# Examining Critical Theory as a Framework to Advance Equity Through Student Affairs Assessment

Ciji A. Heiser Krista Prince and Joseph D. Levy [*]

[*] **Institution:** University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, National Loius University
**Department:** See "about the authors"

# Abstract

Inquiry in student affairs plays a critical role in advancing equity efforts since it is utilized for the improvement of programs and services supporting student learning and experiences. Assessment practice, when undergirded by a critical theoretical framework, employs intentional approaches corresponding to each phase of the assessment cycle. Critical practitioners begin by acknowledging their own subjectivity and the ways their positionality influences their practice. Further, they acknowledge the agency of participants as knowers and collaborators in this work. Additionally, practitioners employ methodological diversity and center marginalized voices not only in evidence gathering, but also in interpretation and when implementing change. Employing such approaches enriches assessment practice and enables data to be used in transformative ways in the pursuit of equity. This article explores critical theory and its implications for assessment practice. Examples and considerations are provided throughout as well as questions posed for institutional and personal practice reflection.

Assessment is a practice deeply rooted in accountability related to the costs of higher education. The rise of assessment for accountability in the 1980s influenced traditional assessment goals such as evaluating student learning, examining programs, and determining institutional effectiveness (DeLuca Fernández, 2015; Wall, Hursh, & Rodgers III, 2014). In an age where increasing scrutiny is seen as the answer to higher education limitations, assessment has served as a form of control (Wall et al., 2014). More recently, external accountability is starting to be complemented by internal curiosity about the impact of programs on student learning (Kuh, Jankowski, Ikenberry, & Kinzie, 2014). At its core, assessment in higher education is "designed to help faculty and staff improve instruction, programs, and services, and thus student learning, continuously" (Banta & Palomba, 2015, p. 3). Efforts to identify the impact of student affairs could be made more comprehensive and inclusive through the incorporation of an equity orientation.

Assessment in higher education is uniquely positioned to transform inquiry into a more inclusive practice in pursuit of equity because it draws "on a wealth of scholarly traditions in order to critique the status quo, interrogate power, theorize agency, and work toward social justice" (Pasque, Carducci, Kuntz, & Gildersleeve, 2012 p. 17). Critical theory is grounded in notions of justice and centering marginalized voices in order to promote emancipation, liberation, and equity (Levinson, 2011). While an axiology of accountability differs vastly from one motivated by equity and justice, the latter motivations can strengthen approaches guided by the former. Core components of assessment practice outlined by the assessment cycle (Maki, 2010, p.7) include evidence gathering, interpretation, and implementing change; these components are vastly enhanced when supported by a critical theoretical framework. Critical approaches have been examined with regard to research, qualitative inquiry (Pasque et al., 2012), the study of higher education (Martinez-Alemán, Pusser, & Bensimon, 2015), and addressing achievement gaps in higher education (Bensimon, 2005); but have only begun to be examined in student affairs assessment practices (DeLuca Fernández, 2015). Strengthened by critical theory, traditional best-practice approaches to student affairs assessment become

transformative for all students by considering the positionality of the evaluator, recognizing agency of the participants, employing methodological diversity, and extending analysis strategies.

