



The Promise of Inclusive Curriculum Policy: Examining Theories of Change that Drive Implementation

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Abstract: Despite the growing tide of discriminatory executive orders and educational policies in the US, Colorado is one of a handful of states to pass legislation mandating the inclusion of minoritized communities in public school curriculum. Curious about how Colorado educators are making sense of public discourse around HB19-1192, we draw from Tuck (2018) to explore the theories of change that guide educators' implementation efforts. By analyzing survey responses, we found both implicit and explicit theories of change framing the promise of inclusive curricula, ranging from the importance of raising awareness about minoritized communities to desiring complexity and going beyond damage-centered narratives. Findings suggest grounding education policy implementation efforts in an examination of theories of change may bring greater clarity to educators' pedagogies and practices.

Keywords: inclusion; curriculum implementation; social studies; education policy; LGBTQ+ people

La promesa de la política curricular inclusiva: Un examen de las teorías del cambio que impulsan su implementación

Resumen: Ante la creciente ola de órdenes ejecutivas y políticas educativas discriminatorias en los Estados Unidos, Colorado se destaca como uno de los pocos estados que ha aprobado legislación que exige la inclusión de las comunidades minorizadas en el plan de estudios de las escuelas públicas. Para investigar cómo los educadores de Colorado interpretan el discurso público en torno al proyecto de ley HB19-1192, nos basamos en Tuck (2018) para explorar las teorías del cambio que orientan los esfuerzos de implementación de dichos educadores. Mediante el análisis de las respuestas a una encuesta, identificamos teorías del cambio—tanto implícitas como explícitas—que enmarcan la promesa de los currículos inclusivos; estas abarcan desde la importancia de generar conciencia sobre las comunidades minorizadas hasta el deseo de abrazar la complejidad y trascender las narrativas centradas en el daño. Los hallazgos sugieren que fundamentar los esfuerzos de implementación de políticas educativas en un examen de las teorías del cambio podría aportar una mayor claridad a las pedagogías y prácticas de los educadores.

Palabras-clave: inclusión; implementación curricular; estudios sociales; política educativa; personas LGBTQ+

A promessa da política curricular inclusiva: Examinando as teorias de mudança que impulsionam a implementação

Resumo: Diante da crescente onda de ordens executivas e políticas educacionais discriminatórias nos EUA, o Colorado figura entre o pequeno grupo de estados que aprovaram legislação tornando obrigatória a inclusão de comunidades minorizadas no currículo das escolas públicas. Para investigar como os educadores do Colorado interpretam o discurso público em torno do projeto de lei HB19-1192, recorreremos a Tuck (2018) para explorar as teorias de mudança que orientam os esforços de implementação desses educadores. Ao analisar as respostas de uma pesquisa, identificamos teorias de mudança—tanto implícitas quanto explícitas—que enquadram a promessa de currículos inclusivos; tais teorias variam desde a ênfase na importância de conscientizar sobre as comunidades minorizadas até o anseio por complexidade e pela superação de narrativas centradas no dano. Os resultados sugerem que fundamentar os esforços de implementação de políticas educacionais em uma análise das teorias de mudança pode conferir maior clareza às pedagogias e práticas dos educadores.

Palavras-chave: inclusão; implementação curricular; estudos sociais; política educacional; pessoas LGBTQ+

The Promise of Inclusive Curriculum Policy: Examining Theories of Change that Drive Implementation

It's 2026, and both federally and locally, attacks on public education are rampant. The Department of Education has been systematically dismantled, eliminating offices and staff who support historically excluded students. By way of executive orders and presidential actions, there has been a massive reversal of policies designed to support all youth, with their varying and diverse identities, in school. Recent executive orders have stripped away support for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, describing such policies as “radical indoctrination” rooted in “anti-American, subversive, harmful, and false ideologies” (The White House, 2025). And yet, amidst these efforts to roll back decades of work toward creating public schools that honor the diverse

identities of youth, local communities and decision makers have persisted in attempts to center equity and justice via policy.

One way scholars, practitioners, and policymakers have attempted to center equity and justice in public education has been through curriculum policy. This approach has worked from the premise that changing the content of curricula will provide students with access to equitable learning opportunities. Curriculum policies born out of movements in ethnic studies, for example, have advocated that minoritized students deserve an education in which their identities and lived experiences are centered in the content of what schools teach (Dee & Penner, 2017). Research suggests that when schools prioritize students' identities and communities, students not only survive but thrive (e.g., Beckham & Concordia, 2019; Love, 2019). These findings have led some states to pass legislation requiring schools to teach “inclusive” curricula, or curricula that include the perspectives and histories of communities that have been historically marginalized in U.S. society and largely invisible in the content of public education.

That said, we know that bringing policy alive in classrooms is far more complex than simply mandating inclusion. In states with inclusive curriculum policies, for example, there is evidence that teachers feel largely unprepared to teach the histories and contributions of diverse communities and experience inconsistent access to professional learning opportunities to support implementation (Aslam & Wilson, 2025). The promise of inclusive curriculum policy rests largely on the existing lenses that educators bring to make sense of the policy, how they understand current and historical educational inequities, and what they believe are the necessary practical steps to take to implement the policy (Reid, 2023).

Colorado's Inclusive Curriculum Policy

In 2019, Colorado became one of seven states to pass an “inclusive” curriculum bill (GLSEN, 2024). HB19-1192 (HB19) mandates funding educators' instruction in public schools of history and civil government of the United States and Colorado and that K-12 social studies curriculum include historically absent identities; it specifically states that instruction

... include the history, culture, and social contributions of American Indians, Latinos, African Americans, and Asian Americans; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals within these minority groups; intersectionality of significant social and cultural features within these communities; and contributions and persecution of religious minorities. (Buentello et al., 2019)

One primary goal of policies like HB19 is to ensure that histories of minoritized groups are included in curricular materials. In 2011, for instance, California passed Senate Bill 48, or the Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful (FAIR) Education Act, which required schools to include instruction related to people with disabilities and LGBTQ+ people. In 2019, Oregon passed a similar bill to ensure academic content standards in the social sciences represented the contributions, perspectives, and histories of diverse individuals.

