Countering the Dominant Narrative:
In Defense of Critical Coursework

By Angela Cartwright Lynskey

Demographics of public schools, in which minority students now make up the majority of the student body (Maxwell, 2014; Sleeter, Neal, & Kumashiro, 2014) while the teaching force continues to be mostly White (Subedi, 2006), indicate that many pre-service teachers will need significant training if they are to be prepared for the challenging task of filling knowledge gaps, interrogating dominant assumptions, and creating space for voices of difference (Butin, 2007a; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Marshall, 2006). Before pre-service teachers, especially those whose privilege remains unacknowledged, can lead their classes in transformational learning, described as that which occurs when a new awareness changes the way we perceive ourselves, others, and the world around us (Cole, 2011), pre-service teachers must first experience it themselves. Thus, the decreasing emphasis on, or even acknowledgement of, multicultural education in teacher education is cause for concern. Teacher preparation programs increasingly focus on preparing candidates for the standardized classroom while failing to engage them in the ongoing dialogue

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about the role of the classroom in society (Butin & Schutz, 2013). The trend away from critical educational foundations is illustrated by the 2006 NCATE controversy over social justice. Ultimately, NCATE opted to abandon social justice in order to maintain its accreditation authority without mounting a defense of social justice, declining to even provide a counter definition to balance the ideological bias of the social justice opponents (Butin, 2007a; Heybach, 2009). Even the more palatable field of multicultural education (Butin, 2007b) is rarely required coursework, and when it is, it is rarely presented in ways that encourage pre-service teachers to move outside of their comfort zones (Butin, 2007a). Without these crucial components in their undergraduate education, it is unlikely that classroom teachers will see among their goals the "responsibility for building classroom communities that confront controversy and take responsibility for creating a better community, one that values diversity and human integrity and fights inhumanity" (Santora, 1995, pp. 21-22). Social justice education, itself an acknowledgement of the larger need for individual and societal transformation through interrogations of dominant assumptions, is frequently met with resistance by pre-service teachers (Conklin, 2008; Villegas, 2007). The data from this study suggests that one explanation for this phenomenon is that the concept of social justice is increasingly counter to dominant cultural narratives, as an analysis of texts popular among Christian communities in the Midwest suggests.

Influence of Christianity

A religiously and politically conservative understanding of Christianity, widely known as the Religious Right (Haidt & Graham, 2007), is influential in education (Apple, 2006), and religious affiliation can influence the way pre-service teachers perceive their studies (Blumenfeld, 2006; Subedi 2006; Van Gorder, 2007). Social justice has come to be considered a culturally liberal view (Haidt & Graham, 2007; Manzo, 2008), while Christianity is generally considered a socially conservative culture (Repstad, 2008). These tensions prompted an intense public debate between notable proponent Jim Wallis and prominent critic Glenn Beck. Beck, at the time a Fox News on-air personality, instructed viewers to "leave congregations that refer to social justice or economic justice," even if only on their website, comparing social justice Christians to Nazis and communists ("Century marks," 2010, p. 9). Beck also encouraged viewers to report their religious leaders to church authorities (Wallis, 2010). The response from Christian organizations committed to social justice, such as Bread for the World and *Sojourners* magazine, included online petitions calling both for Beck to desist and for Christians committed to social justice to take a stand against Beck's characterization.

Christianity has been a significant contributor to the development and evolution of American culture and its political landscape, as it comprises a self-identified majority of the adult population of the United States (Pew Research Center, 2010). Many scholars recognize formative religious experiences as one of the key components that inform our concepts of self and of knowledge, regardless of the

degree to which we later claim a spiritual identity (Shahjahan, 2005; Tisdell, 2007; Vogel, 2000).