## Critical Social Theory and Assessment

Cultural theorists began their work at the Institute for Social Research within the Frankfurt School in 1923 (Hanks, 2011, p. 81). Forerunners such as Karl Marx, analyzing capitalism as a form of domination, brought to light the ways in which market values left power in the hands of few (Levinson, Gross, Link, & Hanks, 2011, p. 26). In the context of assessment, this critique of capitalism is relevant today given how assessment has served to answer calls for institutional accountability; to show that institutions are creating workers and knowledge for economic development (Wall et al., 2014). For example, reporting systems often emphasize "graduation rates, job placement, and debt-to-earnings ratios" (Banta & Palomba, 2015, p. 6) rather than student learning. Drawing on Marx's work, Max Horkheimer named critical theory and described emancipation as its central feature. In pursuit of a more just society, he and others sought to better understand and expose the systems and institutions that regulate behavior and perpetuate inequitable outcomes. He named critical theory to highlight a change-oriented approach in contrast to traditional theories that only sought understanding. While it was originally concerned specifically with the effects of capitalism and its structures on socioeconomic status, now "critical social theories are those conceptual accounts of the social world that attempt to understand and explain the causes of structural domination and inequality in order to facilitate human emancipation and equity" (Levinson, 2011, p. 2). Such theories question common sense assumptions and taken for granted norms. Critical inquiry's multiple branches include critical race theories, LatCrit, queer theory, critical feminist theories, critical discourse analysis, and theories of power and marginalization. Critical theory, in any of its many forms, centers lived experiences in order to "identify and locate the ways in which societies produce and preserve specific inequalities through social, cultural, and economic systems" (Martinez-Alemán et al., 2015, p. 8). In this way, critical approaches oriented towards equity differ from those motived by economics and accountability.

An emphasis on economic outcomes for higher education has led to assessment for accountability, whereby evaluators employ positivistic and detached approaches. Assessment may be pursued using unreflective procedural notions emphasizing fair, neutral, valid, rational, functional, normative, value-free, apolitical approaches (Martinez-Alemán et al., 2015; McArthur, 2015; Wall et al., 2014). These approaches leave considerations of power and privilege largely unexamined if assessment does not interrogate "by and for whom?" (McArthur, 2015; Wall et al., 2014; DeLuca Fernández, 2015). Traditional approaches to assessment reinforce notions of neutrality, sameness, and objectivity, which hinder potential for transforming inequitable policies, procedures, and outcomes. Critical practitioners attend to the differences between groups and seek to remedy underlying systemic inequities that produce differential outcomes. Critical assessment "expose[s] and address[es] power, privilege, and structures; consider[s] thoughtfully histories and contexts; make[s] explicit assumptions and intentions; [and] eschew[s] colorblind and ideological neutral claims" (DeLuca Fernández, 2015, p. 5). Thus, critical approaches enable us to transgress the limitations of, and strengthen, traditional assessment approaches. While it is not meant to be prescriptive, practitioners can embody critical principles through their approach to student affairs assessment work. In order for assessment to be critical, practitioners must adopt an equity orientation when approaching each phase of the assessment cycle by considering positionality, agency, methodological diversity, and analysis.

## Practitioner Positionality and Subjectivity

Ethical standards in assessment and evaluation include maintaining objectivity, limiting bias, avoiding conflicts of interest, maintaining confidentiality, determining political risks of data, and being aware of the impact of data on stakeholders (American College Personnel Association, 2007; Association for Institutional Research, 2013). A critical framework challenges the ability of practitioners to be neutral and unbiased because the practice of assessment is inextricably linked to the identities held by the practitioner such that,

as individual leaders, we practice within norms, assumptions, values, beliefs,

and behaviors originating in our multiple identities…In addition, identity influences experiences and perceptions of power or lack thereof and affects how we think about and practice within power structures of colleges and universities. (Chávez & Sanlo, 2013, p. 9)

Attention to our identities and experiences is imperative because "our positionalities -how we see ourselves, how we are perceived by others, and our experiences- influence how we approach knowledge, what we know, and what we believe to know" (Bettez, 2015, p. 934-935). In order to address the influence of one's subjectivity on their work, a critical practitioner continually engages in self-reflexivity by interrogating "how [their] experiences, knowledge, and social positions might impact each aspect and moment" (Bettez, 2015, p.940) of the assessment cycle.

