From Reading to Restoration: Using Book Clubs and Critical Dialogue to Challenge, Critique, and Change Us and Our Work

Lay-nah Blue Morris-Howe
University of Wyoming
U.S.A.

Cynthia H. Brock
University of Wyoming
U.S.A.

Kate Welsh
Exploratorium
San Francisco, U.S.A.

Aldora White Eagle
University of Colorado Denver
U.S.A.

ABSTRACT: This transformative autoethnography focuses on the authors' learning about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) as a result of their participation in university diversity-related book clubs and subsequent extensive dialogue with one another. The paper features three implementation vignettes where the authors engage in critical self-reflection and self-critique as they (re)consider ways to improve their educational practice as it pertains to DEI. The paper ends with implications for educators to consider as they engage in critical self-reflection/self-critique around DEI in their work.

KEYWORDS: University book clubs, diversity, equity, inclusion, transformative autoethnography

America is an old house. We can never declare the work [of diversity, equity, and inclusion] over…. When you live in an old house, you may not want to go into the basement after a storm to see what the rains have wrought. Choose not to look, however, at your own peril. The owner of an old house knows that whatever you are ignoring will never go away. Whatever is lurking will fester whether you choose to look or not. Ignorance is no protection from the consequences of inaction. (Wilkerson, 2020, p.15)

Courses on diversity in colleges of education around the U.S. are common for virtually any major including teacher education, administration, and counseling (Asher, 2007; Trent et al., 2008). Although university educators often ask their students to engage in knowledge-building and critical self-reflection/self-critique about diversity, it is less common for university educators, themselves, to engage in these same practices (Gorski, 2016; Pennington et al., 2012). Concerned with the need to engage in knowledge-building, critical self-reflection, and self-critique about diversity, we—the first three authors of this article—helped to facilitate a book club initiative within our college of education to foster our learning and the learning of our colleagues, about meaningful diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practices (Dobbin & Kalev, 2018). The purpose of this paper is to explore our individual and collective learning as a result of our collaborative engagement in college-wide DEI book clubs and our subsequent analysis of our learning during discussions about our book club engagement. The following question guides our investigation: What did we learn individually and collectively about diversity, equity, and inclusion as a result of participating in and reflecting on college-wide diversity-related book clubs?

Our paper is structured as follows. First, we contextualize this project in scholarship pertaining to university book clubs, identifying the unique contribution that our project adds to scholarship on university book clubs. Second, we describe transformative autoethnography, the theoretical and methodological lens we used to frame our transformative work. Next, we present three implementation vignettes that characterize key diversity-related issues with which we have been grappling. Finally, we conclude our paper by considering constructive paths forward (both individually and collectively) in our diversity, equity, and inclusion work. We also invite you, as readers, to consider your own "next steps" as we strive to move forward together in solidarity and collective understanding (Hensley, 2023).

Context: College of Education Diversity Book Club

For almost a hundred years, anti-bias and other iterations of diversity training have been implemented in companies, colleges, and universities (Dobbin & Kalev, 2018). A central goal of diversity/anti-bias training is professional development geared to help people more equitably work with and serve others across diversity and difference (Ness et al., 2010). Even though DEI work is under attack across the United States (Gretzinger, et al., 2024; Wood, 2023), it is still largely emphasized or mandated at colleges and universities nationwide (Dobbin & Kalev, 2018).

Whereas not all DEI training is equally effective, scholars have long known that DEI training is most effective when participants engage in DEI work voluntarily and collaboratively (Brancato, 2003; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Ness, et al., 2010; Rogers et al., 2005). As well, DEI learning opportunities that occur over time are more effective than DEI training that takes place in isolated instances (Rogers et al., 2005). The book clubs in which we, the first three authors of this paper and our colleagues, participated across multiple years serve as examples of DEI learning opportunities that are voluntary, collaborative, and occur across time.

Although book clubs have long been used in K-20 and graduate classrooms to foster student learning (e.g., Glazier, 2005; McVee et al., 2004; Raphael et al., 2013), they are less common as sites for learning in universities (Grenier et al., 2022). Moreover, scholars may even dismiss or ignore book clubs as sites for meaningful professional learning (Alsop, 2015). However, studies (e.g., Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2015; Grenier et al., 2022) provide evidence that non-formal learning contexts–such as volunteer book clubs in professional settings–can, indeed, foster important professional learning. In fact, when book clubs serve as sites where book club members build positive and trusting relationships, deep, conceptual learning can occur (Grenier et al., 2022).

Book clubs can also serve as sites for engaging in critical public pedagogy (Grenier et al., 2022). Public pedagogy refers to spaces where learning and teaching happen so that participants consider their own identities and their conceptions of how they live and function in the world (Rich & Sandlin, 2017). Public pedagogy becomes "critical" when these collaborative public spaces are used to thoughtfully address issues pertaining to DEI (Zorrilla & Tisdell, 2016). In the case of our work, we sought to engage in critical, transformative dialogue involving self-reflection and self-critique through and beyond our university book club work (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2015).