While HB19 and others like it aim to advance intersectional justice, inclusive curriculum policies often are symbolic with little investment in implementation. In other words, these policies might serve as formal, state-authorized nods towards a kind of public education that is, at least on paper, more inclusive of students with historically marginalized identities. But as we later contend, policy implementation is not an easy nor clear process by which policymakers simply hand down a mandate for teachers to comply. Policy implementation requires that educators at all levels interpret and negotiate policy (Coburn, 2001) in relation to their identities, beliefs, teaching contexts, and circulating public discourses. This kind of policy implementation requires not just material investment but also meaningful opportunities for educators to learn about their role in the process

of making policy come alive. In the absence of these efforts, we rely on the dangerous assumption that because the policy exists, change happens.

Curious about how Colorado educators were making sense of HB19, in this study we explore theories of change (Tuck, 2018) that guide educators' ideas about what the policy might do. As teacher educators and researchers, we see promise in engaging a theory of change framework as it relates to curriculum implementation and pedagogy, what educators believe about what inclusive curriculum might do, and what it is supposed to "change" about schools and students' lived experiences. Specifically, we bring this research question to our inquiry: What do educators' responses to discourse around HB19 teach us about their theories of change (i.e., about what HB19 will do)?

Educators as Actors of Policy Implementation

We understand the process of policy implementation to be one in which context matters, where success rests on how educators make sense of and enact policy at local levels, and in which broader sociopolitical contexts impact implementation locally (Ball et al., 2011; McLaughlin, 2006). In contrast to traditional approaches that view teachers as objects of policy implementation, we follow Ball and colleagues (2011) and see educators as policy subjects—or "actors" (p. 625)—who have the agency and power to bring policy to life. From this theoretical grounding, education policy is not just a directive to be passed along for teachers to adopt in accordance with a set of prescriptive, technical rules; rather, education policy is a verb—a text in motion, created through social practice with multiple actors who interpret, negotiate, and appropriate policy as they engage in their work (Braun et al., 2010; Levinson et al., 2009).

From a traditional view, one might assume that HB19 would result in a linear process of curricular "inclusion." However, viewing educational policy instead as a production with educators as creative, instrumental actors points to how the interpretation of HB19's potential is crucial to bringing it to life. Thus, getting clear about beliefs and desired outcomes is central for educators as (en)actors of policy. This perspective poses policy implementation as a question of teacher sensemaking, reflecting the extensive research base that has documented the sociocultural and localized dimensions of teacher learning in relation to policy implementation—particularly in restrictive contexts (e.g., Leonardi & Staley, 2018; Stillman, 2011; Stillman & Anderson, 2015; Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977).

In relation to this research base, we elevate theories of change as a fruitful way to grapple with how teachers are making sense of their roles as policy actors. Tuck (2018) uses "'theory of change' to refer to beliefs or assumptions about how social change happens, is prompted, or is influenced" (p. 158). Often, Tuck argues, our theories with respect to how change happens, for minoritized groups in particular, remain implicit. They are not stated, nor questioned. This becomes a problem when our theories of change, or how we assume social change will happen, ignore systemic barriers and structures that serve to minoritize certain groups of people (e.g., LGBTQ+, Indigenous, women, Latinx, Black). When we ignore systemic forces at play that impact equitable life chances, our theories of change are misguided, as they can position individual people and groups as problems to be solved. For example, when educators are tasked with implementing inclusive curriculum, like HB19, how they make sense of what the policy is meant to do is intertwined with their theories of change. In other words, educators whose theories of change are rooted in anti-oppressive pedagogies might interpret inclusive curriculum policies by calling attention to systemic inequities; others might focus on a celebration of African American history month, believing that change happens when students are introduced to "others" who now deserve attention.

Perspectives

Our work is informed by the concerns raised by scholars across a broad range of equity-focused policy research, including teachers' roles as policy actors (e.g., Braun et al., 2010; Hernández, 2020). Here, we seek to build on growing critical policy literature as we grapple alongside our colleagues about why changes we see at the macro-level don't always lead to changes in students' lives. As such, we bring theoretical lenses offered by Dean Spade (2011, 2013, 2015) and Eve Tuck (2009, 2018) to bear on this dilemma.

Questioning Policy's Promise

Our theoretical grounding is informed by our curiosity about why changes in policy do not seem to lead to the transformative changes that we seek, particularly in schools. We question the promise of policies that present themselves as progressive in their aim to right historical wrongs imposed on particular groups of people (e.g., people who live with disabilities, who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, and Questioning (LGBTQ+), and are immigrants, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)). We first turn to Spade's (2011, 2013, 2015) notion of a critical trans politic, which "demands more than legal recognition and inclusion" (p. 1) as it instead seeks to transform the logics that undergird society and marginalize certain groups of people. A critical trans politic requires that we question what law is, what power is, where it is located, and the role that changing laws may or may not play in changing lived realities for the people those laws say they will help. Hesitating to take policies at "face value" (Spade, 2011, p. 54), we question whether policy changes will result in the kinds of changes we want to see. With Spade (2011), we also recognize that formal legal gains most often do not reach the most vulnerable people they are intended to serve. As with policies aimed toward anti-discrimination, we fear that inclusive curriculum policies might "operate to transform systems facing resistance just enough to stabilize things and preserve the status quo" (Spade, 2011, p. 57). We further question whether inclusive curriculum policies, without critical attention to implementation, might serve to "distract" (Leonardi & Staley, 2021) from an in/equitable distribution of the life chances for minoritized students (Spade, 2011).

To be clear, we do not dismiss the value and importance of policy as a strategy to advance greater equity in schools. However, we heed Spade's (2013) warning that focusing on legal recognition and "formal declarations of equity" (p. 1042) like inclusive curriculum policies, may not necessarily create substantive material impact on lived experiences. Though narratives surrounding inclusive curriculum policies, both in research as well as in public discourse, point to the need to address the overarching absence of minoritized groups of people in classroom curriculum (e.g., Burdge et al., 2013; Epstein et al., 2003; Kosciw et al., 2012; Snapp et al., 2015; Thoreson, 2016; White et al., 2018), we must pay attention to more than just what HB19 says it will accomplish. Beyond applauding the inclusion of "minorities" [*sic*] in the social sciences, as educators, we might ask—when we "include"—what are the stories being told about certain groups? (How) are those stories working to maintain the status quo? Where is power to change located? What do educators hope HB19 will do? These curiosities led us to wonder about the theories of change that educators bring to this policy and its implementation.