The influence of one's positionalities is pervasive, reaching even the most fundamental of assessment practices such as the notion of asking the right questions. When designing instruments and employing different methodologies, acknowledging the myriad of intersecting identities that shape one's own lens may lead to the conclusion that this notion of asking the right questions is influenced by one's experiences and biases. Inviting additional voices to discuss assessment processes such as determining what to measure, which questions to ask, what methods to use, and how to analyze and report findings can address positionality and subjectivity as well as give agency to stakeholders. For example, a white, cisgender, heterosexual, female assessment practitioner does not have identities congruent with the assessment of a program designed to serve men of color. This does not make such a practitioner ineffective; however, a more effective approach to assessment would include individuals with similar positionality. Including students and staff who share the identities of the population being assessed helps practitioners challenge power dynamics, be more inclusive of diverse identities, address assumptions, disrupt ideological neutral claims, and acknowledge implicit biases throughout the assessment process. This is critical given the ways positionality can unknowingly influence practitioners responsible for the data collection and interpretation.

Practitioners operating from primarily dominant identities may

further amplify instances lacking perspective. Critical inquiry encourages evaluators to account for implicit biases pertaining to one's identities. Implicit bias is "a descriptive term encompassing thoughts and feelings that occur independently of conscious intention, awareness, or control" (Nosek & Riskind, 2012, p. 115). Thus, our exposure to societal messages and our experiences may subconsciously influence our associations both about groups to which we belong and those we do not. For example, when career coaches evaluate resumes they may subconsciously associate either positively or negatively with student name, perceived race/ ethnicity, education background, experience, or geographical location; but a rubric may mitigate the effects these associations could have on review and feedback. When utilizing rubrics, recommended practices of calibration and norming activities help ensure reliability and work to minimize subjectivity of the evaluator. Having a well-designed rubric and conducting calibration activities can norm evaluators with content and scoring, ultimately aiming to account for existing subjectivity or implicit biases. Beyond assisting the practitioner, rubrics support students by clearly communicating examined content and how scores are determined. Sharing rubrics with students ahead of an intervention as in the example of reviewing a resume provides transparency, while also enabling students to set themselves up for success and familiarizes them with process prior to interacting with a career coach. Critical approaches such as this work to navigate positionality and subjectivity, while improving traditional approaches to assessment, by empowering students and honoring their agency as subjects in the assessment effort.

## Agency of the Participants

Rather than positioning the participant as the object of study, critical practitioners acknowledge the agency of the human "subject," who is expert and authority on their own experiences because "all critical inquiry is grounded in lived experiences, and power relations and social justice are central concerns" (Martinez-Alemán et al., 2015, p. 3; Steinberg & Cannella, 2012). Facilitating collaborative processes by inviting stakeholders to operate as partners in assessment work, rather than objects of it, recognizes agency of participants and strengthens assessment work. Collaboration can occur in multiple elements of assessment

practice: mapping learning experiences and programs provided to larger outcomes or competencies of the institution, writing and approving learning outcomes, and identifying what is meaningful and measurable. Of note is that time is a significant consideration for many practitioners. Culp and Dungy (2012) assert that institutional leaders should encourage their staff to block off time on their calendars for assessment related activities such as analysis and reporting. Incorporating collaborative approaches to assessment work may be more time intensive than initially planned, but such approaches build both assessment culture and competence - which is strongly supported throughout assessment literature as not only appropriate, but necessary.

Engaging in collaborative processes brings the voices of students, staff, and faculty from across the institution to the assessment table. Accreditation standards and criteria already expect students to be consulted and engaged by institutions in decision making and providing feedback on university goals and overall governance processes, not to mention be actively engaged in assessment (Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, 2016; Higher Learning Commission, 2014; Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2015; WASC Senior College and University Commission, 2013). The responsibility rests with the institution to execute and determine how to engage students and ensure all student voices and needs are represented. Maki (2010) reinforces this concept, stating, "assessment is not a task for small groups of experts but a collaborative activity; its aim is wider, better-informed attention to student learning by all parties with a stake in its improvement" (p. 41). Inviting stakeholders to operate as collaborative partners in assessment work honors agency of the stakeholders by prioritizing how their experiences inform data collection and provide meaningful insight during data analysis.