For many years, we have engaged in our college of education book clubs sponsored by the college's diversity committee. Typically, committee members either choose DEI books and/or solicit input from others in the college community for book titles. Then, college-wide announcements advertising DEI book clubs (sometimes with everyone reading the same book and other times with participants choosing the book they want to read and discuss) are sent out, and the diversity committee sets up the book clubs with the dean of the college purchasing books for those individuals interested in book club participation. Examples of the kinds of books read in college of education book club books included *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies* (Paris & Alim, 2017) and *Stamped from the Beginning* (Kendi, 2016). Book club membership is voluntary.

Whereas the literature we have reviewed illustrates how book clubs *can* be powerful sites for individual and collective growth with respect to DEI, our work offers a unique contribution to the field through our critical reflection and self-critique of our engagement and learning as a result of participating in DEI-related university book clubs, in general, with a specific focus on a recent book club in which the group participated.

Transformative Autoethnography: Coming Together to Craft our Stories

We frame our work theoretically and methodologically as a transformative autoethnography (Hernandez, et al., 2022). We unpack each term (i.e., autoethnography and transformation) before describing our own transformative autoethnography. First, autoethnography, for Hernandez et al. (2022, pp. 6-10) includes six characteristics:

- Systematic qualitative inquiry involving in-depth study of the self in relation to others and society,
- Use of personal experience as a key data source,
- The storying of personal experience,

- Individual or collaborative interrogation,
- The straddling of research and praxis, and
- The option to present findings in diverse ways.

Second, transformation can occur through self-reflexivity (i.e., in-depth, critical self-examination). Sykes (2014) argues we all have the ability to transform. Borrowing from Hernandez et al. (2022, p. 15), we define transformation as "…substantial and potentially sustainable change in knowledge, insights, and/or behaviors that can take place in individuals, communities, or organizations…." In the remainder of this section, we draw on Hernandez et al's. (2022) transformative autoethnographic model (TAM) to unpack the nature of our autoethnographic work and the data collection and analysis process in which we engaged for our work.

Hernandez et al. (2022) divide their TAM into two cycles: The transformative learning cycle and the transformative application cycle. We discuss each in turn. The transformative learning cycle includes (a) *preparation* (i.e., selecting an inquiry focus)*,* (b) *exploration* (i.e., gathering materials to better understand self, others, and relevant contexts), and (c) *discovery* (i.e., analyzing and interpreting the meanings of lived experiences through the gathering of materials).

The Transformative Learning Cycle

The *preparation* phase of the transformative learning cycle involved Lay-nah, Kate, and Cindy (all co-leaders of their college diversity committee) working with three additional leaders of the college diversity committee to plan a recent and particularly impactful college-wide book club on *Caste,* Wilkerson's (2020) powerful book that describes race in America as part of a system of social stratification into which individuals are born. During the *exploration* phase, Lay-nah, Kate, Cindy, and the other three members of the college diversity committee facilitated small-group book clubs where members read sections of *Caste*, took notes on their reading, and met three times during the semester to discuss their interpretations of *Caste*. The *discovery* phase featured a culminating event where members of each small-group book club drew on their notes across the semester to create a presentation to share their most significant learnings with the other book club groups who read, wrote about, and discussed *Caste*.

The Transformative Application Cycle

The transformative application cycle included (a) *planning* (i.e., designing an action plan to achieve goals), (b) *implementing* (i.e., gathering data to implement and monitor the action plan), and (c) *evaluating* (i.e., reviewing insights from the implementation phase and evaluating them relative to goals set during the planning phase). The *planning* phase of this cycle included attention to (a) our achievement goals and (b) the collaborators who worked on this phase. We begin with the latter and move to the former. As the six leaders of the college diversity committee met to debrief about the college-wide book club on

Caste, one member stated that the *Caste* book and book-club experience were "life-changing" for her. Other leaders felt similarly. As well, the six leaders discussed that they had facilitated many college-wide book clubs, but they worried about merely engaging in talk with the same people in ways that may not engender concrete change. Thus, the leadership group decided to move forward with action plans for implementing their learning in their respective contexts. Whereas all six members of the leadership team began this work, three leaders opted out of the process due to other commitments. The three remaining members of the group included Lay-nah (a multiethnic counseling professor), Kate (a white science education professor), and Cindy (a white literacy professor), all of whom had been members of the college diversity committee for 10, 12, and seven years, respectively.

Lay-nah, Kate, and Cindy began meeting bi-weekly to plan out the actions they would take as a result of their learning from their book club experiences with *Caste*. They kept personal notes/journal entries on these bi-monthly discussions as they sought to develop individual action plans to enact relative to their unique contexts and experiences. Kate decided to revise her graduate education course to make it more culturally relevant and reflective of the field. Lay-nah opted to engage in self-reflection/self-critique about her personal experiences with DEI efforts and how her multiethnic identity experiences influenced and informed her teaching. Cindy opted to engage in critical self-reflection/self-critique about ways to handle a racist comment made by an educator about Indigenous people. Given the focus of Cindy's learning pertaining to Native American experiences, we invited Aldora (a Native American Director of American Indian Student Services) to join the collaborative team. Cindy and Aldora have collaborated on various projects across the past seven years, and Cindy regularly works with Tribal Nations on educational work in their state.

