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Monological practices, authoritative discourses and the missing “C” in digital classroom communities

Missing “C” in digital classroom communities

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study was to examine teacher decisions surrounding opportunities for student voice, experiences and beliefs in digital classroom communities. The teachers’ decisions reflect monologic rather than dialogic teacher pedagogies which prompted the authors to ask the following question: What led to these teacher-centered practices in digital environments?

Design/methodology/approach – Authoritative discourses in school policies and a missing connection between critical pedagogies and teachers’ technology practices are examined in light of teachers’ decisions to engage in monologic and/or dialogic teaching practices. The authors propose professional development and research that emphasize pedagogy that supports student voice as foundational to practices involving digital literacies.

Findings – Examination of the teachers’ decisions showed monologic practices void of student opportunities to critically engage in digital environments. Dominant discourses imposed through protectionist and digital citizenship policies of schools as well as lack of opportunity through professional development to connect critical pedagogy to technology impacted the teachers’ decisions.

Originality/value – Current research surrounding teachers’ digital literacies uses the TPACK framework to examine technology integration practices. Missing is a critical component that addresses and works to dismantle the dominant discourses and power structures in digital communities (Author, 2018). The authors build on research in critical digital literacies to argue for adding the critical missing “C” into the TPACK framework (C-TPACK) to move researchers and educators to consider pedagogies that examine ideologies at work in digital communities to provide opportunities for student voice.

Keywords Digital literacy, TPACK, Authoritative discourse, C-TPACK, Critical digital literacy, Dominant discourse

Paper type Conceptual paper

The extension of classroom communities to include the social and cultural contexts of students’ lives is foundational to the concept of a democratic education (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970). As digital environments are increasingly integral to the ways students communicate and represent themselves outside of the classroom (Leinhart, 2015), educators must consider the valuable role that digital spaces can play in the development of classroom communities. Importantly, to enact this democratic extension of classroom communities, we must ask ourselves, how can we honor student voice as foundational in digital environments? To address this question, we propose adapting the Technological, Pedagogical, Content Knowledge (TPACK; Koehler and Mishra, 2009) framework, which emphasizes the connection of digital technology use to pedagogy and content, to incorporate the engagement of a critical digital lens (Watulak and Kinzer, 2013) resulting in the Critical, Technological, Pedagogical, Content Knowledge (C-TPACK) framework. The C-TPACK



framework effectuates opportunities to critically examine local, cultural, and global identities, representations, and perspectives and promotes the critical and meaningful integration of digital tools and spaces in our classroom communities to support students' deeper understanding about the social, cultural, and political meanings and resulting uses of texts.

In this conceptual essay, we examine the authoritative discourses that influence teachers' decisions to engage in monologic and/or dialogic teaching practices specifically as they impact student voice in digital classroom communities. We present illustrative vignettes selected from a mixed-methods study conducted in two high schools and one middle school. That study explored the critical dimensions of practicing teachers' technology integration leading to the development of the C-TPACK framework to ensure student voice is prioritized in those classroom communities (Hosek, 2018). With the C-TPACK framework, we hope to move educators and researchers to reconsider functionalist (Edmundson, 2002) and monologic teaching practices and research approaches by critically examining the role of student voice in digital environments. This particularly applies to the English content area where teachers are challenged to:

[...] generate thinking practices in which students recognize their local cultural frames, identify other cultures' frames of meaning, and negotiate these multiple global frames of interpretation to make sense of local texts, activities, values, and identities.

(Myers and Ebevors, 2010, p. 148). By incorporating C-TPACK and connecting that knowledge to teaching practices, teacher education and development programs can meet those challenges resulting in opportunities for students to meaningfully engage in the examination of their own cultural identities while also considering and interrogating the voices and cultures that are represented and/or silenced (Avila and Pandya, 2013).

We begin by explaining monologic and dialogic teaching practices. Next, we direct specific attention to protectionist discourses and digital citizenship school policies that emphasize teaching the "correct" or "appropriate" online responses and decisions rather than the principles of critical digital literacies (CDL; Avila and Pandya, 2013) in online classroom communities. We end by proposing professional development (PD) that includes critical theory as elemental in the development of teachers' TPACK; in short, C-TPACK (Hosek, 2018).