One suggestion for considering the agency of the participant is empowering students as content developers. Seeking perspectives from minoritized populations for experiential feedback when creating educational workshops related to race, diversity, or social justice is one example. Frustrations, concerns, and fears, as well as points of pride and praise, could also be coupled with theory and existing needs or campus climate data to generate workshop

content. These approaches establish minoritized students as subject matter experts on the topic of their lived experiences, enhances engagement, and may attract students to attend given their role in program development. Student feedback and positioning may also inform the methodological approaches taken to collect relevant data.

## Methodological Diversity

An emphasis on economic outcomes has led many practitioners to employ positivistic and detached methodological approaches. Critical approaches to methodology encourage practitioners to consider what to measure and how, using multiple modalities for triangulation, and questioning whether a tool measures the intended topic for different groups. These practices, guided by principles of critical theory, compliment the notion that learning is complex and multifaceted; it needs methodological approaches that work for students engaged in the learning process who are equally complex and multifaceted (Maki, 2010).

Practitioners employing approaches to assessment grounded in critical theory reflect thoroughly on the implications of what is measured and how. In determining what to measure and how, critical evaluators consider the effects of economic drivers and which values are attached to what is measured (DeLuca Fernández, 2015). For example, the outcome that students living on campus will have higher average grade point averages than those living off campus may be driven by the economic need to boost occupancy, by the level of academic support provided to students living in the residence halls, or both.

The different ways in which participants make meaning and process information around their experiences influences how their experience is measured. Approaches to measurement undergirded by critical theory include exploring multiple modalities and multiple methods of data collection. Because learning can be multifaceted and non-linear, Maki (2010) encourages "…employing a diverse array of methods, including those that call for actual performance, using them over time so as to reveal change, growth, and increasing degrees of integration" (p. 40). Such methods cannot be grounded in normative

assumptions or they fail to interrogate underlying disparity (Martinez-Alemán et al., 2015). When selecting assessment methods, practitioners operating from an equity orientation pose questions such as: Will this method reinforce a power dynamic? Does this method work for this population (e.g. survey or storytelling)? What additional method would provide a more comprehensive narrative around a program or service? Employing multiple measures can open new possibilities and resistance to a universal truth or interpretation of data. This is important given traditional approaches to data interpretation of single or isolated sources of data, as well as potential biases from positionality or identities.

Not only are multiple measures encouraged, critical approaches to assessment support the employment of a wider variety of methods. The most common methodological approach to assessment is surveying, with an increase in recent years in the use of rubrics and portfolios (Kuh et al., 2014). Methodological approaches such as rubrics, journaling, focus groups, interviews, surveys, and portfolios could be complemented with approaches such as ethnography, textual analysis, historiography, literary analysis, aesthetic criticism, theatrical and dramatic ways of observing (Steinberg & Cannella, 2012, p. 21). Including diverse methods allows assessment practitioners to leverage the collection of data as a tool for equity by creating the space for students to share data around their learning and development in ways that are as rich and complex as their learning processes and intersecting identities.

Consider context and audience when determining methodological approaches. Lacking direct contact with the intended populations for assessment, a survey might be the best chance to capture data. When a captive audience or engagement is possible, it affords opportunities for populations to be engaged in focus groups, interviews, observations, case studies, reflections, and perhaps even pre- and post-tests; all direct measures as opposed to likely indirect survey measures. Knowing specific demographic information can further shape the approach, allowing or enabling given populations to share their stories in meaningful and familiar ways. Critical approaches challenge notions of correctness, validity, and truth. When considering ideas of validity and truth,

critical approaches question whether a specific tool measures the intended topic across diverse groups. Matsuda et al. (1993) recommend:

> recognizing the experiential knowledge of people of color. Such recognition is filtered through counterstorytelling, narrative, biographies, and life histories. When the experiences and knowledges of people of color are shared, the process allows for a more authentic and unique understanding how they experience racist, oppressive structures. (p. 197)

Intentionally asking questions that resonate across groups, and not just for the majority population, in ways that empower diverse groups to respond with their truth provides richer, contextualized, and valid data for practitioners. The medium and method with which practitioners can collected data also provide opportunities for sharing.

