Chapter 1

Introduction: Intersectionality Related to Race, Ethnicity, Class and Gender

Norvella P. Carter

In 2016, several presenters at the American Educational Research Association annual meeting focused on the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, class and gender. The presentations were unique, because the scholars applied an intersectionality approach that investigated the schooling effects of identification based on race, ethnicity, class, and gender in relation to teaching and teacher education. The presenters translated their work into this volume. Rather than an emphasis on theorizing models of intersectionality, this research collection brings together scholarship that has applied an intersectionality methodology to conditions that affect public school children, teachers and teacher educators. Therefore, this book examines teaching and learning experiences in relation to intersectionality of group identities that include interactions with institutional systems of power and privilege.

Conceptually this book is influenced by the intersectionality scholarship of Crenshaw (1993), critical race theorist and legal scholar. Intersectionality provided chapter authors a methodology to examine group identities for their differences and experiences of oppression, and also for differences within groups that contribute to conflicts among groups (Bright, Malinsky, & Thompson, 2016). This approach allowed authors to move beyond “single-axis thinking” that “undermines legal thinking, disciplinary knowledge production, and struggles for social justice” (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013, p. 787).

Crenshaw (1993) refers to three types of intersectionality. First, there is structural intersectionality which for our purposes, refers to the way in which students of color “are situated within overlapping structures of subordination” (p. 114). Secondly, there is political intersectionality which can refer to the way people of color or of low income are ignored in discussions about race, class or gender (Crenshaw, 1993). Finally, representational intersectionality uses race, [ethnicity, class] and gender stereotypes to frame images of people of color (1993).

Intersectionality in this collection helps complicate commonsense, one-dimensional mainstream notions of race, ethnicity, class, and gender in education by subverting standard assertions of essentialized identities.
Intersectionality is critical because so often these components are excluded from important conversations regarding equality and equity. Our lives are enriched by the lives and experiences of people who have multiple aspects that make up their identity. Furthermore, marginalization and oppression is both complicated and compounded when we refuse to acknowledge all of the variables that comprise one group of people.

The intersectionality research presented serves as “an analytic sensibility” to address “larger ideological structures in which subjects, problems, and solutions were framed” (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013, pp. 791, 795). Consequently, this book examines teaching and learning experiences in relation to intersectionality of group identities that include interactions with institutional systems of power and privilege.

1 Movement toward Equity in Teaching and Teacher Education

Historically, a pivotal time in our nation’s history was the *Plessey v. Ferguson* (1896) U.S. Supreme Court decision. This was a significant time, because it had been documented that people were “open-minded” to the Supreme Court’s decision and were ready to accept whatever was mandated by the “law of the land.” When the Supreme Court ruled that “separate, but equal” was legal, this law was implanted in the hearts of the people. Decades later, in 1954 when the ruling in the case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) reversed the decision, it was too late, the hearts of the people had already accepted the discriminatory view. A movement of resistance and resentment to equity became infused throughout our society.

Currently we are still waging a battle for equity and fairness, which includes schooling and our educational process. Coleman, in his seminal study known as the “Coleman Report,” helped move the concept of equality of educational opportunity forward by documenting the moral and ethical issues that were raised by group-based inequality in educational outcomes (Coleman et al., 1966). More recently Field, Kuczera, and Point (2007) generally define equity in education as a combination of fairness and inclusion. They relate fairness to ensuring that people do not encounter irrelevant obstacles toward achieving their human potential and inclusion as the existence of a minimum standard of education that is guaranteed for everyone.

According to Secada (2012), it was during the decades of the 1970s and 1980s that educators began to use the term equity. Burbules, Lord, and Sherman (1982) tracked the history, but simply referred to equity as fair or fairness in terms of treatment of others. Equity was different than equality (giving everyone the same), whereas, equity moved beyond sameness to giving everyone what