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[00:00:00] **Jack Schneider:** Welcome to *HEQ&A*, the podcast of the *History of Education Quarterly*. I'm your host, *HEQ* co-editor Jack Schneider. Every few weeks, we'll dive into recent work from the journal, asking authors how their projects challenge or extend what we know about a topic, exploring what's interesting and surprising about it, and then taking a step back to consider broader implications. In the second half of the show, we turn our sights to teaching. So, if you're an educator, make sure to stick around until the end. And now let's hear from one of our authors.

[00:00:46] **Yoon Pak:** I'm Yoon Pak. I am Professor and Head of Education, Policy, Organization, and Leadership at the University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign, and I'm here to talk about my recent article from the *HEQ* Presidential Address: "Racist-Blind, Not Colorblind by Design: Confronting Systemic Racism in Our Educational Past, Present and Future."

[00:01:16] Well, it's been quite a year. I mean, there is no means of overstating it or under-- understating it, and [unclear] about there's responsibility that I have, and I hold--and not just because of having been the president of the History of Education Society, but as an academic, as a, a parent, as a community member and it's really extending: "Okay, how do we make sense of this moment?"

[00:01:46] So there was two parts to this. The first one was, "How do I make sense of this moment?" Given the beyond historic proportion on everything that's been occurring, and the article points to that, but also, you know, it's really not that dissimilar from what, uh, scholars have written about for over a hundred years. So let me at least start somewhere to help me make sense of this moment of the dual pandemic, right? So, uh, of COVID-19 obviously, but also the deep disparities that we've known about and written about for, for a very long time and having it make sense for me, because there's a way that we can't not talk about what we've been experiencing collectively, but of course, disproportionately.

[00:02:37] And the second piece is, well, it's not enough about, you know, how does it make sense for me, but what do we do in our roles as academics, as professors, as educators, because that's what I've always found so, so great about being an a--in education. Is that what we do, what we write, what we teach, how we interact with everyday educators, it can have an impact in the classroom tomorrow because it's something that educators can just--a change of behavior towards, towards their students, however old they are can have such an immediate impact. So those were the main driving points for writing, writing the address.

[00:03:20] There've been really great scholarship by researchers in all disciplines to speak to-- let's say, matters of race in our history and our social- political practices and an education. So that's, without a doubt. I think that what I do is really make more explicit, those things that need to be made more explicit and made more clear. So I kind of see my role as being that person telling the emperor, "you don't have any clothes on--go put some pants on," right? So it's in a sense, a call for us to say, no, we we've done really great work, but collectively, and this is myself included, we need to do a little better, right? But doing a little better also means there are some action items that need to take place.

[00:04:14] And that's--it's okay to be an advocate. For many years, there has been this notion that as a researcher, we, we stayed detached. We just stick to the scholarship stick with what we know. And that's fine. That's great. If that is one skills-based area, that is wonderful. But for those of us, I would say, and this is why I hearkened back on those of us in education. And particularly for those of us who are now in positions of relative, I always say that, relative power and with some social media, on our college campuses, there's ways that we have to make changes because it's so long overdue. And especially given what we know now with the scholarship base, we know why there's consistent, inherent, systemic inequities in our educational policies, practices, and the ways that we design education courses, teacher education programs, and that's how that framing around the way we've designed our educational institutions and systems by actively being racist-blind.

[00:05:22] I know it all sounds like an oxymoron, but we've been intentional in being racist-blind. So let's not, let's just stop doing that to some extent. And obviously that requires a great deal of critical self-reflection. These are some of the things that we teach in our courses that we demand our students to do-- engage in your critical self-reflection, what are your implicit-- and explicit-- biases that you come into the classroom? Well, what are some of these implicit and explicit biases that we come into in our own research? Um, how do we work against that by this constant level of questioning and wondering. That is also another way in which it drives what I do, but also gives me great energy and motivation because we're in a very important place as educators.

[00:06:22] The broader implications? Well, obviously, well, it comes through having worked through these primary source files of teacher of color candidates at the University of Illinois, kind of having upon them accidentally. I think I tend to do better historical work when things are just kind of found accidentally or by happenstance, right? And it made me wonder: why would they come to Illinois? Because as a young assistant professor, "I'm like, okay, I'm here because it's a good job. It's got, you know, great scholars here. But other than that, why would anyone else have come to Illinois? Nothing disparaging about Illinois, but it's to say-- yeah, it was some 50 years ago, 50, 60, longer than that-- 'cause I'm not doing my math correctly, but in the early to mid 20th century, what would drive, in particular, these particular group of teacher candidates of color to want to become a teacher and to come to Illinois from places like Hawaii, California, Washington, for those who were Asian Americans. What would bring them to Illinois?