Monological practices and authoritative discourses

Sara is a Nationally Board Certified, 24 year veteran Spanish teacher at a midwestern, suburban high school with 612 students, three per cent of whom are low-income and 73 per cent identify a Caucasian. Her school is one-to-one with laptops and allows students to "bring your own device" (BYOD) to classrooms. She entered her Advanced Placement classroom filled with twenty, sixteen and seventeen year old male and female students seated in groups of three and four at tables facing the front of the classroom where Sara's desk and whiteboard were located. She began the fifty minute class period speaking only Spanish and requiring her students to do the same. Immediately, she had students log on to their devices and individually take a Kahoot vocabulary quiz that she had prepared for them. After the quiz, each question and answer was viewed on the SmartBoard, and then the students were told to put away their technology and pull out their paper worksheets they completed the night before.

Later in Sara's lesson, she used the SmartBoard to show a PowerPoint containing news clips and photos of women of different cultures and ethnicities to illustrate how beauty is perceived differently around the world. After the clip, Sara presented images she found online that echoed these cultural differences. There was no class discussion. Sara then distributed another paper worksheet with questions for students to answer pertaining to the rest of her presentation.

A later review of Sara’s lesson plan showed essential questions and goals intended to invite critical reflection about perceptions of beauty in different cultures. Further, the topic was highly relevant to her students with the potential for meaningful use of Spanish. Had Sara engaged her students using online resources to analyze and critique dominant power relationships that result in problematic perceptions of beauty, such activities would have presented opportunities for CDL practices. However, her lesson implementation revealed missed opportunities for creating a digital classroom community characterized by critical and dialogic engagements with online materials and with each other. Instead, it reflected monologic teaching practices and substitutive and didactic technology use.

Before her lesson, Sara was asked by Vicki (Author 1) to take a survey about her Technological, Pedagogical, and Content Knowledge (TPACK) and her intentions and beliefs about incorporating CDL when integrating technology in her lessons. Interestingly, she indicated that she believed she had a high level of TPACK and often incorporated CDL into her lessons. While Sara’s planning and personal use of technology reflected high levels of both, opportunities for meaningful and critical technology use were not extended to her students. So, why did she rely so strongly on superficial, teacher-centered practices?

When asked about her choices surrounding student engagement online, Sara explained that critically analyzing resources was “still a challenge” for her and she found herself being “steered toward white male authors.” Her concern about her own CDL extended to her students, and she stated that her students’ choices of resources were not critical: “I kind of have to guide the students to make sure that they are not, um, just looking for the first site” because “being teenagers, that’s the thing they do, whatever the first site is [...] because they don’t know what to look for.” Lack of opportunities to develop her own CDL through teacher education coursework and PD, and concern that students could not effectively navigate, represent themselves, and critically engage in online discussions led her to restrict their online engagement.

In the past, Sara had students use technology to explore the economic conditions and poverty levels in Spanish-speaking countries. However, she worried that she would “overly influence my students about how they should think about different things” during discussions surrounding their choices. As a result, she developed PowerPoint presentations to ensure that “lots and lots of different people” were represented and to control discussion about controversial topics.

Sara’s rationale exemplifies the missing theoretical and pedagogical connection between critical theory and instructional technology use. Recent research surrounding teachers’ technology integration practices has relied strongly on the technological, pedagogical, content knowledge (TPACK) framework developed by [Mishra and Koehler \(2006\)](#) ([Chai et al., 2010](#); [Hofer and Grandgenett, 2012](#); [Young et al., 2012](#)). Building on [Shulman’s \(1986\)](#) framework emphasizing the importance of developing and connecting teachers’ pedagogical and content knowledge, the TPACK framework proposes that in order for teachers to effectively integrate technology, technology knowledge must be tied to pedagogy and content. The TPACK framework is most often used in quantitative studies where a valuation is calculated through the use of surveys to predict the likelihood and degree of teacher technology integration practices ([Hofer and Grandgenett, 2012](#)). However, reliance on quantitative measures without consideration of qualitative factors impacting digital environments leads to functionalist conceptualizations of digital literacies ([Hosek, 2018](#)) where the consideration and navigation of social, political, and cultural contexts are seldom considered ([Edmundson, 2002](#)). This includes minimal attention to dominant ideologies impacting digital environments and discrepancies in the socioeconomic affordances of

technology users, which impact how both students and teachers are able to represent themselves and make meaning in digital environments (Hosek, 2018).