Locating and Getting Clear about Theories of Change

Like Spade, Tuck questions well-meaning attempts to change the material conditions for minoritized groups of people. Tuck insists that those wanting to inspire social transformation engage with their theories of change, especially reliance on damage-centered narratives. Particularly focused

on Native communities, Tuck (2009) explains that damage-centered research is intent on documenting the pain of historically minoritized groups. Though damage-centered research is situated in sociopolitical contexts and looks to “historical exploitation, domination, and colonization to explain contemporary brokenness” (p. 413), she argues that it is a “pathologizing approach” that defines communities in terms of their oppression. It problematically strengthens one-dimensional notions of particular groups of people as depleted and hopeless, and critical attention to social and historical contexts often fades away, leaving the damage in place.

We are so used to these stories; pain, loss, and suffering are documented in an effort to seek reparations for minoritized communities, to argue for policy changes, or to appeal to philanthropic organizations for funding so that we can “save” particular groups of suffering students. For example, reporting statistics of LGBTQ+ youth in schools, which are largely focused on their depression, sadness, and suicidality, without significant attention to the transphobic and homophobic contexts in which they are forced to live and learn, leaves us with a reductive story of damage. And, not only do these stories operate culturally, but they remain embedded in these communities and the people in them. Questioning the reliability and effectiveness of this theory of change, Tuck homes in on the question of whether the “wins are worth the long term costs of *thinking of ourselves as damaged*” (p. 415; italics in original).

A “cousin” theory of change to documenting damage is about raising awareness or raising visibility. This rationale relies on the notion that if we document the damage and garner enough people’s interest, then we will convince those in power to share their power and resources (Tuck, 2022). The faulty assumption here is that people are unaware of injustices and historical traumas and if we prove our pain to them, they will help lessen our pain. Broadly speaking, the argument for raising awareness is central to the argument for inclusive curriculum policy and what they might do (e.g., Lewis & Kern, 2018; Vecellio, 2012). We agree with Tuck (2018) who questions an over-reliance on raising awareness as a vehicle that leads to social change. For example, research has shown that simply including the histories of minoritized communities through curricula does not solve the inequities at the root of such marginalization (Stanton & Morrison, 2018). In essence, raising awareness leaves the norm in place; it does not question power, where it comes from, who holds it, and how it impacts people’s lives.

Tuck invites us to disinvest from theories that rely on documenting damage or raising awareness, and she encourages us toward Indigenous theories of change that rely on desire-based frameworks that acknowledge complex personhood. Research and teaching grounded in desire understand “complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination of lived lives” (Tuck, 2009, p. 416). This means that along with detailing social realities that have brought pain and damage onto certain communities, there is also explicit attention to the wisdom and hope that permeate those communities. These frameworks complicate ideas of power, how it operates, where it lives and who holds it, shifting assumptions about blame and responsibility. They also complicate our understanding of human agency—for example, that people are either complicit in reproducing social inequity, or that they resist it. Instead, desire-based frameworks honor complex personhood by recognizing that we are comprised of many facets, both subversive and dominant.

The idea of complex personhood is critical to understanding and implementing an inclusive curriculum as it recognizes the agency, contradiction, subtlety, and complexity present within all people. In his thinking about complex personhood, Avery Gordon (1997) underscores the idea that all people “possess a complex and oftentimes contradictory humanity and subjectivity” (p. 4) that can never be captured by defining them in simplistic ways as victims or heroes. Understanding minoritized communities through the lens of complex personhood means recognizing that people “get stuck in the symptoms of their troubles, and also transform themselves” (p. 4) and that no one is fundamentally “other.” Gordon maintains that the stories that people tell themselves with regard

to their lived experiences “are entangled and weave between what is immediately available as a story and what their imaginations are reaching toward” (p. 4). In this, complex personhood recognizes the realities, desires, contradictions, and complexities present in people's lives.

The complexity that Tuck and Gordon name inspires us to deeply consider the frameworks that we use to think about *and teach about* minoritized communities and history. Tuck reminds us that theories of change are implicit in all research and that faulty or partial theories of change are often engaged by well-meaning people. As educators, we connect this assertion to the idea that theories of change are implicit in teaching and, consequently, our approaches to negotiating mandates of formal policies like HB19. In the case of HB19, unearthing our implicit theories of change about our desires for what the bill will do in schools might offer the opportunity to pursue policy implementation in meaningful and transformative ways. We contend that bringing attention to our theories of change can thus help reveal potential consequences of policy action, as well as point us to an array of possibilities when considering how we want to engage as policy actors. In this article, we argue that pursuing the kind of educational change reflected in HB19 and others like it requires closer attention to educators as policy actors and the theories of change that guide their policy implementation.

Method

In this section, we discuss aspects of our positionality that we consider relevant *in relation to* this study (Patel, 2016) and explain our approach to data collection and analysis.

Positioning

Reflecting on our time as queer teachers in classrooms with young people (Bethy, 16 years; Devon, 7 years; Nelia, 9 years), we experienced the desire to do better by our students, to move toward more liberatory pedagogies that worked to unravel histories of harmful practices that have for so long dehumanized students who do not fit “the norm.” At the same time, we recognize that in such pursuits, we were not always clear about our own theories of change. In other words, as K12 educators, we failed to ask the questions: What do we think our actions will do to and for students? What specifically is the change that we seek to make in our classrooms, and are the means by which we pursue such change working towards our liberatory desires?

In failing to ask those questions over the course of our time as K12 teachers, we can recall too many examples of well-meaning yet naive attempts to be “allies” to our students. These attempts came from misguided places that relied on broken theories of change—places, for example, that saw our students as needing to be saved without recognizing their incredible power and creativity to navigate the harmful contexts that they were in. As white educators (Bethy and Devon) with students of color in our care, this lens no doubt limited our capacity to see and understand our students in ways they deserved to be seen and understood—with attention to their complexity, to the toxic school environments in which they tried to live and learn, and to honor what they could teach us. And as a Latina educator working with Latine students, Nelia too often missed the mark even as she saw herself reflected in her students, underrecognizing the damaging school cultures she also experienced. The pedagogical attempts we all made to cultivate more equitable and just learning environments did not come from deep questions about problems to be solved, but rather from answers we thought we already had, or from our reliance on overdrawn narratives rooted in normativity. We recognize this positioning to name the self-implicative nature of our inquiry and how the questions we ask our colleagues are also questions we ask of ourselves.

