outsider. Therefore, I try to listen and observe well as I attempt to become a better ally. Malea Powell (2004) reasons that allies must “share some understanding of one another’s beliefs” (p. 42). This includes unpacking the belief systems underlying governmental and institutional policy and practice decisions. Educators in my position have a federal mandate to provide instruction that facilitates student ability to participate in dominant systems, but also a moral mandate to facilitate critical questioning of policies, procedures, forms, and conventions that attempt to constrain Indigenous knowledge and practice within those same systems.

Many students in the TTAI program find the Euro-Western emphasis on individual, competitive, scientific empiricism at odds with their home communities’ values, which emphasize collective, cooperative, spiritual epistemology (see Battiste 2002; Medicine, 2001; Yazzie Burkhart, 2004). And much learning in the university is defined by separation and differentiation: in the structure of disciplines and departments; in the dividing or valuing line between what is considered physical versus metaphysical evidence; in the nature of classrooms, assignments, and assessments; in what counts as participation (see Brayboy, 2005) or legitimate distress (see Brayboy, 2004). Consequently, students can experience anxiety (Steele, 1997) and their work can suffer to greater or lesser degrees. One teacher trainee expresses it this way: “[I]t’s just a given that based on the way people are reared and their culture, that there are differences.” Another says, “As a student at the university and school of education . . . I didn’t see people like me. . . . [Y]ou know, you have anxiety when you don’t have anyone that you can relate to.”

Cultural Capital and the Regulated Body

In the evaluation game of PRAXIS I, NCLB and ETS participate in exercising a dominant cultural authority to which Native teacher trainees must generally submit. A paper recently forwarded to me via email from one of the trainees provides the textual realization for this fact. She thought it might be helpful for my tutorials, since others in the program will also take the same course. Upon opening the attachment, teacher comments were the first thing visible. They were underlined (indicative of the “track changes” feature of computer response), in CAPS, and in red font color. The comments, on their own, fairly shouted; they didn’t need triple question marks for emphasis, but there they were. Scrolling through the paper, I looked at all the words and phrases “struck through.” Where the student had written “falls into two categories,” the instructor had substituted “can be classified into two main categories.” Where she had written “good,” he asked for “critical.” The word “has” was replaced with “exhibits.” None of these changes were of great importance; none changed the intent of the sentences, and none were

crucial to conveying content. It was simply a matter of indicating words/phrases the instructor felt “sounded better.” I thought of the students’ struggles with the word choice aspect of PRAXIS I and shook my head. In the paper were also corrections of idiom, (“in regards to” / “with regard to”), which according to *Merriam Webster’s Dictionary of English Usage* have been matters of opinion since 1916. And there was this as well: “NEED TO LOOK AT BREAKING UP ‘RUN-ON’ SENTENCES INTO SHORTER, MORE CONCISE ONES,” even though the sentence involved was correct — long, but correct.

The game, it seems, hinges on how one is culturally positioned even though it is couched as only concerned with the “accuracy and effectiveness of expression” following “the rules of *standard* written English” (Palmer, 2006, p. 184, emphasis added). That is, it is understood that students should construct “effective” sentences using correct “grammar, choice of words, sentence construction, and punctuation” (p. 184). Their answers should be “clear and precise, with no awkwardness or ambiguity” (p. 184). That is a pretty tall order, and the ability to fill it is undermined when one’s delivery is constantly, and negatively, scrutinized or when the rules or expectations upon which delivery rest unpredictably shift. Students might question the instructor’s authority, and they certainly resist it in my presence, but they know they have a long game to play and, therefore, strategically acquiesce. According to Bourdieu (1977), “practical mastery of grammar is nothing without mastery of the conditions for adequate use of the infinite possibilities offered by grammar” (p. 646). What gets taken up or ignored, as well as whose speech is “believed, obeyed, [and/or] respected” (p. 647), is determined by relations of power.

One must consider power’s influence, then, to make sense of PRAXIS I examinations. Language use in the form of entrance examinations within teacher education programs is normalized by the dominant group so that only *its* particular usage is acceptable. Legitimate discourse in teacher training programs entails a recognized speaker (White, Euro-Western) who utters appropriate (grammatically correct) speech in a legitimate form (North American English) for an appropriate situation (examination and, ultimately, teaching). When the speaker entering academic discourse is Native, and therefore racially hyper-recognized, discursive examinations become an unwarranted hyper-corrective site. I say unwarranted because while some believe standardized English conventions are low-order concerns that should come naturally, many composition scholars suggest the opposite (Horner & Lu, 1999; Matsuda et al., 2006). Fluency in this area demonstrates the highest level of proficiency.