## Data Analysis and Reporting

The transformation of data from a raw mass of material to easily digestible information is a core component of assessment practice. Making data easily understandable is fundamental for the usability of the data in order to facilitate data-driven discussion and decisions that influence students, staff, and other stakeholders. Making meaning of the data through analysis and reporting makes data actionable and closes the assessment loop. Employing critical approaches to data analysis and reporting, assessment practitioners begin to ask: how do one's identities or lived experiences influence data analysis? Do institutional values and norms influence data processing? Who are the findings serving? Critical theory can be used to strengthen core assessment practices and advance equity efforts by centering the lived experiences of populations typically left at the margins by examining how meaning is assigned to data and employing collaborative approaches to analysis and reporting.

A common practice for the analysis of quantitative data is reporting the average or mean of the data. Generally, it is thought that by aggregating individual measures, evaluators can find group trends that guide decision-making about curriculum, policy, services, and programs. The common practice of reporting aggregated data has positive merits including the identification of

patterns throughout variables and across time. A critical approach must interrogate what knowledge such objective, apolitical, neutral approaches to assessment might obscure, and consider alternative methods of inquiry that attempt to address and remedy systemic inequities. Aggregation may not tell the complete story. While an aggregate story may be positive, differing narratives from specific populations may emerge. Disaggregating data serves as a tool for advancing equity because analyzing data by different populations allows practitioners to identify if programs and services are equitably meeting the needs of all students across the institution. Data disaggregation can complement aggregated findings by allowing professionals to identify if programs are meeting established outcomes for all students

Disaggregating the data can center the lived experiences of historically marginalized populations and creates space for such voices to be heard. For example, when breaking down a large data set by different subgroups, a practitioner may find that eight students who self-identified as transgender responded to a survey lower than the rest of the responding population. Regardless of statistical significance, critical practitioners acknowledge that significance and importance are not synonymous; they would encourage dialogue around the data by sharing it with stakeholders supporting this population.

Critical inquiry is grounded in lived experiences with power relations and social justice as concerns, thus reciprocity between the practitioner and participants is key. Therefore, DeLuca Fernández (2015) advises practitioners to discuss how they attach meaning to data. Practitioners' intersecting identities frame their worldview, perceptions, and how they make meaning from data. Using uncritical, neutral, or objective approaches could lead practitioners to reject underrepresented voices, over-privilege existing ways of knowing, and reproduce systemic inequality (DeLuca Fernández, 2015, p. 12). As previously discussed, one way to balance practitioner positionality and power relations is to invite additional perspectives to analyze and report on the data. This approach can help moderate biases held by the practitioner, while also working to address power dynamics or inequities of programs or services identified in data collected. Critical approaches to data analysis and reporting can serve as an

important step toward redressing inequity by utilizing a collaborative approach to discussions and interpretations of data,

When only looking at end-results or metrics according to external entities, the importance and meaning can be lost on the student experience. This includes factors influencing success and elements contributing to a safe, encouraging, and inclusive learning environment. Consequently, there becomes less incentive to examine the interaction of identity or diversity elements with institutional interventions. This can have dangerous consequences such that "the implications of methodological conservatism for individuals and communities who regularly encounter individual, institutional, and/or societal oppression include the preservation of discriminatory educational practices, policies, and environments and perpetuation of the inequitable status quo" (Pasque et al., 2012 p. ix). It becomes increasingly important to treat data sets as part of an inclusive batch of information rather than in a silo or vacuum. For example, while student success rates point to particular courses as critical to success, early interventions for students struggling in those courses may need to be tailored to their identities or circumstances. One student on scholarship may struggle in chemistry because they are not studying enough or taking advantage of tutoring resources available to them. Another student may struggle in chemistry because their job, which provides income necessary for them to make tuition payments, prohibits them from making their lab section every other week. Intervention for this latter student needs to be different from the former, as there are additional circumstances for consideration in which to offer guidance beyond coaching time management or study skills.