[00:07:32] And that was an incredibly surprising moment, but we also realize that these are also still the hidden histories. We know the histories of African-American teachers, what happens right with, uh, desegregation, uh, and in, particularly in the South, we're learning more obviously about African-American teachers experiences in Northern cities, but all of these taken together making me wonder. Okay. We really do have a ready and eager population of young people who wanted to be teachers. So what happened along that trajectory? We also do know what did happen because there are the historical, social, and political barriers that were in place. But what might be some other ways in which we've designed our university / college programs so we only let, right, the particular kind of teacher candidates in. Which now, obviously, if we started out that way, we're going to see the effects of what happened over the decades with what we are faced with now, and that aspect, that kind of initial surprise, through some of these primary sources leads me to ask these additional sets of questions about the broader implications.

[00:08:53] And there are aspects in which, and I hear this from my students often who work in schools as teachers, as school administrators who feel incredibly helpless because they feel like they're the only ones, um, supporting racial equity work, that they're the only ones asking questions about why do we have these disciplinary policies that really punish our young Black men and women?

[00:09:20] Why do we do that? Right. So, I also did it for the students who I've worked with over the years who felt so incredibly isolated and alone and trying to figure out "How do I even do this? Do this work?" in a place that is so incredibly resistant to even me asking these questions, we have to do something. And you can tell I'm getting a little emotional just talking about it because that's what I feel is the impact of our work. We have to do something in this moment.

[00:09:58] **Jack Schneider:** The second half of the show is dedicated to thinking about teaching. We ask authors to put on their guest lecturer hats and take students into the weeds. What should they pay attention to, methodologically speaking? What else should they be reading if they want to take a deep dive into the historiography? And where are there opportunities for further research?

[00:10:17] **Yoon Pak:** I really didn't have a way of writing about this right away. So I realized that this, I mean, unfortunately the reality of where we are because of the time that it would take, just even how do I write about sources that weren't meant to be found? Right? So one, that's a huge methodological obstacle because typically they are the sources that we use or historical research are found in publicly available archives or maybe family collections where they've provided approval, newspaper articles, for example.

[00:10:55] So there are those traditional ways of doing historical research, but I suspect that there are a number of people who have similar types of documents that I also came across and are wondering, how do I even begin to make sense of this? And so methodologically, right, we write around the topic. So we write around gaining context of, okay, so what was-- we start small. What was the College of Education at the University of Illinois? Like, of course it's largely administrative focused and even the institutional histories of the University of Illinois or other surrounding universities in what we now call the Big 10 would have more of the institutional scopes within kind of these anecdotal narratives about the institutional leaders. It tells also a story about the culture of the institution, bringing that to bear, but also really then contextualizing it. Other scholars' work on the nature of teacher training, right, during this time period, but also what did it mean for minoritized populations. And to provide it in a more multi-racial framework as much as possible. Right?

[00:12:08] And just, even with this instance at the University of Illinois, they're already, even though there's not a direct overlap, it still reveals a multi-racial history of teaching and teacher education in a place like Illinois. So the other thing is that, well, gee, you know, if there's evidence it occurred in Illinois, there's probably a good chance it occurred at other institutions. So on the one hand, we don't want to place blinders in the ways that we want to approach historical research.

[00:12:41] On the other hand, it requires a sense of, um, strategic hunting and gathering sources, if you will. We need to be a bit more smart about it, but sometimes right, it can fall on your lap literally. And you're like, wow, what is this? And then that also provides a mechanism for further discovery. To give them another example, I know the hunch of kind of the research that, uh, I've

published on with Lauri Johnson on the history of intercultural education in our public schools. It also occurred because she was a student of James Banks, you know, the father multicultural education at the University of Washington. And I being in the history of education, and we both have really-- obviously not just an interest, but the way that our personal and professional lives are, it's really centered on race, race equity-- what does this mean? And so it led us to, and through, James Banks works on the history of intergroup and intercultural education, kind of. We asked different sets of questions about, well, how did public schools in the United States, how did they work through some of these, uh, racial issues during the early through the mid 20th century, as well as antisemitism. So it led us on our own path, um, through archival documents on intercultural education.