The worldview created by religious experiences outlasts belief in the specifics that created the view itself. In her description of a spiritually-influenced worldview, Tisdell (2007) noted its impact on identity development and the ways in which we "construct knowledge through largely unconscious and symbolic processes" (p. 535). She illustrates the persistent effect of these processes, describing participants in her study:

> While nearly all were socialized in a religious tradition, of the 31, only 6 still associated strongly with their childhood religious traditions; the rest tended to define themselves as "spiritual but not religious." All, however, continually spiraled back and reclaimed images, symbols, and music that still had important meaning for them from their childhood religious traditions (Tisdell, 2007, p. 536).

Despite their intentional shift from identifying as religious to identifying as spiritual, the religious "tradition will remain the foundation of their spiritual development, and clearly will always have an impact on the development of their beliefs and values" (Tisdell, 2007, p. 540). This concept appears in education literature, as well; Darling-Hammond (2002) observes that "each teacher is shaped by his or her own experiences" (p. 2).

Methods

Because of the dominance of Christianity in the United States and the impact it can have on the development of identify, beliefs, and values, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was used to determine the portrayal of social justice in the eight best-selling texts in large and influential faith communities in the Midwest (see Table 1). The bookstores associated with two Midwestern mega churches, those with at least 2000 weekly attendants (Beer, 2009), were contacted with requests for their bestselling books. As the two churches are on opposite ends of the socio-political spectrum, it was not surprising that there was no overlap in the titles provided.

Table 1

Analyzed Text	*Author*
Allah: A Christian Response	Miroslav Volf
Culturally Incorrect: How Clashing Worldviews Affect Your Future	Rod Parsley
Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace	Miroslav Volf
Living on Our Heads: Righting an Upside-Down Culture	Rod Parsley
No Dry Season: Raising High God's Standards of Living for this Final Generation	Rod Parsley
Not a Fan: Becoming a Completely Committed Follower of Jesus	Kyle Idleman
Silent No More: Bringing Moral Clarity to America…While Freedom Still Rings	Rod Parsley
Soul Detox: Clean Living in a Contaminated World	Craig Groeschel

The selection of literature as the focus of study was intentional, though it obviously represents only a small slice of the factors that contribute to social justice epistemologies among Christians. Written texts represent an intentional and developed presentation of the ideas within (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009), and the intentionality and thoughtfulness of the written word are indicative of the ways in which it is used to preserve that which the author and audience find meaningful (Olson, 1980). The intergenerational connection and longevity made possible through the archived and preserved words in texts can provide a sense of authority, as the words are in some ways divorced from a speaker and made "impersonal, objective, and above criticism" (Olson, 1980, p. 192). Thus written texts can be understood by readers as authoritative representations of important ideas.

Recognizing the impact texts can have on readers, CDA was used to determine the portrayal of social justice in the eight best-selling texts in large and influential faith communities in a Midwestern state known as a perennial bellwether and microcosm of the United States (Coffey, Green, Cohen, & Brooks, 2011). CDA is a valuable tool when investigating "the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context" (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 352). The goal of CDA is to disrupt the dominant narrative, so it "has focused on hegemonic discourse: official accounts which attempt to naturalize the current state of affairs, to make current power relations appear to be inalterable facts of nature" (Linde, 2001, p. 531). As such, CDA was a useful tool for the investigation of representations of social justice.

Representations of Social Justice

The texts were analyzed for portrayals of social justice, as well as portrayals of difference in race, class, gender, and sexuality. The analysis included no instances of the use of the exact phrase *social justice*, and the many instances of the use of the word justice that were not included in the analysis. The decision to exclude references to justice from analysis had a significant effect on the results; in *Allah* (Volf, 2011) alone, justice was listed as an attribute of God/Allah no less than thirty-six times and as a virtue enjoined by God/Allah no less than thirty-nine times. *Not a Fan* (Idleman, 2011) contained two explicit references to justice, both referencing the hypocrisy of those who neglect it. *Soul Detox* (Groeschel, 2012) did not utilize the word justice at all, and it appeared 10 times in Parsley's (1996, 2005, 2007, 2010) combined works.

