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Culture Beyond Borders: A Postcolonial Analysis of Multicultural Education

Alex Diaz-Hui

Portland State University, adiazhui@pdx.edu

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Key Elements of Research

- Literature on culture in education lacks grounding in Third-World feminist or postcolonial theory
- Multicultural education is founded on what Narayan (1997) calls “the anthropological perspective”
- Culturally-responsive pedagogy makes positive steps, but still fails to recognize the coloniality of culture
- Educators must reject deficit approaches to teaching and understanding community wealth

Third World Communities in US Contexts

“[I]ndividuals from Third-World countries temporarily living and working in Western contexts, to individuals who are immigrants to the West from Third-World countries, to individuals who are born and have lived in Western contexts but have social identities that link them to immigrant communities of color, and to all individuals who are members of communities of color in Western contexts and do not have any sense of an ‘immigrant’ identity” (Narayan, 1997, p. 121).

What Happens in Multicultural Education?

- “Typical curricular discourses distort, omit, and stereotype” the experiences of people of color (Yosso, 2002, p. 93).
- Views of diversity among teachers “arise from its importance in high status discourses” that benefit teachers more than students (Melamed, 2014, p. 84).
- Liberal discourses emphasize deficit approaches to teaching

Multicultural Education and the Anthropological Perspective

- Two key statements of multicultural education:
 - “I must know about other cultures”
 - “I must know about other cultures without disrespecting them”
- Good intentions, but grounded in the “Othering” of non-European cultures
- Three roles are developed in multicultural education: emissary, mirror, and authentic insider

Emissary, Mirror, and the Authentic Insider

- ***Emissary***: sharing the “cultural riches,” or “high culture,” of a third-world communities without discussing issues facing Third-World populations
- ***Mirror***: the study of Third-World contexts through the lens of colonialism and imperialism, which prohibits them from taking a critical stance on the situations and practices of indigenous populations
- ***Authentic insider***: allows Westerners to take interest and study Third-World populations. The authentic insider must refrain from criticizing that culture.

The Deficit Model

- Examines what students lack when they come into the classroom
- Blames students of color because “(a) students enter school without normative cultural knowledge and skills; and (b) parents neither value nor support their child’s education” (Yosso, 2005, p. 75)
- Deficit approaches are common in multicultural pedagogy

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

- Attempts to bridge the gap between home and school through believing all students can achieve, building social relationships, and deconstructing power dynamics of knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 1995)
- Ladson-Billings (2014) now claims most research on culturally responsive pedagogy remain static
- Students rarely have the opportunity to use a critical lens of culture (Ladson-Billings, 2014).
- Research currently moving from “responsive” to “sustaining” (Paris, 2012).

Theoretical Framework of Funds of Knowledge

- A form of assets based learning
- Moll et al. (1992) suggest that teachers should look at what knowledge students gain from their families and communities
- Teachers must then take that knowledge and “shape pedagogy that both connects to students’ experiences and connects to them academically” (Moll, 2015, p. 2-3)
- Some examples include mining, ranching and farming, folklore, and cooking

Six Forms of Community Wealth (Yosso, 2005)

- Aspirational capital: ability to hope and dream
- Linguistic capital: understanding of language(s) and dialects
- Familial capital: knowledges developed within the family
- Social capital: networks of people and community resources
- Navigational capital: the ability to move through various institutions
- Resistant capital: ability and skills that challenges inequality.

Community Wealth, Funds of Knowledge, and Community Sustaining Pedagogy

- Educators must focus on *community* rather than culture
- Build on community wealth students possess
 - All six aspects of community wealth must be utilized
- Bring in students funds of knowledge
 - Recognize it connects more with individual communities rather than national cultures