Once we decided on our respective action foci, we began the *implementing* phase. We decided to formalize our thinking/learning by co-authoring a manuscript. We chose to render our learning in the form of individual vignettes (Florio-Ruane, 2010) pertaining to our most significant learning that surfaced as a result of our collaborative discussions and data analyses. Thus, the crafting and re-crafting of our individual vignettes became both a data source and a data analysis process. Here's how: Our collaborative discussions of experiences, meeting notes, and margin notes helped us to distill our most impactful individual DEI learning into initial drafts of individual vignettes. Then, as our team continued to meet bi-monthly, we brought drafts of our evolving vignettes to discuss, critique, and revise.

There was significant overlap between the *implementing* and *evaluating* phases of our work. Moreover, the analytic process of crafting, critiquing, and re-crafting our individual vignettes did not occur without tension (Hernandez & Ngunjiri, 2013). First, the topics of the vignettes reflect personal struggles. For example, as discussed in Lay-nah's vignette, Lay-nah unpacks her struggles to integrate her personal life as a woman of color with her professional life as a counseling professor. Second, because the individual vignette topics involved personal struggle, writers were vulnerable. As we provided one another feedback on drafts of our vignettes, we each expressed concern about providing meaningful critique that could tighten and clarify the vignettes while not causing emotional harm to the vignette writers (Hernandez & Ngunjiri, 2013). Finally, our implementation

and evaluation processes are ongoing. We all realize that we will continually engage in self-reflection/self-critique and take our new learnings into new contexts in our work (Hernandez, 2023).

Our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Implementation Vignettes

Now, having (a) contextualized our work in the field of education, and (b) provided background information about us and our work together through transformative autoethnography, we present three separate vignettes pertaining to diversity, equity, and inclusion that illustrate issues with which we have been wrestling. Whereas our reading of the book *Caste* (Wilkerson, 2020) was the impetus for our decision to engage in transformative autoethnographic work in the first place, the vignettes we crafted draw deeply from our extended experiences reading and discussing different texts in our college-wide book clubs. In the first story that follows, Kate explores how participation in college-wide book clubs has helped her to (re)think her instruction and actively transform the structure of one of her place-based education courses to address explicitly DEI-related issues. Second, Lay-nah unpacks ways that she uses her own self-reflection practices as a professor to model how the students in her graduate courses might self-reflect/self-critique in their work learning to become counselors. Third, Cindy and Aldora portray Cindy's own learning about Indigenous peoples' experiences with historical trauma as well as more effective ways to address other white people who display a lack of understanding of this topic. In each vignette, we articulate ways that we have individually and collectively interrogated ourselves and our experiences regarding the DEI-related issues we share. Finally, we identify key themes that cut across the three separate vignettes.

Kate Making Repairs on the Old House: Moving from Inspector to Restorer

A housing inspector does not make the repairs on the building he has examined. It is for the owners, meaning each of us, to correct the ruptures we have inherited. (Wilkerson, 2020, p. 380)

In this short vignette, I document changes I made to a Fall 2021 graduate course as I moved from thinking of myself as a housing inspector to a home restorer. In past iterations of the course, I was tied to a list of readings that were "foundational" to the field that were written mainly by white men. As I inspected my syllabus, I realized that I needed to make "repairs" to it to make it more culturally relevant and reflective of the current field. Inspired by reading *Caste* (Wilkerson, 2020) in our college's diversity-focused book group, I found myself wanting to connect the book group learnings to my instruction. Wilkerson's words inspired me to take on a *restoration* of my teaching. So, at the end of our spring 2021 book club, I committed to overhauling one class to center race and racism in my science education course.

Listening to a June 2021 National Public Radio interview with Clint Smith, the author of *How the Word Is Passed* (Smith, 2021), which is a non-fiction book on slavery in the U.S., I asked myself, "Could this be the way to redesign my place-based learning course? Would I be brave enough to put my learnings, beliefs, and commitments to diversity and equity into action in a science education course?" These questions have haunted me since I taught about race as a biological construct to elementary education majors.

In the early 2000s, I tried once before to expand my teaching when I engaged in a series of activities with elementary preservice teachers about race in a science methods course. We watched a clip from *Race: The Power of an Illusion* (Adelman, 2003), created models of skin (Houtz & Quinn, 2003), viewed *Starting Small* (Southern Poverty Law Center, 1997), and used skin color paints to create self-portraits. These resources focus on the origins, beliefs, and consequences of race in America. When I asked the students, "How will you use your experiences today in your future classroom?," one student asked with a bit of fear in her voice, "Is it okay to teach about skin color in our classrooms?" To try to allay her fear, I said, "Of course, and it's important to engage in such conversations." And then I stopped teaching about race and racism in my courses until Fall of 2022 because I fell back on the idea that science, and by association science education, are viewed as objective and data driven (Reiss & Sprenger, 2020), and I took the easy way out of focusing on science teaching and avoiding the topics of race and racism.

