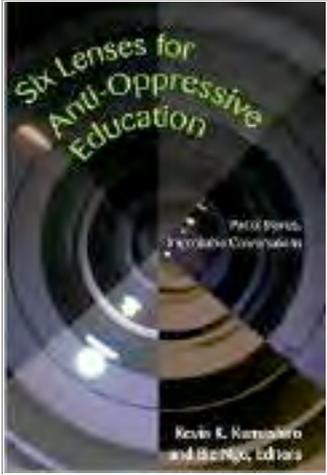


<i>Six Lenses for Anti-Oppressive Education: Partial Stories, Improbable Conversations</i>		
<b>Author:</b>	Kevin K. Kumashiro & Bic Ngo, Eds. (2007)	
<b>Publisher:</b>	New York: Peter Lang	
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In *Six Lenses for Anti-Oppressive Education*, editors Kevin Kumashiro and Bic Ngo have organized a series of essays and presentations about critical pedagogy into six sections, each containing two chapters and an email conversation between the authors of those chapters. The majority of the contributors are teacher educators at American and Canadian universities. Each of the first four sections also include a teaching story by an educator who illustrates how some facet of anti-oppressive education is practically implemented in the elementary, secondary, or university classroom. While the editors have sought to thematically organize their collection around issues of (1) authoritative discourses in education, (2) hidden curriculums, (3) critical literacy, (4) addressing student resistance to critical pedagogy, (5) anti-racist education, and (6) situating anti-oppressive education in times of war, I found that many of the broader questions authors raised were echoed throughout the book. Along with the range of social issues and perspectives presented, the complexity of the book's organization points to some of the contradictions and difficulties inherent to the critical pedagogy project. As Kumashiro and Ngo write in their introduction, "The field of anti-oppressive education includes multiple theoretical traditions, with no consensus on how to teach in anti-oppressive ways" (p. xix).

These difficulties first come to light in the foreword by Allan Luke and Benji Chang, which announces that the book's focus will be on "communities marginalized on the basis of race and culture, social class, gender, sexual preference, age, 'disability' and location" (p. iv). Luke and Chang's apparently ironical reference to "disability" by

framing the term in quotation marks—a distinction for which these writers offer no rationale—is disconcerting given that the rest of the book offers little by way of a critical construction of disability related issues. As Lennard Davis has noted,

People with disabilities, Deaf people, and others who might not even consider themselves as having a disability have been relegated to the margins by the very people who have celebrated and championed the emergence of multiculturalism, class consciousness, feminism and queer studies, from the margins. (cited in Ladd, 2003, p. xi)

In my view, a critical pedagogy book that purports, in Luke and Chang's words, to be "multi-voiced" (p. ix) and to aim for "more inclusive discourses of schooling" (p. xiv) should offer more than a passing mention of diversity beyond issues of gender, race, class, and sexual preference. For example, the book's second section about hidden curriculums includes a teaching story by Judi Hirsch, an educator of "low-income, special needs high school students of color" (p. 85), but this story lacks a critical disability-studies framework which might better illuminate how and why some students are identified as "underprepared" and "low-functioning" (pp. 86-87). This section also includes a chapter on ageism by Gloria Graves Holmes, which seemingly reinforces negative stereotypes of disability by criticizing portrayals of older people as disabled. For example, Holmes views as "ageist" a portrayal of a "seventy-year old, wheelchair-bound grandfather," and terms this characterization as "useless, dependent, isolated, and impotent" (p. 74). Elsewhere, she cites an "ageist bias" of equating "old" with "disabled" (p. 78). These references have the unfortunate effect of stereotyping one marginalized group while attempting to champion another. Since Hirsch's and Holmes' submissions are the only chapters to touch on disability issues, Davis' observation is reinforced by this book.