This is reflected in the opening vignette. Sara clearly was adept and highly skilled with a variety of tools and platforms; however, she used technology with her students superficially, not meaningfully or critically due to low confidence in her ability to engage in the critical dimensions of digital environments. Incorporating a critical “C” into the TPACK framework, or C-TPACK, could provide a means for understanding and helping develop teachers’ CDL and their CDL pedagogies in the classroom.

The C-TPACK framework in combination with Bakhtin’s (1984) theoretical understandings of dialogical pedagogy serves as our guide throughout this essay. Both frame our examination of specific monologic teacher practices to gain insight and understanding of the monologic and/or dialogic pedagogical decisions by teachers regarding student participation and representation levels within digital classroom communities. The C-TPACK framework relies on an understanding that CDL consists of four main elements:

- (1) understanding cultural, social, and historical contexts of technology use;
- (2) critical thinking and analysis;
- (3) reflective practice; and
- (4) and facility with the functional skills and tools of digital technology production (Watulak and Kinzer, 2013, p. 128).

This framework extends the understanding of digital literacies beyond the development of a specific set of technological tools to include the application of critical theory in decisions surrounding participation in digital environments (Jones and Hafner, 2012; Stornaiuolo and LeBlanc, 2016; Street, 1998; Watulak and Kinzer, 2013). It prioritizes the critical ability to develop knowledge and represent oneself; understand, navigate and create within the social structure of the digital environment; and recognize the positions of power at work in that environment and how such power structures impact each individual. Without a critical component in the development of digital literacies, we risk solidifying “the social hierarchy, that empowers elites, and ensures that people lower on the hierarchy accept the values, norms, and beliefs of the elites” (Gee, 2012, p. 57). Further, the C-TPACK framework provides a valuable means for examining a teacher’s decisions surrounding CDL practices as it robustly integrates a teacher’s pedagogical and content knowledge.

We also build on the theoretical insights of Bakhtin (1984) regarding dialogic teaching and authoritative discourses in our efforts to identify the problematic gap between teachers’ critical beliefs and monologic practices. Bakhtin (1984) explained that “monologized pedagogical dialogue” (p. 279) reflects a traditionalist approach to curriculum where students’ compliances and acceptance of a teacher’s knowledge as truth is expected. In contrast, through dialogical pedagogies, teachers embrace the mutuality of learning and support student voices in the learning process. Consideration of the C-TPACK framework in conjunction with dialogic pedagogy supports Freire’s (1970) contention that “Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education” (p. 92).

Monologic and dialogic teaching pedagogies

At a middle school of 200 students, the majority of which is Caucasian and 22 per cent are considered low-income, Diane, a Physics teacher whose classroom is one-to-one with Chromebooks, stood at the entrance to her classroom as her 22 students lined up outside. Her

class had just completed an activity within a series of lessons during which she had them divide into teams and apply Newton’s Laws to the design and building of a protective container for an egg. The students dropped the contained eggs from varying heights and recorded the results in their notepads. Once the activity was complete, the students met in their groups and analyzed their results through discussion and application of Newton’s Laws.

The following day, as the students entered the classroom, Diane handed each a worksheet and directed them to get a ChromeBook from the cart and sit quietly without logging in until instructed to do so. Once the students were seated, Diane went to the front of the room, and turned on the SmartBoard. Before allowing the students to open the Chromebooks and log in, she explained that they must follow her directions closely as she only wanted them on one specific website. She then walked the students step-by-step to the website where they would quietly and independently fill in the paper worksheets containing questions about Newton’s Laws as they applied to various videos she had preloaded onto the Learning Management System (LMS) that housed their digital classroom. After 15 minutes, the students were told to log off, close the Chromebooks, and turn in their worksheets.