In addition to these explicit, and positive, references in *Allah* (Volf, 2011), multiple references to the necessity of working for "the common good," the "good," "care," "rights," and "well-being" of others, as well as multiple positive references to pluralism and the injunction to treat others as you would have them treat you appeared in the analyzed texts. Similar examples were found in *Not a Fan* (Idleman, 2011), including the importance of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and visiting prisoners as acts that evidence the existence of faith. Indeed, one of examples of a casual fan of Jesus was the man who said he believed but refused to

heed Jesus' biblical call to "sell your possessions and give to the poor" (Idleman, 2011, p. 144). Idleman's focus on individual efforts such as mission trips, serving food at the homeless shelter, visiting the sick, or even becoming foster or adoptive parents, however, ignore the role that systemic inequity has in creating those circumstances.

In *Free of Charge*, Volf (2005) has the opportunity to address this issue, but falls short. He asks, "doesn't the very fact of giving undermine any equality that the gifts confer?" (Volf, 2005, p. 83). Volf's (2005) question could lead readers from individual acts of charity toward acts of social justice for systemic change, but instead he assures readers that givers, as conduits of God's giving, are not perpetuating a hierarchy. Though he does assert the importance of governments meeting the "social needs" of their people, which takes some of the focus off of individual charitable gifts, the onus of his argument is on a personal responsibility to give (2005, p. 87).

Though many of the attributes and descriptions of *justice* in the analyzed texts encompassed *social justice*, they were excluded because of the perceived differences, and politicization, between justice and social justice. Social justice is frequently equated with distributive justice, which entails the redistribution of wealth (Apple, 2006; Miller, 1999); due to the economic component of this model, it frequently encounters resistance. Generally, approaches to justice in theory and justice in action are largely divergent; Miller (1992) describes the adherence to theories regarding the importance of justice as the "Sunday-best" version, while the actual application of these values is much more mundane and diluted by "self-interest" (p. 557; see also Miller, 1999). The application of justice values is further contingent upon the scope of applied justice; we are much more likely to act justly for small groups than to advocate for justice on a societal scale (Miller, 1992; see also Miller, 1999). Due to the politicization of social justice, it is possible that readers of the analyzed texts may not make a meaningful connection to the general theory of justice and its practical applications of social justice.

Examples of the divergent meanings of justice, and thus the rationale behind excluding justice from analysis, are also found in Parsley's (2007) *Culturally Incorrect*, Volf's (2005) *Free of Charge*, and Groeschel's (2012) *Soul Detox*. The first section of *Free of Charge* (2005) is about living generously, giving to others the way God gives, while the second section is about forgiveness, which, he argues, we should also do as God does. Significantly, Volf (2005) also encourages readers not to be takers, those who take what they need but refuse to work for it; he does, however, make allowances for those who are "unable to work" (p. 57). The section on giving contains no references to *social justice* or even to *justice*; however, it is full of descriptions of and encouragements to act for social justice. Volf (2005), quoting 2 Corinthians 8:13-14, describes the purpose of giving in the image of God as that which will "create 'a fair balance' between their 'present abundance' and the need of recipients" (p. 78). He goes on, saying that "gifts should foster and express equality" and "should aim at establishing parity in the midst of drastic

and pervasive inequality," as a situation in which "some suffer abject poverty while others enjoy opulence" is biblically untenable (Volf, 2005, p. 82-83).

Volf (2005) encourages readers to give generously "without any distinction—to stranger and to kin, to undeserving and deserving…what the color of their skin is, or how they behave doesn't matter" (p. 75). Significantly, Volf (2005) makes explicit the fact that "resources give us power" (p. 98). His correlation between material resources and access to power, and the corresponding injunction to give of both from your excess, is an important aspect of social justice. Of course, as discussed above, Volf's (2005) focus on individual acts that "offer immediate help" can lead to neglect of the crucial component of acting for systemic change (p. 119). Indeed, his argument that "if Christians in the United States along gave 10 percent of their income, the problem of world hunger could be solved" leaves little room to interrogate the systemic inequities that perpetuate world hunger (Volf, 2005, p. 106).