Twenty years after my first attempt to include topics of race and racism in my science education coursework and after participating in the college's diversity 2018-2020 book groups, I challenged myself to redesign one course. In addition to including readings with more women and people of color authors in a place-based learning course, I restructured the content to center around Smith's (2021) book, which explores the enduring legacy of slavery in America, to begin our investigation of places. He documents eight places "where the story of slavery in America lives on" (p.xiii). The students and I developed two key protocols to guide our interactions. Both protocols involved students using a Padlet (i.e., a digital bulletin board) to share information.

The first protocol involved each student serving as facilitator of a chapter in Smith's book. They entered information on the place highlighted in the chapter on our course Padlet and shared it with the class to provide additional context about the places featured in our reading. See Figure 1 on next page. The students also completed a reflective prompt to undergo a "journey of learning and unlearning" (Smith, 2021, p. 33). We created a chart with two columns: one to record our new learnings around slavery and its lasting impact in America and the other to document what we needed to unlearn about slavery that we had been taught through time.
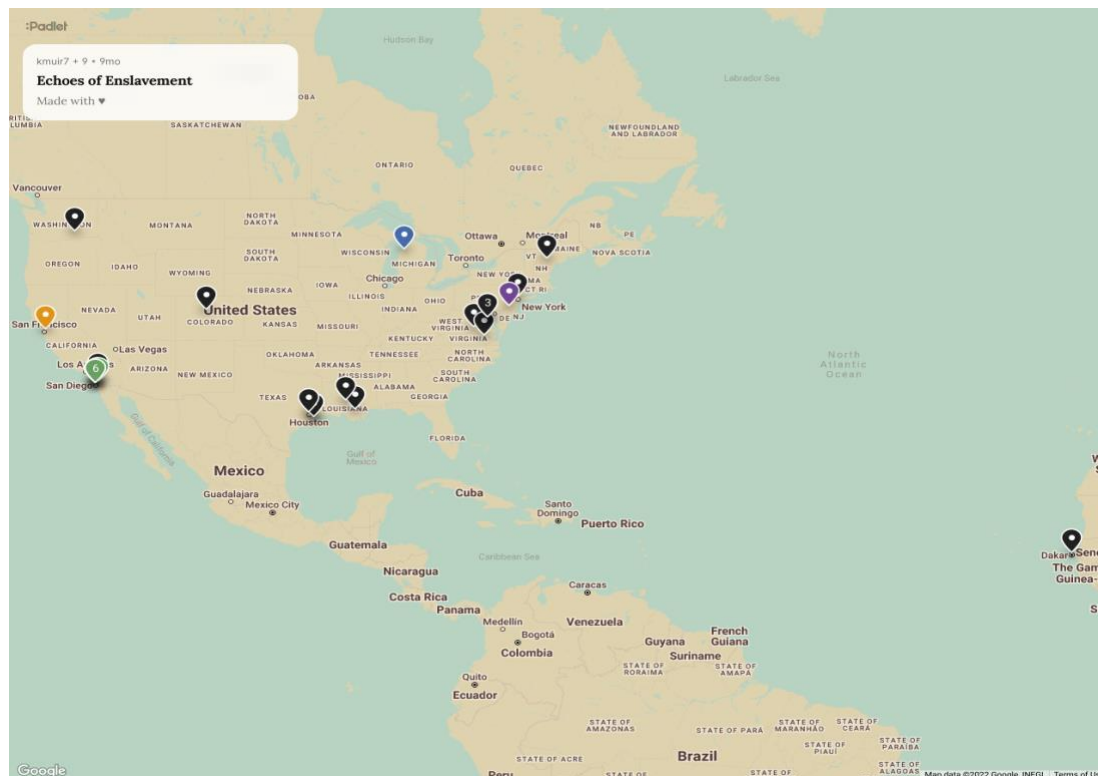
Figure 1
Echoes of Enslavement Padlet

The second protocol was to extend our learning beyond the places described in Smith's (2021) book and to look for echoes of enslavement in other locations. Smith's description of the echoes of enslavement in New Orleans provided initial ideas for the protocol:

> The echo of enslavement is everywhere. It is in the levees, originally built by enslaved labor. It is in the detailed architecture of some of the city's oldest buildings, sculpted by enslaved hands. It is in the roads, first paved by enslaved people. (2021, p. 6)

For this protocol, I also drew inspiration from Wolfe-Rocca's (2021) activity "Echoes of Enslavement" for the Zinn Education Project. She asks students:

> To scan their surroundings for historical traces that live beyond the pages of books, to analyze how these sites help or hinder a clear-eyed view of slavery's legacy, and to share their critical analysis with each other to "map" slavery's echoes in their own backyards. (p. 1)

Students selected a place that was important to them in some way and researched the echoes of enslavement in their chosen places. A few students chose the place where they came from, while others picked a place where they had special life memories. Throughout the last half of the semester, students shared about their places on the course Padlet and through conversations. These discussions were eye opening, informative, and inspirational.