## Implications for Inquiry and Equity

Pasque et al. (2012) asserts that, "equity concerns are foundational to students' lives: marginalized identities, opportunity to learn, access, persistence, attainment, pedagogy, and the social stratification produced by participation in higher education" (p. 7). The application of critical theory positions assessment practices to expose inequalities. An integral component of assessment work is sharing and using data to make decisions for improvement.

Because issues of equity are central to students' experiences in higher education, and critical approaches to assessment facilitate the exposure of inequities in programs and services offered, practitioners taking a critical approach to assessment will be better able to serve all students.

To that end, it is important to examine assessment practices, processes, and resources for opportunities to integrate critical approaches. As plans are put together, is consideration given to involving appropriate stakeholders? When designing an instrument, are demographics and identity-related components stressed for inclusion? Could report templates have built-in sections or prompts encouraging reflection of overall data? Are findings disaggregated with respect to particular populations or identities? Such questions should be posed by assessment professionals, integrated in areas involved in assessment work, and focused on populations that are often the subject of inquiry.

To best inform focus and approach, institutional needs should be considered. As critical inquiry examines identity and equity-related topics, professionals need to be knowledgeable about the populations of students served and existing institutional equity issues. Examining pain points, areas to improve, and strengths surrounding these topics could give purposeful direction when integrating new approaches for programs and services. Knowing institutional priorities and trends could provide a baseline or framework with which to direct initial efforts. This may mean priorities themselves are challenged to evolve and serve equity aims.

Finally, integrated reflection of practice and efficacy will be crucial. Examining over time if professionals are truly taking a critical approach or exemplifying needed inquiry. If not, additional education or professional development may be needed. Questions to help facilitate this reflection may include: Has assessment effectiveness been impacted positively or negatively after integrating critical inquiry? Is critical assessment yielding actionable and meaningful data in relation to inquiry and equity needs at the institution? Like any other assessment approach, where problems, barriers, or opportunities for improvement exist, , iterate for improvement.

## Conclusion

Traditional approaches to assessment characterized by impartiality, validity, and objectivity may provide useful data in the age of reporting and accountability based on economic measures of success. However, such objective approaches to assessment may obscure critical questions, methods, and data interpretations that would enable us to uncover and respond to systemic inequities that render differential outcomes in learning or experience for students. Therefore, evaluators should ground their assessment in critical theory, in order for assessment to advance equity in programs and services at institutions of higher education. Critical approaches can be applied and positively influence every facet of assessment work. Grounding assessment approaches in critical theory enables practitioners to examine further learning and development experiences of all students and collect evidence through a wider array of methods meaningful for triangulation.

## About the authors:

*Ciji A. Heiser is the Assistant Director for Assessment and Strategic Initiatives at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Krista Prince is the Coordinator for Leadership Development in the Department of Housing and Residential Education at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is also a doctoral student in Educational Studies/Cultural Foundations concurrently pursuing a certificate in Women's and Gender Studies at UNC-Greensboro. Joe Levy is the Director of Assessment at National Louis University, with responsibility to guide university level assessment, support academic program assessment, and coordinate student affairs assessment. Joe is passionate about data-informed decision making, accountability, and promoting a student-centered approach inside and outside of the classroom. Joe earned his MS in Student Affairs in Higher Education from Colorado State University and his BA in English from Baldwin-Wallace College.*

## References

ACPA-College Student Educators International. (2007). *ASK*

standards: Assessment skills and knowledge content standards for student affairs practitioners and scholars. Washington, D. C.: American College Personnel Association (ACPA).