A recent exchange between a TTIA student and her disciplinary instructor illustrates the point about hyper-recognition and correction. The student was told she needed to pay better attention to her use of articles, defining those articles as “a,” “the,” and “is.” This presented some real difficulties because there are only three articles in the English language: a, an, and the. “Is” is a verb. In going over her paper, we found that her use of articles was perfect throughout. As my colleague explains,

This is a particular accomplishment because in the student's native language, there are no articles. Sometimes the subject of a sentence, "student," is followed by a prepositional phrase, "with disabilities." This can create confusion in subject/verb agreement because "disabilities" is plural while student is singular. If the subject is student, the verb form should be "is." If the subject is students, the verb form should be "are." This student received direction from a faculty member that her use of "is" in just such a sentence was incorrect. However, the subject of the sentence was student, which is singular. Thus, her use of "is" was correct. (E. Maughan, February 12, 2007, personal communication)

One would think that within teacher training disciplines a student's ability to demonstrate content knowledge would take precedence; instead, instructors focus on what appears easiest to correct. And because even people with no second-language influence often have difficulty with grammar and punctuation, instructors can then "miscorrect," (Maughan, 2007) as easily as correct, which confuses the issue of PRAXIS I preparation intervention. Combine this situation with the widely circulating notion that knowing Standard English grammar/punctuation increases and hence *indicates* one's ability to think (see Mulroy, 2003), and we have a site of disadvantage, of discrimination.

The attempt by dominant educational institutions to standardize is accomplished in two ways: by imposition and by self-regulation. When exams like PRAXIS I regulate teacher-training programs, students may learn to internalize Foucaultian panoptical gaze, training the gaze not only on themselves but also on their fellow students. As in the "sections of fence" scenario, they believe there is "no excuse," when their cultural knowledge does not match up with dominant expectations or values. Somehow, they (an Indigenous collective in this case) believe they "should have known" better. It's a round-robin blame game. First, the finger of blame is pointed at them. Then, they point the blame toward themselves. Finally, they direct blame to others in similar situations. This violence happens early and often and because of it, they may come to believe, as one TTIA student recently professed, that the only way for them to become "good" teachers is to "always speak correctly," to "master" a standardized English and teach that standard in their future classrooms. In this way, imposed control becomes invisible, becomes self-discipline, self-surveillance, and produces a "standardized," student (Farrell, 2000, p. 25).

Those for whom educational discourse occurs as habitus rarely question or consider how language is used to create and/or maintain power relationships. Yet, as Ochs and Schieffelin (2001) suggest, educators and researchers need to "reinterpret behaviors as cultural that have [been] assumed to be natural" (p. 270). When some people seem to continually experience educational success and others do not, it can impact the way these "others" feel about their own abilities. These feelings are apparent in questions asked by TTAI teacher trainees during PRAXIS I preparation intervention: "I know you tell us not to worry, that these are not transferable skills, but doesn't [PRAXIS] test skills you need to have?" "Are these tests getting harder?" "How much will it cost to retake [the exam]?" and, most

tellingly, “What if I’m the only one who doesn’t pass?” As Carrington and Luke (1992) suggest, habitus can constitute persistent though “largely unconscious ideas about one’s chances of success [. . . that . . .] lead individuals to act in such as way as to reproduce the prevailing structure of life chances and social distinctions” (p. 197). Students whose life experiences allow them to expect they will succeed in academic endeavors generally will. Students who have internalized institutional or culturally imposed limitations to these endeavors can be expected, in some measure, to reproduce limited educational outcomes.

From the time they are small, students whose backgrounds differ from the dominant ones are told by educational authorities and general public discourse that if they do not speak or write “correctly,” they will do poorly in school. When correctly means “not like the rest of your home community,” students may feel a need to choose between one and the other. Under these circumstances, they may capitulate and be seen as becoming “White,” or they may retreat into silence and be seen as recalcitrant. Of the seven teacher trainees participating in the 2006 preparation intervention class, three were quick to take (and pass) the exam. These three are considered by some in the program to be the most “White-identified” of the group. The remaining four waited until spring 2007 to take the exam. Of these four, one never attended the workshop, one began with the rest but opted to discontinue, one expressed desire to practice with everyone but did so sporadically, and one was present but remained silent instead of participatory. Across all educational levels and modes of engagement, the same “choices” play out. The more tension surrounding institutional and discursive norms and the ability to produce them — circumstances aggravated by the “highly-qualified” definitions in NCLB — the more teachers in training, for example, exercise linguistic restraint, and practice discursive self-surveillance.

Eventually, the four who experienced the most anxiety passed as well. It is important, therefore, to remember that teachers-in-training can navigate discursive situations with quite sophisticated understanding. Even within teacher training settings, curriculum is in some sense negotiated rather than imposed because students are “never completely passive” (Schaafsma, 1998, p. 264) as they receive their training. As suggested earlier, students can exhibit more identity control, more plurality and complexity than might be expected under the circumstances. Lyons (2000) would call this exerting “rhetorical sovereignty,” which he defines as the “right and ability of *peoples* to determine their own communicative needs and desires . . . [and] to decide for themselves the goals, modes, styles, and languages of public discourse” (pp. 449-450). A teacher trainee recently demonstrated this decision-making capacity. When pressed by an instructor to speak up during a cohort workshop she calmly and confidently explained: “I’m not usually vocal. I learn from listening to discussion. If I have questions, I ask at another time.” One could advocate that teacher trainees learn to use standard discourse strategically, so that it will serve their purposes. Determinism can, in this way, be upturned in favor of possible agency.