After hearing about their chosen places, we participated in a community service project at our university. We spent a day together helping to support *The Black 14: Healing the Hearts and Feeding the Souls* (https://www.black14.net/) project by unloading and stocking the university foodshare project with 12,500 pounds of supplies. The Black 14 incident occurred on the University of Wyoming campus in 1969 when 14 Black football players were removed from the college football team for wearing black armbands to protest racial injustice. We were honored to speak with John Griffin, a member of the Black 14. It was an amazing experience for the students and for me.

At the end of the semester, I was left wanting more time with this group of students. They elected to take up my invitation to participate in a non-credit book group to read and discuss *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story* (Hannah-Jones et al., 2021) in Spring 2022. Their voluntary participation indicated to me that, somehow, the restoration of my teaching inspired a sense of belonging. Our intellectual community still desired to think, discuss, and be together. Through continued reflection, I am inspired to keep focusing on restoring my teaching.

Lay-nah Finding Balance: Integration of Personal and Professional Growth

Self-reflection is a necessary component of growth and we, as educators, often experience diverse opportunities for this action. Involvement in diversity- and social justice-focused book clubs provided me many opportunities for introspection and subsequent growth. This vignette situates the challenges that many experience with newfound awareness and how to integrate this new information into the professional work of being a counselor educator. Here I share personal experience with DEI efforts, how my personal identity experiences influence and inform my teaching, and how self-reflection has led to personal and professional growth.

I have long been active in diversity and inclusion efforts in higher education. As a student, staff, and faculty, I was surrounded by many who were like-minded and had similar life experiences, or those who recognized the critical need for such efforts and were driven by the same goals for our campus community. It was not until I engaged in book clubs in our college that I really felt the personal challenge that was needed to prompt the self-reflective process my role as educator demanded.

As a counselor educator teaching a multicultural course, I often discuss with my students that personal growth is ongoing. We teach our students that personal awareness is necessary and challenging, but that we cannot facilitate the growth of our clients without first having the willingness to explore our own vulnerabilities and biases. I share with every cohort of students I teach that "multicultural competence is not a destination, but rather, a journey." This is to normalize the process they are experiencing in the moment that is often painful and confusing. The statement also serves as a bar of expectation though, indicating that their growth cannot end and that they will be accountable to stay abreast of new knowledge in the field to meet best practices for their clients and supervisees. This one multicultural course is just an introduction to the personal reflection and professional work they will need to continuously engage in throughout their careers.

I reflect on my own ongoing process of growth, specifically the pain and confusion that it still holds. I share these feelings with students, and I question myself and my methods with my students. I reflect on the feeling of inadequacy as an educator that visits me from time to time. My multicultural counseling class is the class I love and loathe the most. My students rave about me and shred me apart, year after year, with accounts of life-changing learning or the worst educational experiences ever. Despite knowing where student consternation is likely rooted, I latch on to the negative and seek growth.

I face the challenge of balancing need and desire for professional growth while also experiencing personal turmoil. I am not sure how much of the personal I am *allowed* to let into my professional work. As a woman of color and a mother of children of color, I am constantly educating my children and advocating for them in our daily lives. We live some of the topics I teach; yet, I have to question how much influence my personal life can have on my professional life. The times I decide to withhold personal experiences that I believe could be beneficial to students' learning reinforce this challenge, as I feel incongruent and disingenuous. Carl Rogers (1986) believed that congruence and authenticity of therapists are crucial to the therapeutic relationship, and these are attributes that I strive for in my teaching as well.

An example of this inner conflict occurred in a class discussion on the impact of the events of 9/11, in which I shared a story of a friend of Indian descent, born in the US, taunted by young men as they drove by her and threw rocks, yelling for her to go back to where she had come from and calling her a terrorist. A student quickly chimed in that she was so glad that things were not the same anymore and we [collective US] had made so much racial progress since. When I then shared that my own teenage son had racial slurs yelled at him outside our home while playing basketball in our driveway, that student and others were visibly uncomfortable with surprise. The discussion shifted with many students then contributing to a narrative of questioning the extent of positive change this society has *actually* accomplished. I believe it is privilege and oppression that shape our perspectives on situations regarding another's existence, and this situation calls to mind Wilkerson's (2020) book, *Caste*. In it, she declares that "The price of privilege is the moral duty to act when one sees another person treated unfairly. And the least that a person in the caste can do is not make the pain any worse" (p. 386). I questioned my decision to share a personal, but real, experience.

I recall how many similar discussions have occurred in my classes, in which students share initial impressions of the progress our nation has made in equality, cultural climate, and inclusivity, which then spark discussions that challenge those notions. Within book clubs, members shared the astonishment they felt at newfound awareness that has occurred as a result of their engagement in the material and the reflective process group discussions elicited. I have personally felt the challenge through my process of engaging in these book clubs, leading me to further self-reflection on my teaching, with specific attention to my efforts to reach learners of multiple perspectives and identities with the use of diverse scholarly resources—a value reinforced while reading *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies* (Paris & Alim, 2017) in a previous book club.