Association for Institutional Research (AIR). (2013, May 2). Code of ethics and professional practice (CODE). Retrieved from Association for Institutional Research (AIR) website: https://www.airweb.org/Membership/Pages/CodeOfEthics.aspx

Banta, T., & Palomba, C. (2015). *Assessment essentials: Planning, implementing, and *improving assessment in higher education (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Bensimon, E. M. (2005). Closing the achievement gap in higher education: An organizational learning perspective. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2005: 99–111.

Bettez, B.C. (2015). Navigating the complexity of qualitative research in postmodern contexts: assemblage, critical reflexivity, and communion as guides. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 28*(8), 932-954.

Chávez, A. F., & Sanlo, R. (Eds.). (2013). *Identity and leadership: Informing our lives,informing our practice.* Washington, DC: NASPA Publications.

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE). (2016). Standards for accreditation: Commission on institutions of higher education. Burlington, MA: New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

Culp, M.M., & Dungy, G. (Eds). (2012). *Building a culture of evidence in student affairs: A guide for leaders and practitioners.* Washington, DC: NASPA Publications.

DeLuca Fernández, S. (2015). *Critical Assessment* [PDF of PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from http://studentaffairsassessment.org/structured-conversations

Hanks, C. (2011). The double-edge of reason: Jürgen Habermas and the Frankfurt School. In B.A.U.Levinson (Ed.), *Beyond critique: Exploring critical social theories and education* (pp.

80-112). Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Higher Learning Commission (2014). The Criteria for accreditation and core components. Retrieved from: https://www.hlcommission.org/Criteria-Eligibility-and-Candidacy/criteria-and-core-components.html

Kuh, G. D., Jankowski, N., Ikenberry, S. O., & Kinzie, J. (2014). *Knowing what students know and can do: The current state of student learning outcomes assessment in US colleges and universities.* Urbana, IL: University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA).

Levinson, B.A.U. (2011). Introduction: Exploring critical social theories in education. In B.A.U.

Levinson. (Ed.), *Beyond critique: Exploring critical social theories and education* (pp. 1-24). Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Levinson, B.A.U., Gross, J.P. K., Link, J., & Hanks, C. (2011). Forerunners and foundation builders: Origins of western critical social theory tradition. *Beyond critique: Exploring critical social theories and education* (pp. 25-50). Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Maki, P. L. (2010). *Assessing for learning: Building a sustainable commitment across the institution* (2nd ed.). Stylus Publishing LLC: Sterling, VA.

Martinez-Alemán, A. M., Pusser, B., & Bensimon, E. M. (Eds.). (2015). *Critical approaches to the study of higher education: A practical introduction.* Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Matsuda, M. J., Lawrence, C., Delgado, R., & Crenshaw, K. (Eds.). (1993). *Words that wound: Critical race theory, assaultive speech, and the First Amendment.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

McArthur, J. (2016). Assessment for social justice: The role of assessment in achieving social justice. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 41,* 7, 967-981.

Middle States Commission on Higher Education. (2015). Standards for accreditation and requirements of affiliation (13th ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

Nosek, B.A., & Riskind, R.G. (2012). Policy implications of implicit social cognition. *Social Issues and Policy Review, 6*, 113-147.

Pasque, P., Carducci, R., Kuntz, A., & Gildersleeve, R. (2012). Qualitative inquiry for equity in higher education: Methodological innovations, implications, and interventions. *ASHE Higher Education Report, 37*.

Steinberg, S., R. and Cannella, G. (Eds.). (2012). *Critical qualitative research.* NY: Peter Lang Publishers.

Wall, A. F., Hursh, D., & Rodgers, J. W. (2014). Assessment for whom: Repositioning higher education assessment as an ethical and value-focused social practice. *Research and Practice in Assessment, 9*, 5-17.

WASC Senior College and University Commission. (2013). Standard 4: Creating an organization committed to quality, assurance, institutional learning, and improvement. Retrieved from: https://www.wascsenior.org/resources/handbook-accreditation-2013/part-ii-core-commitments-and-standards-accreditation/wasc-standards-accreditation-2013/standard-4-creating-organization-committed-quality-assurance-institutional-learning-and