Media Analysis and Questionnaire

The passage of HB19 and the establishment of a commission to review and revise the State Social Studies Standards ignited public debate about the purpose and merits of the bill. This debate was politically charged with fervent opposition growing out of summer 2020 and the spread of anti-critical race theory (CRT) and anti-LGBTQ initiatives. In the midst of this public debate, we conducted a qualitative media analysis to explore how HB19 was interpreted locally. We procured media artifacts: articles, editorials, commentaries, endorsements, features, and broadcast transcripts from newsprint and Internet sources published during the 34-month period between when HB19 was passed (2019) and through Colorado's social studies standards revision phase (2022). Using this media analysis as a guide, we then developed and disseminated a questionnaire (Appendix A) via email and social media. To our open-ended questions, participants' responses offered nearly 100 pages of qualitative data. Our purpose was to generate policy knowledge (Dumas & Anderson, 2014) about how HB19 was being understood and interpreted by local educators in response to public discourse and what they viewed as the change inclusive curriculum could make for their schools and students.

Participants (Our Colleagues)

We collected nearly 300 responses to our questionnaire, which included the informed consent process as approved by our Institutional Review Board. Given our positioning as former K-12 classroom teachers and researchers currently working in partnership with Colorado teachers, we refer to participants as our colleagues and identify each data excerpt by using the numbers that we assigned to each respondent. By referring to each respondent as "our colleague," we intend to highlight their agency as policy actors.

We decided to focus on 80 colleagues who supported the bill. Our decision to focus on this group speaks back to the larger puzzle of why equity-focused policies don't make the impact they intend to have. We wanted to understand the theories of change that teachers "doing the work" have and not just assume that being on board with the policy meant that implementation would follow at the most equitable and just levels. With regard to colleagues who opposed HB19, we were exhausted by their delusive argument and decided not to uplift their voices. Research has continued to show that inclusive curriculum matters to how students learn, feel connected, and thrive (e.g., Burdge et al., 2013; Kosciw et al., 2012; Robinson & Espelage, 2012; Snapp et al., 2015).

The majority of our 80 colleagues identified as cisgender females ($n=59$) and white ($n=71$), approximating the gender and racial demographics of Colorado public educators (Colorado Department of Education, 2022). Colleagues also represented all age groups from 18 to 65 and over, with about half indicating they were between the ages of 35 and 55. Importantly, our colleagues resided in 32 different locales across the state, meaning that responses to the questionnaire represented perspectives from diverse school districts and regions, not just the major urban communities or areas surrounding the university. These educators represented a variety of roles in early childhood education, elementary and secondary schools, special education, administration, and teacher preparation.

Data Analysis

While the narratives of educators who were "for" HB19 were in ways predictable, we wondered how bringing theory to bear on our data might help us dig more deeply. In essence, we used theory to "think with" our data and our data to "think with" our theories (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 261). To begin our analysis, we approached each of our colleagues' responses with the analytic question: What is/are the theory/ies of change embedded in this respondent's support for

the bill? In other words, we reviewed the data with the intention of identifying what respondents signaled as the goals or potential of the bill. We first separated the responses by question, removing identifying information associated with each response. Although we primarily used an inductive approach to identify emerging themes, insights from our theoretical framework guided our analytical approach.

As co-authors, we first reviewed and coded responses on our own. We shared our written analyses and took time to compare notes, identify themes, and home in on select responses in which theories of change felt more elusive. Talking through examples in which theories of change were more difficult to identify helped us refine our codes for subsequent rounds of data analysis. While we speak in terms of “rounds” of data analysis, our process was not linear, nor did it happen in distinct stages. Our process was also not kept between us. Along with multiple iterations of analysis and coding, we had many conversations with our colleagues, graduate student team, and in-service educators with whom we work. In sharing examples of what we found and how we were making sense, we were able to identify prominent themes that became our primary findings. To refine our shared understanding around each of these themes, we selected responses that we felt were representative of the embedded theories of change, which we explore in further detail below.

Findings

Throughout our analysis, we draw on responses wherein we noticed both implicit and explicit theories of change. The results of our analysis reflect our application of the ideas of both Spade and Tuck; our focus is on understanding our colleagues’ theories of change and the frameworks that underpin those theories. As we explore throughout our findings, the theory of change we most recognized throughout the data centered on raising awareness. This was not surprising given our questionnaire prompts and, really, the intention of the bill. Within that broader theme, we noticed an important distinction in our colleagues’ responses. Some focused on the importance of raising awareness specifically for students whose identities tend to be minoritized in schools (e.g., students who are LGBTQ+, economically disadvantaged, of color) while others argued its importance for students whose identities are more privileged in schools (e.g., students who are white, cisgender, straight, able-bodied). We unpack each in detail below. We were also moved by a second theory of change that colleagues spoke to, which was rooted in desire and attention to complexity. Across reflections, two themes characterized those theories of change. Colleagues recognized that LGBTQ+ students are more than their damage and gave attention to where the damage comes from. They also acknowledged and welcomed complexity and contradiction in the teaching of history and in the lives of students.

Raising Awareness

More generally, theories of change associated with the theme of raising awareness were characterized by our colleagues’ beliefs that inclusive curriculum would impact students’ motivation to be better people and to change the world for the better: to think critically, to right wrongs done throughout history, and to be invested in community to such a degree that schools and society would thrive. For example, by raising awareness via inclusive curriculum students would become “critical thinking citizens of the future” and that by “knowing [their] history, [they] can change it and make it better” (38). Other colleagues shared points of view rooted in the idea “it’s so important for all children to learn about and be exposed to all cultures and lifestyles to make them more well rounded humans” (141). Raising awareness by way of inclusive curriculum seemed to be a way toward “positive school climate and a diverse democratic society” (1). Implicit in these ideas is a

theory of change that assumes, in Tuck's (2018) words "people will generally do the right thing with the right information" (p. 160). And, beyond minoritized students "doing better in school," as the question suggests, responses also pointed to the way inclusive curriculum might impact all students and their engagement in a diverse world.

This nod to both minoritized students mentioned in the question and their more privileged counterparts was interesting to us in that, at times, our colleagues spoke of raising awareness along those two distinct lines. In other words, some responses were clear that inclusive curriculum is important for students in schools for whom this bill was, perhaps, written (i.e., "minorities" [*sic*]) and others had to do with students who should, need to, or would benefit from learning about people who are "different"—the most privileged students. This finding supports literature like Bishop's (1990) "mirrors and windows" and Kumashiro's (2000) notions of anti-oppressive pedagogy that educate "for" the other and "about" the other.