My increased awareness is attributed to engagement in book clubs and has truly aided me in my reflection and subsequent adaptation of my classroom instruction. I believe my students benefit from the personal growth I've experienced from participating

in these book clubs, as I am more able to meet them where they are in the learning process, and I can see myself in them as they work through the challenges of integrating newfound awareness of personal growth.

Cindy Learning More about Indigenous Peoples' Historical Trauma

In her powerful book on race in America, Wilkerson (2020, p. 15), argues:

America is an old house…. Wind, flood, drought, and human upheavals batter a structure that is already fighting whatever flaws were left unattended in the original foundation…. We are the heirs to whatever is right or wrong with it. We did not erect the uneven pillars or joists, but they are ours to deal with now.

Unfortunately, as Wilkerson (2020) notes, America is built on horrific historical traumas inflicted on people of color, including Indigenous Americans (Brayboy, 2005). Moreover, the remnants of those traumatic experiences live on in the structure of our American house in the form of historical trauma (i.e., Pewewardy et al., 2022; White Eagle, 2021) experienced by Indigenous peoples at the hands of white colonizers (Penewardy et al., 2022). Our central goal in this vignette is to craft a brief, poignant, explanation of Indigenous peoples' experiences with historical trauma and make transparent ways that Cindy, as a white person, is learning about how she can support Indigenous peoples as all Americans continue to grapple with the vestiges of trauma inflicted on Indigenous peoples by white colonizers. Our vignette is structured as follows: First, we introduce ourselves. Next, we explain why we wrote this vignette. Then, we discuss features of historical trauma and issues that Cindy is considering as she continues to reflect on the historical trauma inflicted on American Indians. Finally, we propose possible ways forward in our transformative work.

Aldora is an enrolled member of the Northern Arapaho Tribe from a rural background. Cindy is European American (English, Irish, and Scottish) from a rural background. We (Aldora and Cindy) have been friends and colleagues since October of 2015. As but one example of our work together across time, Aldora earned her doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction from Western University[1], and Cindy was her dissertation co-chair.

Whereas Cindy had learned about the atrocities inflicted on Indigenous peoples prior to meeting Aldora, across the past seven years, Aldora has taught Cindy firsthand about the historical trauma that she and other Indigenous people have experienced. We were prompted to write this vignette in response to a statement Cindy heard made by a white educator: "I don't know why they [Indigenous peoples] can't just get over it," referring to the atrocities inflicted on them, and the historical trauma experienced by Indigenous peoples because of these atrocities. Cindy was stymied by this statement, and, sadly, she did not respond. Engagement with Wilkerson's (2020) powerful book in a college of education book club, other books discussed in college book clubs, and additional

---

[1] Pseudonym

readings and conversations with Aldora, helped to provide a possible avenue for Cindy's own learning and future responding.

In crafting this response, we recognize that briefly responding to over five centuries of atrocities inflicted on American Indians in a few words does not capture Indigenous peoples' lived experiences. Moreover, because Cindy, and other white Americans, live in—and with—white privilege, there is much that Cindy, and other whites, will never understand about Indigenous peoples' experiences (Brayboy, 2005).

According to Sotero (2006), historical trauma occurs when (a) a dominant culture inflicts mass traumas on a group of people resulting in cultural, linguistic, societal, and economic devastation; (b) the original generation demonstrates biological and psychological symptoms from the trauma; and (c) subsequent generations experience the biological and psychological factors–including prejudice and discrimination–experienced by the original group(s). From Cindy's readings and discussions with Aldora, she learned that the vestiges of historical trauma for Indigenous people include (a) societal and environmental factors such as domestic violence and living in poverty, (b) physiological factors such as higher rates of heart disease and diabetes, and (c) psychological factors such as higher rates of alcohol and drug use, and loss of family and tribal connections (Sotero, 2006; White Eagle, 2021). Additionally, historical trauma often exacerbates the death of Indigenous languages and cultures.

Through engagement in recent additional conversations and readings with Aldora, as well as reflections on current and past college of education book clubs, Cindy's thinking and learning about Indigenous peoples' historical trauma has been transformed. First, as she engages with Indigenous people, she is engaging in reverent listening when they talk about their lives and experiences. For Cindy, reverent listening means (a) understanding that there is so much resilience in Indigenous people, (b) recognizing that Indigenous people are working in their own communities to recover from the vestiges of historical trauma, and (c) never presuming to understand the lives and experiences of Indigenous peoples. Second, Cindy is striving to be an ally to Indigenous people regarding the topic of historical trauma by speaking out respectfully to other Whites about what she has learned regarding historical trauma.