These lesson activities represent contrasting pedagogies, specifically constructivist and traditionalist, but we could also characterize them as dialogic and monologic (Bakhtin, 1984). Monologic teaching practices reflect traditionalist pedagogy where teacher-centered practices are normalized. Deng *et al.* (2014) explained that traditionalist pedagogical beliefs “tend to emphasize discipline, subject matter, and moral standards” (p. 247). In such instances, the teacher is the supervisor and authority in charge of the learning process “serving as the expert in a highly structured learning environment” (Tondeur *et al.*, 2017, p. 557). Monologic teaching assumes the teacher “knows and possesses the truth” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 81) and places the students in the position of passive recipients of knowledge that the teacher wants to impart to them. This leaves little room for student voice, let alone critical consumption and production of text, within digital communities (Handsfield *et al.*, 2009). This stands in opposition to dialogic pedagogy. Dialogic pedagogy invites and supports a classroom dynamic where “power relations are flexible, and authority over the content and form of discourse is shared” (Reznitskaya, 2012, p. 447). Student inquiry, critical thinking and analysis result in “collaborative co-construction of knowledge” (Reznitskaya, 2012, p. 447) which contributes to in-depth discussions about lesson topics. The teacher facilitates and provides feedback, but generally relies on student-driven interests and direction to make meaning and critically engage. Such dialogic practices prioritize student perspectives in the development of knowledge and lead to a learning environment that equitably values the voices of all members of the classroom community (Bakhtin, 1984).

Rather than teaching or modeling CDL, Diane used technology simply for reviewing and reinforcing Physics concepts, reflecting functionalist rather than critical frames, and a monologic rather than dialogic pedagogical approach. Importantly, not engaging her students in the critical dimensions of technology was a conscious decision. Diane’s choice to control and restrict student technology use during this lesson reflected her assumptions about her students’ CDL and positioned her in a traditionalist role of “expert” when integrating technology during instruction. When interviewed after her lesson, she explained that despite recognizing the value of meaningful student technology use (particularly as described in the Next Generation Science Standards which she uses in her curriculum), she worried that her students did not know how to identify the “appropriate” online sites and that she believed they needed to be “monitored and supervised constantly” when using Chromebooks.

Diane also explained that she was uncertain about her own CDL. She had no exposure to CDL in her teacher education, graduate courses, or in the PD offered by her school. Despite

considering her pedagogical beliefs to be constructivist, her uncertainty about students' CDL led her to engage in traditionalist, monologic practices resulting in lost opportunities for student voice and representation in their digital classroom community. Providing opportunities for Diane through PD to move past the application of functional skills to the critical analysis of texts by examining the social, political and cultural contexts could strengthen her confidence to guide her students in their development of those same skills. This could result in the extension of the constructivist practices that she values to include, rather than exclude, digital environments.

Despite the value of dialogic teaching for student learning (Mercer and Littleton, 2007; Soter, *et al.*, 2008) and the importance placed on it in national standards (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2002), monologic teaching practices are more prevalent. In fact, in their comprehensive study of 200 American classrooms, Nystrand *et al.* (2003) found that most teachers mistakenly considered their monologic teaching practices (e.g. recitation and drill and practice) to be dialogic.

This disconnect is also evident in technology integration practices wherein teachers believe their practices reflect critical and constructivist pedagogy when, in fact, they represent traditionalist and didactic practices (Hosek, 2018). Understanding this disconnect between theory and practice is necessary for determining why monologic teaching practices are prevalent in decisions that impact digital classroom communities and is key to moving towards digital student-centered dialogic practices. Examining and challenging authoritative discourses at work in school policies surrounding student participation in digital environments is a starting point.

Authoritative discourses create barriers for dialogic digital communities

Andrew, a practicing high school History teacher for 25 years at a rural school with a largely Caucasian student population with a low income percentage under six percent, utilizes his one-to-one classroom environment by employing a flipped classroom model where the lecture and materials pertaining to a lesson are accessed and reviewed by students outside of school, (usually the night before) allowing class time for active engagement and discussion of the material students have already seen and/or reviewed (Abeysekera and Dawson, 2015). The class LMS houses all of the materials and lectures and is filled with embedded primary source documents, videos, artwork and photos. On the day of this lesson, Andrew welcomed his 21 students as they entered the classroom and sat down at round tables with three students each. He asked his students to open their Chromebooks and log in to their class LMS where they would find a Kahoots online quiz about World War 2 that they would take as teams. The quiz was projected onto a large wall at the front of the room. For the next 45 minutes, Andrew had the groups briefly and quietly discuss and enter an answer for each question. After each question was answered, he told them the correct answer. At several points during the quiz, Andrew played videos with historic content and show images of artwork, propaganda, and photos from the era that he embedded. Each time, he provided connections between what was happening during the war and how that related to current events. At two points, he asked his students if they had any questions, and none did. Andrew chose this lesson for observation as he believed it contained a high level of both technology integration and required his students to recruit CDL to their work.