[00:14:06] And at that time I was in San Diego and there was just something about being in San Diego and seeing just like, gosh, what a wonderfully diverse place. This is? How could there not have been an intercultural education program at San Diego? And the current research that I was looking at, it didn't mention parts of western United States, for example, but I just had this hunch, right? Like "Surely, there had to be something!" And as I was doing research in the library, going through the annual reports of the San Diego city schools, I don't know how many years' worth of annual reports I looked through, there was one sentence that says that the San Diego schools were "embarking on an intercultural education program." That is all I needed to see-- that one sentence out of all those decades of annual reports that I looked through. That was also a wonderful eureka moment. Then, from that one sentence, out of all those-- who knows-- hundreds and hundreds of pages of annual reports I'd looked through, that that helped me to set on a discovery of looking through sources at San Diego, which then actually became one of the highly touted schools in the reforms towards intercultural education.

[00:15:30] First and foremost. You have to know the craft, right? So there's nothing more exciting to see and witness, um, when anyone who is such, um, skilled at their craft to talk with such passion about the [unclear] and it could even be woodworking, frankly. I really, I really get excited to see other people's passion about their craft. And the way they explain it because they understand the history of that craft. So it means first and foremost, even if students are in history of education or in another area, know deeply your craft, which also means the genealogy of the scholarship that has brought this field where it's at. Now I would always say, you're not always going to like what you read in that genealogical knowledge-gathering part of it. But you got to know it, right? Because if you're going to call yourself a historian of education or call yourself, um, another, you know, uh, an educational psychologist, uh, at some point you gotta know, you gotta know the history behind that history and, uh, be able to explain that and the knowledge base.

[00:16:55] That will come through-- at the same time, however, it also requires us, especially in education to read widely across education, educational research, because that is what's going to help make sense of maybe contemporary studies and you realize, "Hey, wait a minute, you know, this is kind of sounds very similar to what I read, uh, what occurred in 1965," for example. So it allows us to make those immediate connections that contemporary, um, educational researchers might not readily do in their research. So that's also part of our job is not only to do that original research, which is very important, through a solid historical methods, but also to draw from the other fields and disciplines that comprise education research to say, well, you know, here's how we

can think differently about the achievement gap, for example, which of course now it's really about the opportunity gaps. So it's also bringing in those, um, those elements.

[00:18:01] At the same time, it's also doing the different kind of reading that helps us be more sane. I'll put it that way. So for a long time, the way as a graduate student, I'd like to read fiction at night because reading fiction for me, at least, it helped me imagine different possibilities. Not just about, hmm, how do I think about this research in a different way that kind of extends to what I'm reading right now, but also gets me excited to reshape and reformulate what I thought I knew in teaching, for example, and other ways it's just pure fun to read good fiction and to escape from one's current reality that you want that form of escape.

[00:18:53] So the bottom line is read, read extensively, deeply, and widely. I would say, where is there not the opportunity to research because nowadays it's available everywhere at our disposal, at our fingertips, which is really great. I really appreciate the development of digitized archives and documents to help us make sense of this. Sometimes it is a bit overwhelming because at least, uh, as I say back in my day, we actually had to go to the libraries or go to an archive. And then if we couldn't find additional sources, we say, you know, I tried, you couldn't find the additional sources. Um, but now that with so much information at our disposal, it really then becomes a different kind of skill development in our work that says, okay, given just the mountains and mountains of data that I have before me, how do I then work to distill it in a way that A) first and foremost, it's factual, reliable evidence. Um, but secondly, in a way that, um, I can synthesize it and make it cohere and still focused on research that I want to do.

[00:20:16] **Jack Schneider:** Check out *History of Education Quarterly* online. The journal is published by Cambridge University Press and it's carried by most academic libraries. You should also be sure to follow *HEQ* Twitter handle: @histedquarterly, which regularly sends out free read-only versions of articles, and the show's Twitter handle @HEQandA. And don't forget, subscribe to the show so you don't miss forthcoming episodes. We're available on iTunes, Stitcher, and wherever you get your podcasts. HEQ&A is produced at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. Our producer is Jennifer Berkshire and our theme music is by Ryan Shaw. I'm Jack Schneider. Thanks for joining us.