In *Soul Detox*, Groeschel (2012) uses the word *justice* when he describes the concept of righteous anger by drawing attention to the "poverty [that] runs rampant;" "corporations [that] exploit the earth's resources for billions of dollars and excrete toxic waste into the land and seas;" and the plight of "people [who] are tricked, kidnapped, taken advantage of—even sold as slaves" (p. 128). He goes on to argue that "used as a catalyst for justice and the pursuit of God's righteousness, anger can cleanse, restore, and unite" (Groeschel, 2012, p. 129). Despite identifying systemic issues and encouraging readers to act, Groeschel (2012) does not use the term *social justice*.

References to *justice* are few in Parsley's (1996, 2005, 2007, 2010) works. The term appeared only once, in the name of an organization he supports, in *Culturally Incorrect* (2007), though he does describe activities that are aligned with social justice and encourage readers to rediscover the tradition of the social gospel. Parsley (2007) repeatedly encourages readers to work toward the "relief of the poor and oppressed" (p. 79) and to see the "exploited lifted up" (p. 92). He calls readers to "to arise – in love, action, and purpose" (p. 154) to reclaim their "rich heritage of influencing society through humble acts of charity, strategic community concern, and sacrificial works of service" (Parsley, 2007, p. 163). In addition, Parsley (2005) includes a list of scripture references to support his claims that it is the "responsibility for Christians to care for the poor" in the endnotes of *Silent No More* (Parsley, 2005). He also asserts that "God cares deeply about orphans, widows, and the poor, and expects His people to share His concern" (Parsley, 2005, p. 169).

Best-selling books at two mega churches in a bell-weather state, these texts represent the dominant narrative on social justice. The absence of discussion or even acknowledgement is conspicuous. The dominance of hegemony is sustained by its invisibility; when dominance is made visible, it must be confronted (Applebaum, 2004; Crocco, 2010; Freire, 1970; Mura, 1999; Young, 2001). As the silence, and thus invisibility, of difference in the analyzed texts indicates, self-confrontation is frequently difficult for individuals of dominant groups (Banks, 1996).

While the texts encourage personal charity, in which individuals take actions

to alleviate the suffering around them, they do not further the cause of intentional pursuit of equity, which is implicit in the concept of social justice. Though the discussion of justice in the analyzed texts is not overtly damaging to the cause of social justice, negative portrayals of racial minorities, women, and homosexuals were revealed by the analysis. These negative portrayals of difference are of great concern to teacher educators, as they are in direct opposition to the core principles of social justice, as well as the end of prejudice and discrimination, central to multicultural education (Bennett, 2001). In addition, some of the unanticipated findings of the analysis demonstrate more subtle influences against social justice, including anti-intellectualism and a lack of multivocality.

Anti-Intellectualism

Apple (2006) laments that "open season on education continues," and goes on to note that many of those critiquing education are religious groups (p. 1). The treatment of education and educated individuals by one author, responsible for half of the texts analyzed for this study, is consistent with Apple's (2006) findings that, from the perspective of conservative Christians, "public schooling thus is itself a site of immense danger" (p. 45). Apple (2006) quotes conservative Christian author-activist, Tim LaHaye, who describes public education as "the most dangerous force in a child's life" (p. 45).

The author's rejection of education, especially critical frameworks, is based in his perception of them as elitist and dangerous. Indeed, as he dismisses even the ideas of multiculturalism and tolerance, identifying them as "ludicrous and extreme" (Parsley, 2010, p. 130) attempts to "indoctrinate malleable young minds" (Parsley, 2010, p. 157), it is little wonder that teacher educators encounter resistance to multicultural education.