After his lesson, when Vicki asked Andrew about his pedagogical beliefs, he said he considered his teaching practices to be based on constructivism and critical theory. From analysis of the class LMS, it was clear that Andrew recruited his own CDL when designing the lesson, preparing materials, and drawing connections between the past and the present. Nevertheless, the opportunity to critically engage and make-meaning with the materials using online primary resources was not extended to his students. When asked why, he explained that the students were restricted by the school from a multitude of online sites,

were not allowed to create videos (the video feature on the Chromebooks is disabled and video apps are not allowed to be installed), and were closely monitored in all online discussion forums. Andrew stated that his school’s protectionist policies make it very difficult to design lessons that allow for high levels of creative and meaningful student participation online. As a result, he eliminated online discussion boards and several projects that require apps that the school prohibits.

Authoritative discourses impose ideologies that reinscribe normative power relationships and result in not only missed opportunities for student voice and representation, but also a potentially neutralized representation of students (Kellner and Share, 2007; Morrell, 2015). It is essential to understand why teachers enact monologic over dialogic practices when integrating digital literacies into their instruction. Toward this end, the impact of protectionist and digital citizenship policies on teachers’ decisions surrounding student engagement in digital spaces is discussed below as examples of authoritative discourses surrounding technology use in schools. Such dominant discourses result in digital classroom communities that are not reflective of students’ beliefs, cultures, and backgrounds.

Protectionist policies

Restrictive internet policies in schools that are meant to protect students can actually create barriers within digital classroom communities (boyd, 2007; Burnett and Merchant, 2011; Kellner and Share, 2007). This “protectionist approach” (Kellner and Share, 2007, p. 6), where firewalls and blocks restrict students’ online participation, impedes opportunities for critical discourse and meaningful collaboration. Protectionist internet policies have been supported by liberal and conservative activists alike who believe digital environments without restrictions give open access to students where they can be harmfully influenced (Kellner and Share, 2007).

Currently, US schools that receive federal funds or discounts for providing internet access are required to abide by legislation entitled “The Children’s Internet Protection Act” (CIPA) which outline “Acceptable Use Policies” (AUP) (www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/childrens-internet-protection-act). According to CIPA, schools must create internet safety policies monitoring the online activities of minors to ensure that online activity does not include “inappropriate matter” and/or activities that are “harmful to students.” Because CIPA does not require policies to be enforced in any specific way, deciding what those policies say and how they are enforced falls to local school boards. Isaacs *et al.* (2014) explained that this leads to overfiltering resulting in lawsuits claiming such policies infringe on freedom of speech rights. According to the ACLU (2013):

Filtering beyond CIPA’s requirements results in missed opportunities to prepare students to be responsible users, consumers, and producers of online content and resources. Some school districts block access to content deemed “controversial, inappropriate, or time wasting” (p. 64).

Hobbs (2010) explained that overfiltering impacts the development of students’ CDL, consequently impacting their ability to “participate fully in a globally competitive and democratic 21st century society” (p. 65). Power is held by those who determine what is or is not considered harmful, what is considered acceptable/unacceptable, and what is seen/not seen. Rather than providing students with opportunities within digital classroom communities to examine, question, and challenge ideologies that may not represent their beliefs, ethnicities, or cultures, they are positioned as passive recipients of what others believe matters most. While it may not be the distinct and direct intent of school administrations and school boards, by imposing protectionist policies they inadvertently

contribute to the proliferation of online ideological structures that reinscribe dominant power relationships and ideologies

Batch *et al.* (2015) stated that “it is critical to recognize the unequal and uneven impact of filters” (p. 66). Such practices have the potential to create a greater digital divide (Gorski, 2009; Makinen, 2006). This cannot be viewed as disconnected from broader patterns of socioeconomic inequality. As Kucukaydin and Tisdell (2008) explain:

[. . .] capitalism has to build and maintain its hegemony and influence on dominated groups by creating cultural and political consensus through formal and informal organizations and institutions such as school, media, and family (p. 11).

