Examining Perspectives of Immigrant Working Learners & Education Providers: CRT as Analytical Framework

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Examining Perspectives of Immigrant Working Learners & Education Providers

CRT as Analytical Framework

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https://edtech.worlded.org/our-work/projects/21learning
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Overview

Context
Frontline service workers in the US

Theoretical Frame
From sociocultural to critical theory

Methodology
CRT a priori codes to better see

Analysis
Figuring out who said what

Findings
Tensions revealed

Implications
Relationships matter

Based on a subset of the data reported on in Higher Ed, Skills, and Work-Based Learning article: https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-08-2021-0158
Frontline workers in the US
Who are frontline service workers in the US?

- **42%**
  - Are people of color.
  - Many work in food service, retail, healthcare & hospitality

- **30%**
  - Are young adults
  - Under the age of 35

- **60–70%**
  - Learning skills
  - Like language, literacy, numeracy

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The Issue

Frontline Workers

Employers
## Literature review

We read into...

- Workforce development/employer-oriented viewpoints
- Mal-employment
- Structural barriers to education
- Racialized systems and exclusion
- SLA literature centering identity & equity (for example, Darvin & Norton, 2021; Flores & Rosa, 2019; Nelson & Flores, 2019)

[https://edtech.worlded.org/21cleo-news](https://edtech.worlded.org/21cleo-news)
Research Questions

What supports English learners’ participation and engagement in workplace learning?

Who gets access to learning opportunities?

Whose workplace learning leads to advancement?

What do the perspectives of adult working learners reveal about their education and training when viewed through a CRT lens?
Theoretical Lens

Shift to CRT
Sociocultural Theory
(Activity Theory - Engström)

Critical Race Theory
(Crenshaw, 1991; Solorzano, 1997; Bell, 1980; Yosso, 2005; Gotanda, 1991; Closson, 2010)
Sociocultural frame showed that learners...

- Are agentic
  Though lit refers to them as passive participants

- Make strategic choices
  Based on their goals

- Are resilient
  They persist in learning despite barriers

- Independent learning
  If no other learning opportunity is available

Based on a subset of the data reported on in *Higher Ed, Skills, and Work-Based Learning* article: [https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-08-2021-0158](https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-08-2021-0158)
Race intersects with other aspects of identity:
Compounds other inequalities: gender, orientation, economic exclusion, language discrimination
Eliminating structural oppression benefits everyone
Recognizing the impact of structural racism and endeavoring to understand how it impacts learners can help us work to mitigate its impact.

Why draw on CRT for adult education research?

(Bell, 1980; Closson, 2010; Crenshaw, 1991; Gotanda, 1991; Solorzano, 1997; Yosso, 2005)
Methodology

Qualitative coding: 2 ways
Our Participants

Frontline service workers engaged in employer supported education and training

45 first interviews: learners, teachers, supervisors, career navigators

10 follow-up interviews with focal participants who responded to a questionnaire

3 convenings with workforce development advisors, educators, & participant learners
Selected Focal Participants

Ijakoo
- Multilingual (Somali, English)
- BA in Economics
- Job in retail
- Workplace English class
- Single parent of 2 children

Ombeni
- Multilingual
- MA in Management
- Job in computer recycling center
- English class, Bookkeeping, Excel
- Family with 6 children

Muhazzim
- Multilingual
- MA in Business Administration
- Job in retail pharmacy
- Management Certificate
- Part-time father of two children
Qualitative Approach

Grounded Theory

- Open coding of interview data for finding themes, then more focused inductive coding to better understand them

Shift to CRT

CRT: Building a priori codes

- Reviewed seminal CRT literature; pulled salient themes; applied a priori codes to data
Bell, 1980; Closson, 2010; Crenshaw, 1991; Gotanda, 1991; Solórzano, 1997; Yosso, 2005
Analysis

Applying a priori codes
J: [15:05] I see. Okay. So you're thinking of the future when you study now? And the future is to be a CPA?
User: glo Jacobs
Aspirational capital
Community Cultural Wealth
Critical Race Theory Analysis
J: Yeah...
Analysis Timeline

01
Applied the CRT codes

02
Selected focal participant

03
Identified salient themes

04
Conducted theoretical sampling

05
Refined themes, raised new questions
Findings & Discussion

Better understanding of learner experience
Findings & Discussion

Malemployment

Getting noticed matters

Provision of mediated support

Access to social capital

Who gets noticed can be a site for race, gender, and language discrimination
Ijakoo

Not recognized or visible

“I used to work [as] a cashier and the schedule and the pay is, it wasn't good so and also I don't see any future on that, that's why I just wanted switch.”
Ombeni

Waits to be noticed

Researcher: Would you ask about the position if someone quit, a supervisor quit, would you ask, to see “Oh, I would like to be a supervisor”

Ombeni: No ((chuckle)), I [couldn’t] ask... I prefer them to choose me.
Muhammad

Seen as having potential

“I keep asking and even, you know, in every evaluation my supervisor commends for me. He said, like, hey, he's the one who will question most of the time, and I love it. He said he literally said, he said, I love it, how much questions you ask, and that's, that's a lot of learning.”

- From Pakistan
- Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi as a first languages, English since age 5
- Master’s in Business Administration
- Currently working in a drugstore chain as a database support
- Has completed a retail supervisor certificate
- Hopes to go into management
A. Not identifying an issue

Perpetuation white supremacy though not named as such.

Codes (Closson, 2010): Endemic racism, color-blindness

- Ex. Ralph - “what are you doing that you can’t afford a couple hours a day, or, or, you know, half of your Saturday or four hours one evening to, to help further your career?”
- Matthew; failed to notice race at play in identification of jobs available for BIPOC students

B. Identifying an issue but not problematizing

Willingness to create opportunities, but not questioning limitations of a course set up for the benefit of the employer

Codes (Closson, 2010): Color blindness, Interest convergence

- Lynn noted: location of class in the workplace benefited both the employer setting and the learners.
- Carmen noted: workers needed “understanding [of soft skills] how to be, how to be someone that the companies would want to hire...”

C. Identifying an issue and taking action

Recognition of potential perpetuation of white supremacy AND description of how they work to mitigate problem.

Codes (Closson, 2010): Social Justice Orientation

- Leslie advocated for changes in curriculum and HR training resources to make them more accessible
- Matthew allowed students to bring children to class
Implications

So what?
Practical

Training as “opportunity” ???

Mediating scaffolding as nourishment

Theoretical/Analytical

CRT as beneficial in SLA research

You have to learn how to see it.
Read more about it.

Thanks!

Do you have any questions?
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