Cross Vignette Analysis

Now, having shared our three separate vignettes, we turn to a discussion of key insights across them. As well, we consider how our transformative work informs DEI work in education. In each vignette, we sought to explore what we learned during our college-wide diversity book clubs, what we have learned subsequently as we have continued to explore DEI issues together, and how we can use critical self-reflection and self-critique to transform our thinking, learning, and actions. Taken together, we see commonalities across our separate vignettes with respect to ways that self-reflection and self-critique brought about transformation in our beliefs and actions. For example, readings and discussions of powerful DEI books during college book clubs, as well as continued discussions during our work together, drew Kate's attention to ways she might revamp

her place-based education course to address DEI issues. This insight is crucial; college and university educators can assume that DEI education only occurs in multicultural/diversity courses (Gorski, 2016). As a field, however, we know that DEI education is most effective when it is not an add-on, but when it permeates all (or most) courses in students' programs (Ness, 2010). Lay-nah drew on the college book clubs and our subsequent conversations to examine ways to seek balance between her personal life as a woman of color and her professional life teaching DEI-related topics and issues in her multicultural counseling course. Working with Aldora, Cindy used her book club experiences and our collaborative conversational spaces to learn more about the historical trauma experienced by Indigenous peoples and to consider ways to address her own lack of understanding and action when the issue of historical trauma of Indigenous peoples comes up in conversations with other white people.

Concluding Comments

> The Transformative Collaborative Autoethnographic framework can be a practical strategy to provoke perspective-taking in diverse settings, with a view to changing individuals and the communal spaces they occupy. (Hernandez, 2023, p. 199)

Drawing on TAM (Hernandez et al., 2022), our paper contributes to DEI-related work by sharing the transformations that can occur when participants engage voluntarily in DEI-related learning opportunities in collaborative and continuous ways (Brancato, 2003; Ness et al., 2010). Our work also contributes to the literature exploring how book clubs in university contexts can serve as catalysts to foster participants' deep transformative learning; in our case, learning with respect to cultural change work (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2015). We argue that we engaged in cultural change work by considering how each of us, as individuals, engaged in self-critique and self-reflection with an eye towards improving ways we can (individually and collectively) engage in and act positively with respect to DEI efforts. In fact, we know that DEI work can be counter-productive unless it includes deep, thoughtful self-reflection and self-critique across time and space (Singal, 2023).

Perhaps fittingly, we end our paper as we began it–by considering the insightful words of Wilkerson (2020). We, as university scholars, recognize that we have much to continue to learn about meaningful DEI work in our individual lives and relative to our own institutions. We see the notion of "radical empathy" as presented by Wilkerson (2020) as a powerful step forward in our respective transformative journeys. Wilkerson (2020) argues that "...radical empathy means to listen with a humble heart to understand another's experience *from their perspective*, not as we imagine we would feel…. Radical empathy is the kindred connection from a place of deep knowing that opens our spirit to the pain of another *as they perceive it*" (p. 386, emphasis added).

References

Adelman, L. (Executive Producer). (2003). *Race: The power of an illusion.* [T.V. Series]. California Newsreel; Independent Television Service.

Alsop, R. (2015). A novel alternative: Book groups, women, and workplace networking. *Women's Studies International Forum*, *52,* 30-38.

Alvesson, M., & Sveningsson, S. (2015). *Changing organizational culture: Cultural change work in progress.* Routledge.

Asher, N. (2007). Made in the (multicultural) U.S.A.: Unpacking tensions of race, culture, gender, and sexuality in education. *Educational Researcher, 36*(2), 65-73.https://www.jstor.org/stable/4621076

Brancato, V.C. (2003). Professional development in higher education. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 98*, 59-65.

Brayboy, B.M.J. (2005). Toward a tribal critical race theory in education. *Urban Review, 37*, 425–446. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-005-0018-y

Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S.L. (1999). Relationship of knowledge and practice: Teacher learning in communities. *Review of Research in Education, 24*, 249-305.

Dobbin, F. & Kalev, A. (2018). Why doesn't diversity training work? The challenge for industry and academia. *Anthropology Now, 10*(2), 48-55. https://doi.org/10.1080/19428200.2018.1493182

Florio-Ruane, S. (2010). *Teacher education and the cultural imagination: Autobiography, conversation, & narrative.* Routledge.

Glazier, J. (2005). Talking and teaching through a positional lens: Recognizing what and who we privilege in our practice. *Teaching Education, 16*(3), 231-243.

Gorski, P. (2016). Making better multicultural and social justice teacher educators: A qualitative analysis of the professional learning and support needs of multicultural teacher education faculty. *Multicultural Education Review, 8*(3), 139-159. https://doi.org/10.1080/2005615X.2016.1164378

Grenier, R.S., Callahan, J.L., Kaeppel, K., & Elliott, C. (2022). Advancing book clubs as non-formal learning to facilitate critical public pedagogy in organizations. *Management Learning*, *53*(3), 483-501.