However, strategic use is easier said than done, as it must be enacted within a larger frame of habitus — long-term dispositions toward language as structured by dominant institutions. Although in the example the student stated her desire to control the goal, mode, and style of her own learning processes, the instructor had the institutional authority to command the final outcome. She, standing and walking with purposeful energy closer to where the student was sitting, looked directly at the student, forced eye contact, and insisted, “Well, this is the time.” As this one brief interchange demonstrates, it is possible to vary one’s acceptability factors (consciously or unconsciously) in accordance with the situation’s demands, but legitimacy is stratified according to the degree one deviates from or adheres to the norm.

Conclusion

It is impossible to consider the cultural capital currently denied underrepresented, Indigenous students without remembering history and thinking toward the future. We must remember that in 1928, a survey of Indian affairs ordered by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior reported deplorable educational conditions for Native youth (Merriam et al., 1928; in Tyee Clark, 2004, p. 227). Sixty-three years later in 1991, the report *Indian Nations at Risk* indicated, “schools [still] failed to educate Indigenous children” (Tyee Clark, 2004, p. 227). In 1995, the National Center for Educational Statistics reported, “60% of American Indian students do not graduate” (cited in Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002, p. 282). According to a 2000-2001 joint report of Minneapolis state data, American Indian enrollment was down, one out of every four American Indians was suspended during the school year, dropout rates “exceed[ed] twelve percent,” and achievement on basic skills tests was lowest among American Indian students . . . [R]oughly 50,000 students” underperformed (cited in Tyee Clark, 2004, p. 228). Finally, according to the National Education Association (2008), “only 11 percent of American Indians have a college diploma compared to 27 percent of all other Americans.

Today, as NCLB comes up for reauthorization, we realize it too has contributed to the miseducation of American Indian/Alaska Native populations. It has left many staggering under the weight of a universal mandate to test: test children, test schools, test teachers-in-training. What has been touted as arising from “scientifically-based research” and calling for standardized curriculum and testing (O’Neill, 2004) has produced a disregard for local context and community competency. Such methods are often employed to categorize and divide, to indicate conclusively that something or someone is right and, hence, any other option or person is wrong. In this way, Euro-Western theory and method become constructed as holding the power of authority. While this is not a positive state of affairs for anyone, it consistently has more detrimental ramifications for those whose traditions are considered outside Euro-Western norms. In this regard, educational policy has failed to consider some very real consequences. It is a cultural clash, but one that is fortunately more likely to evoke a response like that

of one Native teacher trainee who says, “I hold on to my cultural values, to my spirituality, to my traditional way of life . . . I live the values of the Arapaho.” In this way, says another, “[w]e can help bring new ideas and stop the assumptions and generalizations about American Indian education. We’re there for anyone who has to step up to the challenge of learning a dominant culture and succeeding in it.”

When Luke (2004) exhorts researchers, then, to imagine what literacy discourses and practices might look like, he is asking us to consider the various ways ensembles can, do, or should overlap and intersect “in the face of new forms of linguistic and cultural hegemony and persistent questions about the impact of modernity on indigenous and local communities” (p. 334). It is a move from considering the way dominance is established through overt colonization to how it is reestablished more subtly through governmental policy like NCLB. Teacher education programs for underrepresented students wield tremendous power, benefiting some and negatively impacting others. Because we are concerned with the way society correlates language and power, it is important to interrogate how educational policy and institutionalized practice wield power through valuing a particular cultural capital instantiated in Euro-Western ways of valuing and knowing. Adequate funding, professional development for teachers, and differentiated/multiple/authentic/locally-developed assessments are important components that might make programs like NCLB better, but until we also acknowledge specific racialized components arising from competency discourse, education will not be much improved.

Although NCLB purports to value “highly qualified” teachers, the way this term is defined and enacted in the case of Indigenous educators can actually work to “drive out” those who might be our “strongest” and “most creative” teachers (Kantor & Lowe, p. 484). As McCarty (2005) indicates, “linguistic and cultural diversity is imperiled by national and transnational forces that work to homogenize and standardize, even as they stratify and marginalize” (p. xv). Under the guise of proffered inclusion and increased capital, PRAXIS I examinations can work to exclude specific populations by withdrawing the possibility of active student participation in elite programs, acquisition of degree certification, jobs within the field, and ultimately, economic stability. We cannot ignore the homogenizing effect of examinations that privilege mainstream White cultural values and experiences. We must continue to trouble standardization until we have more Indigenous students admitted into teacher education programs, more Indigenous teachers who can effectively advocate for students in their home communities, and ultimately more Indigenous communities who can determine what knowledges will be respected and values upheld in the schools that serve them.

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