

Abstract

The notion of applying “culture” to education and learning needs to be questioned. The education system perpetuates bourgeois ideologies, specifically those that value White middle-class culture while stigmatizing students of color (Althusser, 2010/1969; Paris, 2012). This is done by using the deficit model, which examines what students who live outside of the White middle-class cultural sphere lack when they enter school. The use of the deficit model allows for schools to justify discriminatory practices in the classroom that serve as a scapegoat to explain poor academic performance, stating that certain students lack the information and skills needed to succeed and that the student’s family does not care about education (Yosso, 2002). Deficit approaches recreate colonialist power dynamics in the classroom, particularly the notion of the colonized as “other” (Narayan, 1997).

While several scholars have applied Critical Race Theory to discourses on culture in education, (Yosso, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2014), few have applied third-world feminism into their research. This theoretical approach has created the belief that Western feminism is the primary source of feminist theory for educators to use in their praxis (Mohanty, 2003). While several aspects of third-world feminism cannot be applied to powerful countries such as the United States, the work of Narayan (1997) provides a nuanced analysis of culture that revolutionizes perspectives on culture in learning. Using Narayan’s analysis of national culture and the anthropological perspective of multiculturalism, I will complicate contemporary narratives on multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching. I conclude by encouraging community sustaining pedagogical practices.

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