Raising Awareness for Minoritized Groups

When it came to our colleagues reflecting on why raising awareness might be important for minoritized students, we noticed several theories of change which also seemed influenced, broadly, by damage-centered frameworks. Digging more deeply into those frameworks allowed us to home in on codes that we call "mitigating risk" and "against all odds."

Mitigating Risk. Many colleagues described HB19 as an opportunity to mitigate educational risk factors for historically marginalized students. Respondents defined these risk factors in a number of ways, such as school failure, being bullied, and emotional stress. In other words, implementing a curriculum that includes marginalized identities will, according to these respondents, reduce some of the harmful conditions of public schooling. Many colleagues agreed that "students deserve to see representations of themselves in the school curriculum" (e.g., 185). Many also went further to articulate the risk involved without that representation. For example, one educator wrote:

...[representation] is especially important for those students who are marginalized in many ways by our dominant white culture. Many of these marginalized populations are at high risk for school failure, and helping them to feel supported, included and safe in the school environment can help to mitigate some of the risk factors that they face. (185)

While this educator attends to social and cultural conditions by situating curricular representation as countering "dominant white culture," the theory of change embedded in this position remains rooted in the damage-based framing that Tuck describes, as it centers around factors that are assumed to be inherent to the student. When marginalized students "see representations of themselves," then, their risk for "school failure" is reduced because they will feel safer and more supported in schools. Our colleague names dominant white culture as marginalizing and suggests that raising awareness by way of representation might lead to support, safety, and belonging; yet the focus of such awareness raising is on how individual students or student groups do not fit within the policies and practices currently available in public schools. That is to say, the goal of this theory of change is to mitigate the factors that cause marginalized students to experience harm rather than transforming the structures and practices that maintain such factors as "risk."

Other colleagues explained that students not seeing themselves represented causes students to feel "unwelcome, and unaccepted" (124) and "alone, erased, isolated, and often unsafe" (59). These feelings of emotional distress, "lead to increased risk for abuse, homelessness, bullying, suicide and many other issues for those in the marginalized groups that are underrepresented" (59). In fact, one colleague argued these feelings have resulted in suicide being "the number one cause of

death among teen members of the LGBTQ+ community... They do not see themselves in their world, and so they give up hope” (124). As queer educators who live as queer and genderqueer (Bethy) adults and who navigated the early 90s (Bethy) and early 2000s (Devon and Nelia) as queer kids, we understand why theories of change around “mitigating risk” might be at the forefront of our colleagues' thinking around HB19. Time and again, we are faced with devastating statistics around how schools are often unsafe and dehumanizing places for LGBTQ+ youth. This fact—that there is an inherent risk to being an LGBTQ+ student in school—is one that forms the ecology of learning conditions that students face when the curriculum further marginalizes their identities and lived experiences. But what happens when these narratives become the driving force for the actions that teachers take in service of LGBTQ+ students? For us, a theory of change that relies on this damage by way of mitigating risk-centered narratives does little to imagine what the learning ecology for students with marginalized identities *might* be. Even worse, the horizon of opportunity these narratives afford LGBTQ+ youth is grim, trapping these students in beliefs about themselves located in violence and victimization. To justify inclusive curriculum primarily through a lens of risk or harm is limited in how such a theory of change can orient us toward visions of educational change in which students thrive.

Against All Odds. A companion to mitigating risk, in our colleagues' responses, we saw a theme that we named “against all odds.” These are reflections in the data that point to challenges, obstacles to overcome. For example, in response to a statement that inclusive representation of LGBTQ identities in the curriculum might be inappropriate or offensive, this educator highlights a theory of change that emphasizes challenge:

It is important to share the challenges that community leaders have overcome...Students of today experience many different types of social stigmas. It is important for us to inspire ALL students to overcome social stigmas and the challenges that come with 'being different'. (160)

Although supportive of including LGBTQ+ identities in the curriculum, this perspective underscores assumptions that such narratives should be included (i.e., raising awareness should look like) representing how people have “overcome” challenges associated with difference. In many ways, this perspective connects to Tuck's critique of damage-centered narratives that consider social change to occur through witnessing another's pain. Like the previous example about mitigating risk, which left “failure” unquestioned, this response similarly rests its theory of change in witnessing pain rather than questioning how and why such “social stigmas” around “difference” exist in the first place.

In another response to the prompt that said “the academic curriculum should reflect a diverse student population” and “when students see themselves in the curriculum, they do better in school” this colleague argued,

It's important to recognize the struggles and accomplishments of all minorities and how they have shaped our democracy. When students can identify with the courageous people of the past, history becomes personal and meaningful. When they can connect with the historical stories of cultural, racial, and ethnic challenges and triumphs, they are learning and feeling the whole truth about our nation's past...the good and the bad, the pride and the discomfort. Yes, students embrace their heritage, their differences, and their belongingness when they see themselves in the curriculum. (151)

This respondent's reflection challenges the limited account of pain and suffering by also arguing for the "whole truth... the good and the bad, the pride and the discomfort;" however, implicit in binaries of struggle/ accomplishment; challenge/ triumph, and even in "courage" is a focus on pain in the lives and histories of "all minorities." Here, the theory of change undergirding better outcomes for students, presumably who are minoritized, relies on them "seeing" racialized, cultural, and ethnic historical stories of overcoming odds, of struggling in order to succeed, of both "challenge and triumph." These reflections were similar to those of another colleague who shared:

... generally speaking, LGBTQ persons in history faced more struggle to succeed than their peers. That struggle is necessary to highlight in order to accurately report and celebrate the overall accomplishment. Not all elements of history are palatable to everyone; the key takeaway from the lesson should be about succeeding against the odds and not whether those odds are in alignment with a student's personal views. (11)

Similar to theories of change that center on mitigating risk, understanding inclusive history to be about seeing the struggle or odds that marginalized communities have faced places undue emphasis on damage. What makes this "against all odds" narrative incomplete is that it potentially misses a critique of the conditions that required struggle in the first place. As this colleague shares, struggle is necessary to "report and celebrate" accomplishment. Of course, struggle is part of stories about marginalized communities, but we caution that an "against all odds" theory of change might establish a relatively flat narrative about history and social change. When it comes to the stories that students may hear by way of implementation of HB19, we wonder about social and historical contexts, what is shared, and how the tensions between winning and losing might be engaged with students. Is there attention to what caused the struggle to begin with? What took courage? Which challenges different communities met and how systemic forces that are, for example, racialized, might be interrogated?