Aside from this significant omission this book offers several interesting and informative discussions of how discourse and ideology operate in the classroom and beyond. In the first section, about authoritative discourses, Charlotte Lichter provides an insightful account of how present-day concerns over boys' literacy underachievement are linked to British-based historical discourses of gender and education. As a social justice educator at Virginia Tech, Jane Lehr writes of the difficulties in challenging entrenched scientific discourses on masculinity and femininity. In Linda Fernsten's teaching story, the negative impact of academic writing discourses and teaching methods on the self-image and achievement of a bilingual student is brought to light. As occurs elsewhere in the book, in Fernsten's story she admits her inadequacies in facilitating an anti-oppressive education: "My class did not offer a strong enough sociopolitical discourse to help [my student] construct a more positive and productive writer identity. . . . what I offered was not enough to help him map substantial change" (p. 41). As this story highlights, in the critical pedagogy project what is sometimes missing is knowledge of how to make the crucial link between theory and transformative action.

The third section, about learning to read critically, returns to themes of gender and academic achievement, as in Carol Ricker-Wilson's discussion of how readings of gender and sexuality emerged in her high school English classrooms. Ricker-Wilson provides suggestions for critical-questioning protocols that can aid students in deconstructing texts. For example, she lists sample protocols based on feminist literary theory, Marxist criticism, and poststructural literary theory that interrogate textual depictions of gender and power and challenge the composition of the literary canon. In addition, this section again raises the question of whether and how ideological critiques of texts can translate to real-world action, as in Mary Beth Hines' case study of a college literature classroom taught by a social justice educator and Jocelyn Anne Glazier's teaching story about an English methods course for new and preservice teachers. While offering further practical suggestions for fostering critical literacy, Hines and Glazier also cite a gap between teacher educators and teachers themselves. Not only may teacher educators have much more "institutional freedom" (p. 153) to promote a social justice pedagogy, but, as Glazier writes, as a teacher educator "I do not have\_€"nay, I do not make\_€"the opportunity to follow my students into their classrooms to support their 'walking the walk,' in school contexts that too often try to constrain this sort of work" (p. 147).

The risks involved with practicing anti-oppressive education are brought home in the fourth section about addressing resistance. The chapters by Rita M. Kissen and Mary Curran highlight some difficulties in facilitating awareness of racism and gender issues among primarily white, middle-class teacher candidates who in their training programs encounter disadvantaged minority families and adult ESL learners. However, it is in the teaching story by Ann Berlak and Sekani Moyenda that the real dangers of anti-oppressive education are brought to light. In describing an explosive encounter between Moyenda, an African-American elementary-school educator who made a classroom presentation to Berlak's preservice and in-service teacher candidates, the two teachers convey the value of expressing moral anger and the pain felt by victims of racism in the context of anti-racist and critical pedagogy university classrooms, often ruled by a decorum befitting a Sunday-school picnic. Additionally, the ways in which Moyenda was censured and penalized for her forthrightness—including being asked to resign by her school's administrators following the publication of Berlak and Moyenda (2001)—are a clear reminder that anti-oppressive education in the true sense is not a safe undertaking. The conversation that follows between Berlak, Curran, Kissen, and Moyenda provides some of the most authentic dialogue in this book.

In contrast, the subsequent sections regarding anti-racist and anti-oppressive education felt more theoretical and detached in focus, although the conversation between Connie North and Thomas M. Philip in the fifth section raises interesting points about the role and voice of social justice researchers from underprivileged backgrounds. The chapter by George Lipsitz and Prama Tagore and the one by Faith Herising in the sixth section describe challenges to teaching and learning critically in the context of the U.S.-led war on terror.

As a whole, *Six Lenses for Anti-Oppressive Education* provides a valuable and thought-provoking resource for teacher educators and other teachers seeking to implement critical, antiracist pedagogies in the contemporary classroom. The gaps in this collection's scope and in the anti-oppressive education project itself will hopefully lead to new inquiries and writings that continue to advance the understanding and practice of critical pedagogy.

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