Developing the CDL practices of both teachers and students is necessary to challenge the dominant discourses in digital environments that serve to maintain specific social and political agendas. Burnett and Merchant (2011) explained that the key to protecting students online lies not in protectionist policies but in the development of students’ CDL, which:

[. . .] could be used to interrogate the competing discourses which surround social media use – around positive stories of participation and empowerment on one hand and more negative associations with consumerism, exploitation, fraud, safety [. . .] (p. 44).

The monologic practices that result from protectionist discourses as illustrated in the examples of Sara, Diane, and Andrew show how student voice is restricted in digital classroom communities despite teachers’ beliefs that such engagement is important. Professional development that ties critical theory to technology, discussed below, could provide the pedagogical underpinnings that support ways to solicit and honor student voice in digital classroom communities.

Digital citizenship policies

Research surrounding digital citizenship in schools shows a prevalence of policies absent of a critical component (Jones and Mitchell, 2016; Ribble and Bailey, 2004; Ribble, 2015) initiated in an effort to protect students as they operate in digital environments (Jones and Mitchell, 2016).

However, restricting the digital interactions of students presents potential obstacles in the development of students’ CDL (Watulak and Kinzer, 2013). CDL includes a social and dialogical component (Avila and Pandya, 2013) that can be restricted by such authoritarian policies. Such policies seem to encourage a functional digital skillset rather than a critical one (Edmundson, 2002; Jones and Hafner, 2012; Watulak and Kinzer, 2013). CDL practices “both foster and afford the ability to design critical digital texts” (Avila and Pandya, 2013, p. 3) which hinges on a fluid, dynamic and participatory approach to digital environments (Burn *et al.*, 2010). Emphasis on the CDL of teachers and students could nullify the need for such protectionist policies. For this to happen, teacher education programs must find ways. Another form of authoritative discourse prevalent within school policies is the concept of digital citizenship. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) explained that the idea of incorporating citizenship in education is not a new one. Horace Mann (1838) focused his attention on developing students’ sense of personal responsibility through hard work, honesty, and integrity, and John Dewey (1938) promoted his vision of a democratic education which emphasized the role of students as helpers and active contributors in their communities. As the classroom community expands to include online environments, the concept of citizenship has followed.

Digital citizenship has been proposed as a means to teach students the “correct” and “respectful” way to act in online environments (Ribble and Bailey, 2004; Ribble, 2015).

Missing, however, is both locating those personal acts within social, economic, and political contexts as well as recognizing that part of citizenship includes participation in community and actively responding to issues of social injustice (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004; Jones and Mitchell, 2016; Morrell, 2015). Protectionist and digital citizenship policies contribute to the digital divide, which no longer simply refers to differences in physical internet access due only to financial factors. Warschauer (2011) described it as “the social stratification due to unequal ability to access, adapt, and create knowledge via use of information and communication technologies” (p. 5). Monologic teaching practices and policies that limit or deny students’ online meaningful and critical engagement reinforce that divide.

Much like the protectionist policies described earlier, digital citizenship policies are often justified as a means to increase students’ digital safety (Jones and Mitchell, 2016). Ribble (2015) explained his model for digital citizenship:

Just as you teach your students the rules of society, it is imperative that you teach them the rules of the digital world, and how to be safe and responsible with technology (p. 14).

It is necessary to ask who determines the “rules of society” and by enforcing them, are certain ideologies being imposed while neutralizing others? When students’ voices are limited or controlled, so are the opportunities to examine, question, and challenge the dominant discourses that exist online. Those “rules” of online participation present a potential obstacle as they disempower students in digital classroom communities and reinforce not only teacher-centered, monologic practices but also dominant ideologies. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) explain:

Educators need to take into account the varied notions of citizenship reflected in different programs and that decisions we make in designing as well as researching these programs are, in fact, political (p. 242).

Online policies that invite student participation regarding their own experiences, beliefs, and cultures could lead to stronger voices for marginalized youth (Cohen and Kahne, 2012). A national survey of 3,000 youth showed that youth who are highly engaged in online activity that supports personal interests “were five times more likely to engage in participatory politics such as political blogging and petitioning, and four times more likely to engage in any political act” (Cohen and Kahne, 2012, p. 3) than those not highly engaged online. Jones and Mitchell (2016) believe that digital citizenship should be considered separate from school protectionist policies as the term necessarily includes actively advocating for social justice, whereas protectionism emphasizes specific, dictated online behavior.