Raising Awareness for Students Who Experience More Privilege in Schools

While some theories throughout the data pointed to the "change" that inclusive curriculum might make for students whose identities are minoritized, others focused on the effect that inclusive curricula might have on the most privileged students, or for students whose identities are typically affirmed throughout the curriculum. Implicit in these theories of change were a few key ideas: that education is key to social change, that education will enrich the lives of these students, and that education by way of raising awareness will build empathy.

Education as Key to Social Change. Throughout responses, we noticed a common idea about education, which was that education, by way of raising awareness, is the key to social change, or that knowing better means doing better. For example, when presented with the idea that teaching about a diverse population might be offensive to those who might not agree with particular "lifestyles"—a common narrative from those who oppose the bill—one colleague argued, "In my experience, those who don't approve of those 'lifestyles' are people who have no idea what they are opposed to. Education is the only antidote to ignorance" (9). Another colleague shared,

... 'otherness' is reinforced by only representing dominant identities and cultures. Therefore, those within the dominant culture fail to recognize their privilege or the true diversity and human existence. This serves to further systematic oppression. This leads to increased risk for abuse, homelessness, bullying, suicide and many other issues for those in the marginalized groups that are underrepresented. ...representation is key to community and safety. (59)

When minoritized identities and cultures are absent from curriculum, they remain as “other,” and, according to our colleague, when that happens students— in part by not recognizing their privilege— create oppressive systems that serve to disadvantage underrepresented groups to the degree that they are at risk in many ways, including of dying by suicide. The theory of change implicit in this response is that by including “true diversity” in the curriculum, students who are privileged will work toward community building which in turn will create schools as safer places for underrepresented groups. Another colleague shared, “It’s important for ALL students to see the beautiful diversity of humanity and to understand the historical treatment of non-dominant groups. We can’t improve humanity if we don’t reckon with the past” (115). Similar to the example shared above, this response reflects a theory of change which assumes that when “ALL students” understand the “beautiful diversity of humanity” and the ways in which minoritized groups have been treated historically would result in motivation to improve humanity. A theory of change grounded in the belief that knowing better means doing better is not only, as Tuck says, flawed; it also, as Spade might argue, positions students with the most privilege as having complete control over the experiences of minoritized students and over how and if social change is possible. This is important to note because when we as teachers fail to complicate our thinking, when we don’t acknowledge the power, hope, and agency in minoritized communities, not only does the norm stay in place, the deep generational wisdom that these communities hold is erased, as is the possibility for sovereignty that Tuck names as vital.

Enrichment. We call what we see as a related theme enrichment, which perhaps extends ideas of knowing better and doing better to *being* better. Through inductive analysis, we came to recognize ideas of “enrichment” or “well-roundedness” pointing to ownership, as if education “about” our diverse world, for more privileged students, is a commodity, something that they might benefit from for their own sake. Responses that helped us develop this theme pointed to raising awareness as key to being “well-rounded” and “ready for a diverse workforce” (107). In a sense, the theory of change represented in these responses points to an individual benefit for students.

When presented with the idea that when students see themselves they do better in school, this colleague “completely agreed with this theory” and explained, “[I] think that not only should every child see themselves in their teachings that it’s so important for all children to learn about and be exposed to all cultures and lifestyles to make them more well-rounded humans” (141). Similarly, another colleague shared,

I strongly agree that each student should have learning experiences that reflect their own unique and diverse identities and perspectives. I also think that these learning experiences are vital for students across identities and perspectives. My life has been enriched by learning about the lives and histories and experiences of Black people, for example, even though I do not identify as Black. Similarly, I have been enriched by learning through the perspectives of queer people even though I do not identify as queer. (34)

Theories of change here point to the idea that when we are exposed to diversity beyond our lived experiences and realities, we *become*, so to speak. Perhaps being well-rounded will allow students to develop empathy; perhaps they will make decisions that reflect their understanding of a more complex humanity. From these responses, it’s hard to know what being well-rounded does beyond something for the individual. Another colleague went a bit further to explain,

Students should be able to see themselves as valuable and essential parts of history, and more well-rounded students can compete better in an increasingly diverse

workplace. Thus, both for moral and economic reasons, the inclusion of these histories should be mandated in Colorado schools. (107)

Beyond exposure to diversity being something that might enrich students' lives or make them well-rounded for their own sake, a theory of change in our colleague's response here points to the benefit of upward mobility, being able to advance in a competitive economic market.

Building Empathy. With regard to students whose identities are typically affirmed by the curriculum, a final theme in educators' responses about raising awareness was the opportunity for students to build empathy. "Representation," according to colleagues, matters because it will lead to these students "understanding" and "becoming more knowledgeable" (2, 7, 17). The knowledge and understanding that inclusive curriculum might inspire in students who "don't identify with any of those groups" (2) will "build empathy" (49), resulting in these students being/ becoming "more empathetic" (2). Educators saw the development of empathy, through raising awareness about underrepresented identities, as key to social change. One colleague underscores the importance of naming identity and explains,

Representation absolutely matters. It also matters that those that don't identify with any of those groups have a better understanding so that our community can become more knowledgeable and empathetic when appropriate.... Their (LGBTQ+ students) experiences are not political and reading about their experiences, especially when delivered in their own voices, can build empathy and understanding in cis straight people. (7)

This colleague further explained the benefit that students experience from *not* being the dominant voice in the room: "There may be times white children are not the dominant voices in the room. That's a good experience for them. To have to listen and empathize with others. To hear other voices too" (7). Another colleague acknowledged, as did many of our colleagues, that perhaps the discomfort privileged students might feel when learning about "difference" might lead to internal growth and positive action: "Maybe if white people felt uncomfortable enough they would realize, empathize, listen and learn how to be different and better!" (35). These insights are further articulated by another colleague who shared,

I support [HB19] as it encourages students to put themselves in the shoes of others who are different and have had different life experiences than they have.... The proposed change [to the curriculum] encourages broader thinking and empathy, which our society desperately needs. (19)

Embedded in our colleagues' insights is a theory of change that relies on empathy and presumably damage. Responses suggest that stories students might hear, the learning and understanding that they will develop, will provoke a particular sympathy, a sensitivity for groups who are "different" from them and who suffer. While as educators, we want to support our students to develop empathy and to have a heart for the world, empathy as an end goal leaves the norm in place; those students can easily take off those shoes once the bell rings. Building empathy, as Tuck reminds us, by way of raising awareness "does nothing to contest the order of power, how [people in power] got that power, and their influence over our lives."