The negative portrayal of education begins subtly in *No Dry Season* (Parsley, 1996) and becomes more explicitly anti-education in *Silent No More* (Parsley, 2005); the introduction informs readers that he will "not be silent until the media's high-tech persecution of [his] faith is exposed and until the very schools [his] tax dollars support are no longer the enemies of everything [he] teach[es] [his] children to believe" (p. 3). Indeed, the entirety of *Silent No More*'s (Parsley, 2005) sixth chapter is devoted to exposing the fact that "public education in [the United States] is a dismal failure" (Parsley, 2005, p. 121); the theme is taken up again in *Culturally Incorrect* (Parsley, 2007), where he argues that "the decline and fall of public education has been accelerated by the continual erosion of any vestige of biblical values in the public school classroom" (Parsley, 2007, p. 21).

The author supports his assessment by claiming that "everything to do with our public school system is down—everything, that is, except crime, drug use, illicit sex, and the cost to taxpayers" (Parsley, 2005, p. 121). Despite arguing that, aside from "an underlying 'anti-intellectualism' in a few isolated circles," most Americans are in favor of education (p. 120), the author explains that knowledge is "not all that it is cracked up to be" and "grossly overrated" (Parsley, 2007, p. 119). He

prefers wisdom, "the most practical—but often least developed—of educational attributes," which "takes knowledge out of the ivory tower and engages it down where the rubber meets the road" (Parsley, 2005, p. 125).

The negative portrayal of the "academic elite" continues when the author challenges their commitment to the "virtues" of "'tolerance' and 'diversity'" (Parsley, 2007, p. xvii) and goes on to identify "our universities" (Parsley, 2007, p. xxi) as sites "filled with Marxist admirers" (Parsley, 2007, p. 37) in which "false worldviews are being preached" (Parsley, 2007, p. xxi). The author asserts that Christians have "lost the universities," many of which "were founded by Christian men as distinctly Christian institutions" (Parsley, 2007, p. 7), but are now threatened by "a new, militant strain of atheism" (Parsley, 2010, p. 190). Now, he argues, "the massive majority of our institutions of higher learning are not only blatantly humanist and atheist," but also "fiercely intolerance of the ideas that energized their founders" (Parsley, 2007, p. 8).

The negative portrayal of "elite universities" continues in *Living on Our Heads* (Parsley, 2010), when the author identifies them as "bastions of 'progressive' feminist thought and practice" (Parsley, 2010, p. 99; see also p. 160) where "liberal political correctness, multiculturalism, and 'tolerance' run stark-raving amok" and create "some of the least intellectually free places in our land" (Parsley, 2010, p. 130, emphasis in original; see also p. 152). He argues that "there is a well-documented and widely recognized tendency in academia to indoctrinate malleable young minds with the most ludicrous and extreme liberal ideologies" (Parsley, 2010, p. 157; see also p. 159).

The author goes on to discuss what he terms the problem of "academic adolescence" in *Living on Our Heads* (Parsley, 2010), in which he laments "the academic Left's disdainful dismissal of our entire heritage as a civilization" (Parsley, 2010, p. 152). A symptom of this problem is the absence of "conservative ideas" due to the "left-wing" habit of protesting conservatives who lecture on university campuses (Parsley, 2010, p. 152-153). In the place of conservative ideas are "egregious examples of left-wing indoctrination" (Parsley, 2010, p. 159) provided by "our 'progressive' educational establishment, in conjunction with humanistic psychology professionals (Parsley, 2010, p. 162).

In addition to challenging the current system of education, which he argues is underfunded by the "secular government" while simultaneously suggesting that some of the insufficient funding be transferred into vouchers, much of the author's attention is focused on educated persons (Parsley, 2005, p. 131). He describes "brilliant, but utterly clueless" individuals, "educated beyond their intelligence," as those who "have a PhD, but they don't have the slightest idea how to make it in life" (Parsley, 2005, p. 125). The portrayal of educated individuals become even more negative in *Culturally Incorrect* (Parsley, 2007); he encourages readers to remember that

> We, as believers, must never again allow some bearded old goat sitting in a university chair to stare at us over the brim of his glasses, stroke his whiskers, suck on a pipe and crown his head with an encircling wreath of smoke and intimidate us because he feels some kind of intellectual superiority over us (p. 30).