So what does all of this mean for teachers and teacher educators? For meaningful pedagogies that provide opportunities for student voice in digital environments, we argue that professional development (PD) must combine the application of critical theory to instructional pedagogies within digital environments leading to the development of teachers’ CDL.

Professional development: including the critical “C”

Kate, a middle school Language Arts teacher at a school one-to-one with Chromebooks, considers herself and her 23 students lucky to have largely unlimited access in her classroom to online platforms including YouTube. Her school includes 690 students, 65 per cent of whom are Caucasian and 27 per cent of whom are considered low income. She receives strong technical support from a technology specialist who troubleshoots technical issues and offers one-to-one help whenever requested. Unlike the protectionist policies at Diane and Andrew’s schools, the policies at Kate’s school encourage teachers to include online student participation in their lessons. However, the PD at her school is “tutorial-based and short” without a critical dimension. In an

interview after being observed, she explained that she had little to no exposure to CDL which caused her to question her ability to develop the CDL of her students. This also caused her to self-impose her own protectionist policies. She stated: “CDL is really difficult to teach, and more experience would be amazing.”

The PD offered at Sara’s, Diane’s and Andrew’s schools was similar to Kate’s. In each case, the teachers stated PD surrounding digital literacy centered on superficially applying the newest technology tools to lessons. All teachers explained that in no cases was critical theory applied to technology use, but all believed it would have changed their approaches to student participation in their digital classroom communities.

A teacher’s personal learning style and choice of teaching practices impact the role technology will play in hi/he/er classroom (Anderson *et al.*, 2011; Koehler and Mishra, 2009; Koh *et al.*, 2014; Prestridge, 2017; Tondeur *et al.*, 2013), making the exploration of pedagogical beliefs a key factor in technology integration PD. PD that centers on connecting pedagogical beliefs to technology use is also instrumental in the development of CDL practices that promote student-centered digital environments (Avila and Pandya, 2013; Burnett and Merchant, 2011; Koh *et al.*, 2014; Prestridge, 2017; Watulak and Kinzer, 2013). Without it, teachers often find themselves balancing teacher- and student-centered technology practices until a teacher’s comfort level with technology use in the classroom increases (Montrieux and Schellens, 2018; Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2013). In both Sara’s and Diane’s teaching practices, there was a disconnect between their theoretical and pedagogical beliefs and their actual classroom decisions regarding student participation in their digital classrooms. Because of their lack of confidence in their and their students’ CDL, they relied on protectionist practices. Sara could have provided her students with opportunities to locate and examine existing digital texts that represent standards of beauty in both American and Spanish cultures inviting dialogue and an understanding of similarities and differences between cultures and how texts are used to represent and push certain ideologies. Diane could have developed her students’ CDL by modeling ways to identify websites that provide reliable and applicable information.

Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2013) describe teaching practices surrounding technology where “Students in today’s classrooms still tend to learn *from* (author’s emphasis) technology, using it primarily as a delivery tool” (p. 2). Technology integration PD for teachers has largely focused on functionalist use of technology tools (Ertmer *et al.*, 2012). Drawing on Edmundson (2002), Hosek (2018) defined this functionalism as “use of digital tools without consideration of context, social factors, political and economic conditions, and cultural and/or historical contexts within which content is delivered via digital platforms” (p. 25). Inherent in meaningful, student-centered technology use is consideration of the social, political and cultural contexts that are present in digital environments (Watulak and Kinzer, 2013). This indicates that understanding and tying critical theory to technology is necessary for teachers.

As evidenced in the examples of Sara, Diane, Andrew, and Kate, critical theory was missing in their teacher education and professional coursework surrounding technology integration. This contributed to a lack of comfort with understanding how to incorporate critical theory with student technology use which led to reliance on monologic, highly structured activities void of student voice. For example, rather than locating and providing all of the digital texts and historical events he found most interesting and impactful, Andrew could have helped his students identify, locate, and examine digital resources and texts they believed connected to the time period and represented the power structures at work during those historical time periods. Following such activities with discussion about why students

focused on what they did and whose perspectives were represented or absent in those resources can lead to development of students’ CDL (Janks, 2000).