Attention to Complexity: Desire-Based Theories of Change

While many responses across questionnaire items indicated that the possibility of change was grounded in damage-centered narratives, many of our colleagues pointed to frameworks rooted in

desire. Throughout responses, we saw narratives that aimed to depathologize minoritized communities, that challenged a reliance on damage. Instead, our colleagues' reflections underscored the need for a focus on "complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination of lived lives" (Tuck, 2009, p. 416), and to move beyond raising consciousness. Throughout our analysis, we noticed two salient themes: more than damage/ where the damage comes from and acknowledging and welcoming contradiction.

More than Damage/Where the Damage Comes From

Though less present than a focus on damage, throughout their responses, educators argued for the need to tell stories that spoke to the complexity of minoritized communities. For example, one colleague worried about the potential danger in showing students a "disadvantaged portrait of themselves and people like them," explaining

too often representation of marginalized groups focuses on their struggles and hardships, their disadvantages and as a bi-product of the (socially imposed, though that is not always made clear) deficits that these groups are starting from, rather than the contributions they have made, the successes they have achieved, etc. (57)

Not only does this colleague argue that "we must be intentional and deliberate in showing them other stories of themselves, ones in which they are the protagonist" but also points to social forces that create damage to begin with. Below, our colleague echoes the importance of attention to systems of oppression and the negative impact it could have on students' learning. This colleague shared,

Without a true understanding of the centuries of systematic oppression, students could think [citizens of color] and Native Americans have less wealth because they are lazy. The narrative itself is lazy because it doesn't even try to understand all the historical and societal contributions to wealth. When students understand all the contributing factors which are not due to one's choices or efforts, then students can learn to be empathetic for the challenges experienced by minorities. (160)

While empathy is a part of this colleague's theory of change, rather than relying on damage, the "lesson" relies on attention to power and historical injustice. Without attention to forces that disproportionately distribute equity and justice, students might misinterpret the ways in which *inequity* has resulted in material consequences for minoritized communities—in this case, a lack of wealth. Another colleague extends this line of thinking by arguing that

conversations about race, immigrants, and LGBTQ+ people need to happen to be 1. accurate about our history and culture, 2. understand how history has created systems of privilege and oppression, 3. Integrate this into individual schema/experiences, 4. better understand the current events in our world. (59)

Beyond raising awareness of injustice, cultivating students' deep understanding of systems of privilege and oppression will presumably move students to *change*, to understand the world differently and to make sense of how history has impacted our current reality. In this colleague's response, there is attention to damage, but the damage is explained and not erased. Contextualizing damage in social and historical systems of racism, colonization, and transphobia, to name a few, is critical to shift the discourse from damage to desire and possibility.

Acknowledging and Welcoming Complexity and Contradiction

A common trope in narratives of resistance to HB19 suggests that conversations about race, gender and sexual diversity, and other groups listed in the bill will make students who experience privilege (e.g., white, cisgender, straight) uncomfortable and that this learning will lead to further division. Many of the responses that acknowledged and welcomed contradiction come from our colleagues' reflections on this point—that in one colleagues' words, “truth has always been uncomfortable.” Speaking to our complex history, one colleague argued for teaching to include facts: “this is what happened, this is what led up to it, this is how people responded.” They continued,

History might make us uncomfortable but it is still our history. Not everything in history is pretty. People have done some awful things. But we don't need to ignore those things and not teach our kids about it. It doesn't make all white people bad but there were/are some bad people and some bad policies and it's okay to learn about those so we can learn to do better. (5)

In this response, our colleague disrupts binary thinking about people being good or bad, or as Tuck (2009) says, “either complicit in reproducing social inequity, or that they resist it” (p. 419). This reflection moves toward a theory of change rooted in desire, and in this, we see such power. For Tuck, desire moves beyond binaries and dichotomies, such as those that frame individuals and communities as either reproducing or resisting, and attending to complexity. Desire,

more closely matches the experiences of people who, at different points in a single day, reproduce, resist, are complicit in, rage against, celebrate, throw up hands/fists/towels, and withdraw and participate in uneven social structures—that is, everybody. (p. 420)

Framing historical events and actions in ways that challenge right/wrong and other binary thinking has the potential to engage students in meaningful ways and to acknowledge potential discomfort that might arise. Scholars of queer theory and pedagogy have written about the promise of discomfort (e.g., Britzman, 1995; Kumashiro, 2002; Luhmann, 1998; Staley, 2018), and the necessity of it. Kumashiro (2002) supports us to think about how students experience discomfort when they learn that they are, in fact, complicit with oppression—as we all are. He calls attention to the emotional toll this work takes, when students experience “crisis” (Kumashiro, 2002), and he invites teachers to think about creating the context for learning that might hold space for reactions like these. Discomfort, he argues, *is how we learn*. This insight was reflected in several responses, including this one, when an educator spoke back to the idea that inclusion by way of HB19 would provoke damaging discomfort:

This presumes that discomfort is unbearable and that it doesn't lead to better understanding and connection (when mediated well). That is a false presumption. Discomfort is not the same as feeling unsafe. And we NEED to teach youth to sit with an uncomfortable discussion for the sake of better understanding and connection! That skill ALONE is worth doing this. (59)

Similarly, another colleague shared, “A lot of history and current events are not comfortable conversations. When we teach people to have conversations they can grow and change. If we avoid uncomfortable conversations then we are not becoming better together” (173). Challenging students to understand both themselves and their ancestors through a lens of complexity and desire not only supports them to grapple with their own complicity, but it also provides space for them to see and

witness one another in community, to find connection, understanding and a shared humanity that is riddled with contradiction, as these two colleagues suggest. In Tuck's application of Gordon's (1997) complex personhood, she draws on Indigenous understandings of "collectivity and the interdependence of the collective and the person" and pushes back on the Western focus on the individual. Centering collectivity requires that as members of, in this case, classroom communities, we support our students to invest in one another, in our personal growth, in our understandings of the world around us, our histories, and how who we are and how we act impacts those around us, in both small and large ways. When thinking about the implementation of HB19, we find this framing is so promising. It directly attends to the intersectional aims of the bill and what students will learn, about themselves and others, and how it will impact all students, always, in different ways. When we teach and learn in ways that honor complexity—of our students, our histories, and the lived experiences of people in our communities, when we teach from a desire based theory of change, we are hopeful that students are drawn to crave complicated knowledges, be "informed seekers" as proposes, "longing, [for a] present that is enriched by both the past and the future" (Tuck, 2009, p. 418).