The author goes on to claim that "smug academic authorities" are convincing "a generation of people" of their own insignificance and meaningless lives (Parsley, 2007, p. 94). Even in the somewhat more nuanced *Living on Our Heads* (Parsley, 2010), he places the word intellectuals in quotation marks, apparently in order to signal some disagreement with the concept.

Interestingly, the author includes National Education Association (NEA) members in the "educational elite," despite the fact that teachers are largely considered to be members of the middle class (Parsley, 2005, p. 129). He quotes *Forbes* magazine, a "sedate business journal," when he argues that the NEA "is 'the worm in the American education apple'" that "'has come to embody every single cause that has contributed to the crisis that threatens our public schools'" (Parsley, 2005, p. 127). He goes on to characterize the NEA as "a smothering monopoly" with an "appetite for new kingdoms to conquer" (Parsley, 2005, p. 127) and goes on to claim that the "massive, radical, and reactionary teacher's union" is "more influential even than the combined strength of the White House and both houses of Congress" (Parsley, 2005, p. 129).

A notable component of the author's negative portrayal of education can be seen in his treatment of the critical theories that inform much scholarship in the academy. Critical theory is traced back to the work of the Frankfurt School and Habermas, though its historical roots extend back to Marx and the philosophes (Agger, 1991; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Held, 1980; Maddock, 1999). The author portrays multiple critical lenses as fundamentally incompatible with Christianity, describing them as "wrong and/or destructive" (Parsley, 2007, p. 77). He notably describes postmodernism as being in "stunning contrast" to Christianity (Parsley, 2007, p. 73; see also Parsley, 2010) and argues that:

> …you frequently hear postmodernists label people who hold a biblical worldview "intolerant." The Christian (at least the Christian who thinks like one) can't and won't buy into postmodernism's fundamental presuppositions (Parsley, 2007, p. 58).

The author continues his negative portrayal of postmodernism in *Living on Our Heads* (Parsley, 2010), in which he claims that a "postmodern, post-Christian" United States engages in idolatry of celebrities (Parsley, 2010, p. 27). He continues his argument that postmodernism necessarily leads to "moral relativism," which he characterizes as "Godless morality" (Parsley, 2010, p. 60).

To compliment his negative portrayal of this notable critical lens, the author also rejects the possibility of any positive outcome of the Age of Enlightenment, characterizing it as a "mix of skepticism, atheism and worship of reason" (Parsley, 2007, p. 89; see also Parsley, 2010). He denounces Enlightenment philosophes, either in name or in seminal philosophy (Parsley, 2007, p. xix, 52-53, 83-84, 86, 89, 98). One exception is when he claims that "freedoms were part of a centuries-old English tradition derived from both Judeo-Christian ideals and the Enlightenment" (Parsley, 2010, p. 129).

In addition to reason, the author also appears to have a particular issue with

the concepts of tolerance (Parsley, 2007, p. xvii, 3; see also Parsley, 2010, p. 130, 135) and multiculturalism (Parsley, 2010, p. 130, 152). The importance of critical lenses and related concepts to the field of education makes his admonition to "be on the lookout for" and "learn to recognize" such "worldviews" problematic (Parsley, 2007, p. 62), as is the fact that he warns readers against being "compromised by elements from the false paradigms" (Parsley, 2007, p. 67).