In fact, researchers consider pedagogical change as necessary for technology integration practices to become more student-centered (Sang *et al.*, 2010; Ertmer *et al.*, 2009; Ertmer *et al.*, 2012). When teachers develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between technology and pedagogy and then engage in self-reflection about personal pedagogical beliefs, more meaningful and innovative technology integration is possible (Prestridge, 2017). All four teachers in the illustrated examples above stated that PD that examines how technology and pedagogy are connected as well as practical experience specifically tying critical theory to technology integration is needed and would be personally beneficial.

PD that incorporates CDL practices would challenge dominant discourses in policies and teacher practices surrounding student online participation and support pedagogical interactions and practices that encourage, engage and empower student voice. Specifically, this can lead to digital classroom communities where the dialogic engagement of students is supported and encouraged, resulting in more robust opportunities for student voice. Preservice teachers’ evaluations of teacher education programs indicate a lack of modeling and purposeful experiences with CDL practices during their programs (Bruneel *et al.*, 2013; Mao, 2014; Roblyer *et al.*, 2010; Selwyn, 2009). Without that knowledge, there is little chance that teachers and students will engage in the critical dimensions of technology (Ertmer *et al.*, 2012; Koh *et al.*, 2014; Prestridge, 2017; Ruggiero and Mong, 2015).

Future directions for research and practice

In their development of the TPACK framework, Koehler and Mishra (2009) placed importance on context which does support the potential application of both sociocultural and critical theory when determining digital literacy. However, in current research that uses the TPACK framework, critical factors such as socio-economic power structures and dominant ideologies present in digital environments are not closely examined and their impact on student voice and representation is not considered (Chai *et al.*, 2010; Hofer and Grandgenett, 2012; Koh and Divaharan, 2011; Schmidt *et al.*, 2009; Young *et al.*, 2012). TPACK studies typically focus on quantitative measurement (through surveys) of preservice teachers’ TPACK without following them into their subsequent classrooms to observe how TPACK is recruited to digital classroom community decisions and practices. Observing the actual practices of teachers can provide valuable information about what supports and/or hinders meaningful and critical technology use with students (Hosek, 2018).

The C-TPACK framework requires teachers and researchers to consider the sociocultural context of digital environments and how context impacts student learning (Hosek, 2018). CTPACK pushes researchers and educators to consider pedagogies that incorporate the social, political, and cultural contexts at work in digital communities to provide opportunities for students’ voices to be more fully represented. This includes reconsidering functionalist language and research approaches that gloss over those contexts in digital environments.

Koehler and Mishra (2009) described teachers’ TPACK as a “dynamic equilibrium” (p. 67) of seven connected knowledge domains. This balance requires continually “creating, maintaining, and re-establishing” the connections while paying close attention to classroom contexts. With classrooms expanding beyond the traditional walls of schools to include digital environments, attention to the social, economic, and political contexts within digital classroom communities is essential in the development of a teacher’s digital literacy. Helping teacher candidates and practicing teachers recognize the dominant ideologies, power structures, and political and cultural perspectives that are/are not represented in

digital environments is an essential starting point. Learning how to engage in critical analysis of those representations can increase their comfort and confidence in engaging students in the process of examining and negotiating cultural representations in digital environments through collaborative projects and inquiries. This is particularly relevant in English classrooms where “a critical understanding of how texts signify multiple meanings when framed by different cultural identities” (Myers and Ebevors, 2010, p. 149) supports impactful student participation in an increasingly diverse and globalized society.

Schools implement protectionist and digital citizenship policies in the hope of protecting students in online environments, but the result is often monologic teaching practices. In addition, professional development often fails to tie critical theory and pedagogy to technology leading teachers to self-impose protectionist policies due to low confidence in their own CDL (Hosek, 2018). Providing PD that ties critical theory to digital literacy pedagogies offers an alternative to authoritative online participation policies that lead to traditionalist, teacher-centered practices. Such PD should emphasize pedagogies that support interactions, decisions and practices that evoke and honor student voice as foundational.

Equally important is addressing what is missing in research that impacts teacher decisions to prioritize student voice in digital classroom communities. Educational research largely focuses on defining digital literacy and predicting technology integration in functionalist terms. The addition of the critical “C” to the TPACK framework (C-TPACK) pushes researchers and educators to consider pedagogies that include the social, political and cultural contexts at work in digital communities to provide opportunities for students’ voices to be more fully represented.

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