ABSTRACT

Manufacturing Dissent:
The New Economy of Power Relations in Multicultural Teacher Education

by

Katherine Richardson Bruna

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Davis

Professor Jon Wagner, Chair

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the force of cultural mismatch (the fact that the majority of urban teachers in the U.S. are White and their students are not) on critical multicultural teacher education. It explores the relationship between critical multiculturalism on multicultural education and shows how, in the context of teacher preparation, multicultural education has taken up critical multiculturalism’s call for social reconstruction while leaving behind its call for the deconstruction of race. The goal of transforming the “typical” White teacher into an agent of social change, which is characteristic of critical multicultural teacher education’s approach to cultural mismatch, reveals that there is an uneven understanding of what being “critical” means. How the limits of this understanding negatively affect the content and delivery of multicultural teacher education for all preservice teachers is the focus of the dissertation’s central study.

Using interview, observation, and document data, the study describes the 3-year journey of one teacher educator as she tries to take a “critical” approach to
teaching a course on cultural diversity. Through the lenses of pedagogy, teacher socialization, knowledge production, and modern power, it discusses the reactions of the preservice teachers to the course, how they shape the teacher educator’s practice, and her understanding of what being “critical” in the classroom really means. Specifically, the study is used to problematize the popular use of reflection in critical multicultural teacher education as the dissertation more generally considers the relationship between self-regulation and state control. It argues that an emphasis on the individual White teacher as the locus of inequality detracts attention away from the structural conditions that perpetuate oppression. Cultural mismatch approaches to critical multicultural teacher education are, it asserts, part of the very problem they purport to address.