Lack of Multivocality

The proportion of data from one author was an unintentional and unexpected development in the study. It does, however, illustrate another theme in the findings; the authorship of the bestselling texts lacked multivocality. Multicultural education seeks to create individuals with multicultural competence (Bennett, 2001). This requires a reconciliation with the self (Banks, 1996) which requires individuals in both groups to see past their own perspectives. Indeed, one of the key concepts of multicultural competence is the ability to see past one's own positioning to "the 'whole picture;'" thus, multicultural competence is, in some ways, "a way of looking at the world" and interacting with others (Case, 1993, p. 318). When multivocality is not encouraged, it will be more difficult to accept differing perspectives.

The analysis revealed a lack of multivocality in the authorship of the analyzed texts; the four authors are all white, male, Westerners. This supports Haidt and Graham's (2007) findings on the different influences on morality. They argue that conservative interpretations of morality may interfere with an interest in social justice because conservatives consider issues of ingroup/loyalty, authority/respect, and purity/sanctity when assessing the morality of a situation, while liberals focus on issues of harm/care and fairness/reciprocity (Haidt & Graham, 2007). While conservatives also consider harm/care and fairness/reciprocity, it is a significantly smaller percentage of their criteria than for liberals, for whom considerations of harm/care and fairness/reciprocity represent the totality of their moral compass (Haidt & Graham, 2007).

In a description of the in-group/loyalty consideration, Haidt and Graham (2007) address many issues represented in the analyzed works:

> From this point of view, it is hard to see why diversity should be celebrated and increased, while rituals that strengthen group solidarity (such as a pledge of allegiance to the national flag) should be challenged in court. According to ingroup-based moralities, dissent is not patriotic (as some American bumper-stickers suggest); rather, criticizing one's ingroup while it is engaged in an armed conflict with another group is betrayal or even treason (p. 105).

Reflecting the description above, the insider/outsider dichotomy was frequently utilized by one of the authors. In addition, notions of authority/respect and purity/sanctity are also commonly found in his works, though they are also found in the analyzed texts by other authors, as well. The analysis also revealed another trend that supports Haidt and Graham's (2007) ideas; education, particularly higher education with a critical lens, is discouraged.

Implications for Teacher Educators

In contrast to the above negative portrayal, many scholars consider critical paradigms essential to social justice education; indeed, Hytten and Bettez's (2011) fourth category, theoretically specific scholarship, consists of the application to education of common critical lenses. Critical paradigms acknowledge that our perception of reality is shaped by "social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender" factors, and that as our construction of knowledge is based in these factors, it is intrinsically "transactional" and "subjective[e];" because of these ontological and epistemological commitments, critical interpretations are contextual and "dialogic" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 109).

Neutrality is, arguably, nonexistent, as all perspectives are limited by positionality. If this is the case, it is imperative that pre-service teachers have meaningful exposure to multiple narratives. The tone of absolute certainty in most of the analyzed texts, and the blatant rejection of any notion of relativity in some, would make those who may have internalized these worldviews quite resistant to contradictory narratives and critical lenses. Pre-service teachers may have a difficult time accepting these critical lenses, along with many aspects of social justice, if they have not had sufficient coursework to counter the dominant narrative, represented by the analyzed texts. Acceptance requires a paradigmatic shift "from reliance on absolute, dualistic principles of some sort to an acknowledgment of nonabsolute relativity" (Bennett, 1993, p. 45).

As Bennett (1993) explains, acceptance is reached when "difference is both acknowledged and respected," without value judgment, "as a necessary and preferable human condition" (pp. 47-48). The analyzed texts demonstrated, with few exceptions, either a complete silence or a negative judgment of difference. The analysis revealed no finding on the explicit portrayal of social justice; however, the presence of negative portrayals of difference and of academic inquiry, especially that which challenges dominant narratives, suggests that teacher education programs lacking sufficient coursework on multicultural education, and the philosophical frameworks that support it, will be unable to counter the dominant narrative. Transformative educational experiences require transformed educators, and providing sufficient, quality coursework is imperative to the transformation of our pre-service teachers.

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