Discussion and Implications

As researchers and practitioners have emphasized, representation matters. Inclusive curriculum *does* something to and for students' learning and unlearning (e.g., Kumashiro, 2002). For students whose identities have been historically minoritized in schools, representation provides mirrors for them to see themselves, their families, people who share similar identities and lived experiences. For students whose identities have been more privileged in schools, it provides windows, opportunities to imagine life differently, to understand how certain communities experience this world. If, as educators, we engage a commitment to intersectionality whereby we invite students to think about identity and community as complex, multi-layered, and paradoxical, the hope is that all students will engage both mirrors and windows (Bishop, 1990) as they make sense of who they are, the history that got us all here and that we continue to create. And, as educators with commitments to anti-oppressive practices, we question if and how these lenses and subsequent pedagogies have effectively done what we hoped they might do. In essence, we argue that representation absolutely matters, *and* that representation with criticality is the essential component.

Spade (2011) asks us to question laws and policies, even "good" ones, in what they intend to do and how. In this study, we answer Spade's call—and, encouraged by Tuck's nudge to think about our theories of change, we question if more common practices (e.g., around mirrors and windows) offer changes we are after as educators. Applying a theory of change framework allowed us to understand our colleagues' responses in nuanced ways and supported us to question taken for granted notions of what inclusive curriculum might do and how. We asked, for example, about what students might see in those mirrors, how stories told might reflect damage, brokenness, problems to be solved. Through the windows, we had similar questions: what will students see about "others" beyond victimhood, bad luck, or resilience in the form of individual achievements and success. As we sat with our colleagues' reflections, ideas of inclusion seemed to largely follow theories of change that relied on damage and raising awareness. Throughout our analysis, we pointed to examples of our colleagues' thinking that we believe need to be troubled and reconsidered, theories of change that are partial. This, we see, as a place of possibility, an opportunity to develop our pedagogies and practices.

Beyond understanding the ways that systems of oppression continue to marginalize groups of people based on race, gender, sexual orientation, language, immigration status, and dis/ability, we

want to uplift theories of change grounded in the complexity of people's lives, their power and joy. Beyond attending to the resulting damage that communities have to contend with, we see promise in engaging complex histories, digging deep into paradoxes, challenging binaries of good/bad, success/failure, and unpacking these nuances with students. When engaging students in learning about Rosa Parks, for example, a common frame might be to encourage some students to look through a “window” and to develop empathy by putting themselves in Parks’ shoes, sitting where she sat, experiencing discrimination in a particular way, as a woman of color during segregation. Other students might be encouraged to look in a mirror, to remember times when their resilience in the face of discrimination was a lesson for others, when they lifted themselves up after experiencing a targeted attack on their personhood. These are, no doubt, important lessons about empathy and beating the odds. And, as we argued previously, these lessons stop short of supporting students to understand the ways that systems and structures disproportionately dole out inequity and injustice. Educators as policy actors might further support students to think about the ecology of injustice and white supremacy that Parks, a longtime activist and not a “tired seamstress,” was responding to as well as the intentional collective action in which the Black community-at-large was engaged (Theoharis, 2015). Parks, in fact, was a “test case” coordinated by the NAACP, and her action served as the cornerstone of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which was later described as “the model for human rights throughout the world” (Library of Congress, 2026). This more complex, and accurate, dive into the story of Rosa Parks not only implicates white supremacy and subsequent actions of perpetrators but also highlights the power and *resistance* of the Black community and the legacy of their fight for freedom. Students who experience this lesson might be asked to think about ways their actions at times might be discriminatory (e.g., with regard to normative assumptions about race, sexuality, gender), where those actions might come from (e.g., cisheteronormativity, white supremacy), and how they might disrupt harmful thinking and subsequent actions. They might also be asked to think about what power looks like in the face of discrimination, examples of minoritized communities resisting unjust systems and structures, and what we can learn about joy in building solidarity and community.

Our hope is that our analysis and theory of change framework that we bring to bear on educators’ reflections provide insights into the ways that implementation of inclusive curriculum might work to shift the cultures of schools, to challenge students to have empathy, yes, *and* to move toward putting privilege on the line as we recognize that we are all implicated in historical harms that persist. In alignment with Hernández (2020), we hope our analysis offers an example of how researchers and practitioners might leverage a theory of change framework to realize the promises of equity-focused policies in education.

Conclusion

Our findings feel urgent given the recent and continuous rise of racist, transphobic, and xenophobic rhetoric and policies. To be sure, while we write here about inclusive curriculum policies and their promise, both the federal government and many states have already adopted intentionally *anti*-inclusive policies. This curricular legislation restricts schools’ abilities to engage in work promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion for minoritized groups of students and censors the lives of queer and trans people through so-called “No Promo Homo” and “Don’t Say Gay or Trans” laws (GLSEN, 2024). Further, there has been a pointed attack on trans youth in schools, framing affirmation of trans youth’s gender identities as something being forced upon them and a threat to families and safety (The White House, 2025). Yet, even as these dangerous moves to take away the life chances and dignity of certain communities become more pervasive, we see promise in the ways

that educators can leverage their roles as policy actors and move in deliberate and politically savvy ways. The call here is to make sure that as educators, we do not take our theories of change for granted, but rather that we ground our pedagogical and curricular decisions with greater clarity around the goals of our actions. For those crafting formal policies—especially inclusive curricula policies—we see opportunities to outline the theories of change in formal policy language, rather than allowing beliefs about what the policy will do to remain vague or implicit. We also see opportunities for policymakers to draw on an understanding of educators as policy actors—who interpret, make sense of, and enact policies in ways informed by their theories of change—to animate how policies are written. Examining our theories of change in this way holds promise for honing policy implementation efforts toward more just and inclusive public education.

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