Gretzinger, E., Hicks, M., & Dutton, C. (2024, July 15). Tracking higher ed's dismantling of DEI. *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* https://www.chronicle.com/article/tracking-higher-eds-dismantling-of-dei

Hannah-Jones, N., Roper, C., Silverman, I., & Silverstein, J. (Eds.). (2021). *The 1619 project: A new origin story.* One World.

Hensley, N. S. (2023). Life writing and sustainability education. *Currere Exchange Journal, 7*(2), 52–60.

Hernandez, K.C. (2023). Bearing a Black woman's burden: Autoethnography for provoking perspective-taking and action in predominantly white academic spaces. In A.M. Allen & J.T. Stewart (Eds.), *We're not OK: Black faculty experiences and higher education strategies* (pp. 198-217). Cambridge University Press.

Hernandez, K.C., Chang, H., & Bilgen, W.A. (2022). *Transformative autoethnography for practitioners: Change processes and practices for individuals and groups.* Myers Education Press.

Hernandez, K. & Ngunjiri, F. (2013). Relationships and communities in autoethnography. In S. Jones, T. Adams, & C. Ellis (Eds.), *Handbook of Autoethnography* (pp. 262-280). Left Coast Press, Inc.

Houtz, L.E., & Quinn, T.H. (2003, Feb.). Give me some skin: A hands-on science activity integrating racial sensitivity. *Science Scope, 26*(5), 18-22.

McVee, M. B., Baldassarre, M., & Bailey, N. (2004). Positioning theory as lens to explore teachers' beliefs about literacy and culture. In *53rd yearbook of the National Reading Conference* (pp. 281-295). National Reading Conference.

Ness, M. K., George, M. A., Turner, K. H., & Bolgatz, J. (2010). The growth of higher educators for social justice: Collaborative professional development in higher education. *InSight: A Journal of Scholarly Teaching, 5,* 88-105.

Paris, D. & Alim, H. S. (2017). *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world.* Teachers College Press.

Pennington, J.L., Brock, C.H., Abernathy, T., Bingham, A., Major, E., Ndura, E., & Wiest, L. R. (2012). Teacher educators' dispositions: Footnoting the present with stories from our pasts. *Studying Teacher Education, 8*(1), *69-85.*

Pewewardy, C., Lees, A., & Minthon, R. (2022). *Unsettling settler colonial education: The transformational Indigenous praxis model.* Teachers College Press.

Raphael, T.E., Pardo, L., & Highfield, K. (2013). *Book club: A literature-based curriculum* (2nd ed.). Small Planet Communications, Inc.

Reiss, J., & Sprenger, J. (2020, Winter). Scientific objectivity. In E. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.* https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/scientific-objectivity/>.

Rich E., & Sandlin, J.A. (2017). Physical cultural studies and public pedagogies. In M. Silk, H. Thorpe, & D. Andrews (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of physical cultural studies* (pp. 549-557). Routledge.

Rogers, C. (1986). Carl Rogers on the development of the person-centered approach. *Person-centered Review, 1*(3), 257–259.

Rogers, R., Kramer, M.A., Mosley, M., Fuller, C., Light, R., Nehart, M., Beaman-Jones, S., DePasquale, J., Hobson, S., & Thomas, P. (2005). Professional development as social transformation: The literacy for social justice teacher research group. *Language Arts, 82,* 347-358.

Singal, J. (2023, January 17). What if diversity trainings do more harm than good. *New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/17/opinion/dei-trainings-effective.html

Smith, C. (2021). *How the word is passed: A reckoning with the history of slavery in America.* Little Brown & Company.

Sotero, M. (2006). A conceptual model of historical trauma: Implications for public health practice and research. *Journal of Health Disparities Research and Practice, 1*(1), 93-108.

Southern Poverty Law Center. (1997). *Starting small: Teaching tolerance in preschool and the early grades.* [Film kit and teachers' guide.] https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/film-kits/starting-small

Sykes, B. E. (2014). Transformative autoethnography: An examination of cultural identity and its implications for learners. *Adult Learning, 25*(1), 3-10.

Trent, S.C., Kea, C.D., & Oh, K. (2008). Preparing preservice educators for cultural diversity: How far have we come? *Exceptional Children, 74*(3), 328-350. https://doi.org/10.1177/001440290807400304

White Eagle, A. (2021). Invisible me: Three Northern Arapaho early school leavers. *Journal of American Indian Education, 60* (1), 29-50.

Wilkerson, I. (2020). *Caste: The origins of our discontents.* Random House.

Wolfe-Rocca, U. (2021). *Echoes of enslavement: Not only in the South, but everywhere.* Zinn Education Project. https://www.zinnedproject.org/materials/echoes-of-enslavement/

Wood, S. (2023). DEI Bans at colleges: What students should know. *U.S. News and World Report.* https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/dei-bans-at-colleges-what-students-should-know

Author Contact

Lay-nah Blue Morris-Howe, laynah@uwyo.edu

Cynthia H. Brock, Cynthia.brock@uwyo.edu

Kate Welsh, kwelsh@exploratorium.edu

Aldora White Eagle, aldora.whiteeagle@ucdenver.edu