The Journey from Babel

Unleashing the Power of the Collective through the Creative Dynamism of Difference

John A. Cassell, Thomas Nelson, & Harriett B. Arnold

The biblical tale of King Nimrod, described as the grandson of Noah and master of a distantly ancient world, is poignantly relevant to the course of scholarly labor on the concepts of multiculturalism and multicultural education. In a fit of untrammeled hubris and resentment, Nimrod commanded the countless millions under his authority to gather and build a great tower through which he sought to challenge God's position and authority. The tower was built, and in a particularly impactful film depiction of the event, Nimrod climbed the dizzying height to its top. He then drew an arrow, looked up, and fired it into the heavens as if to announce that he had arrived.

God, we are told, in much the same way as any exalted executive authority challenged by middle management, was not pleased or impressed by the presumptive and irreverent actions of an impetuous and arrogant subordinate. In a single heavenly stroke the linguistically, ethnically, and culturally unified human family was torn asunder—one person could no longer understand the next person's language and their neighbor's customs and dress suddenly seemed foreign and exotic. Humanity was scattered to the four corners of the earth to live forever more in the challenging disarray of linguistic, ethnic, and cultural diversity.

In a very real sense, the recorded history of human civilization can be seen as a long and arduous journey from Babel; an effort to cope with, at times overcome, and at times understand and leverage the socio-cultural, ethnic, and linguistic barriers resulting from Nimrod's audacity. Central to this journey are both the superficial and deeply engrained markers of culture, the different perspectives regarding life on Earth that cultural identity sets in motion, and the mechanics of language and verbal interaction between human beings through which we attempt to attain understanding, find common ground, and achieve a felt sense of belonging. As scholars and practitioners in numerous fields have continued their work to understand the power and potential of multiculturalism and multicultural education, the legacy of Nimrod and the shadow of his tower have loomed ever larger and have become ever more urgent.

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Multiculturalism at the Crossroads

Definitional Drift

The collection of articles presented in this special issue of *Multicultural Education* takes on an enhanced level of topicality and immediacy in light of the crossroads at which both multiculturalism and multicultural education find themselves in both the United States and the West generally. Over the last 30 years, many see multiculturalism as having gone from a position of generalized dominance and intellectual ubiquity relative to socio-cultural formulations regarding the proper structure and operation of societies to—if not dead—then certainly on its deathbed (Wright, Singh, & Race, 2012). There are a number of factors that have played a part in creating this situation.

Perhaps the overarching difficulty with regard to the position of multiculturalism in the West is the fact that it has always been intellectually problematic in that it lacks an agreed-upon meaning in terms of how it is presented in the academic literature and public discourse (Henry, 2012). This has resulted in it being a historically-contested concept, both as an intellectual formulation and as a basis for policy measures such as multicultural education (Harreveld, 2012). The focus of multiculturalism in the U.S. has shifted noticeably over the last 40 years. In the 1970s the multicultural movement was centered on issues of equity and fairness first set in motion by progressivist reformers in response to (1) rising cultural and racial tensions in the wake of mass immigration during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and (2) the race riots of the 1940s and 1960s.

These events resulted in the intercultural and intergroup education movements in the public schools—the precursors to the multiculturalism that arose later as a result of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. In the 1980s the focus shifted to an emphasis on affective aspects of human relations and in the 1990s the focus shifted again, moving back toward equity and fairness concerns in the form of a more aggressive stance relative to social justice, power, and privilege (Dolby, 2012).

This has led to a conceptual, structural, and policy oscillation between two broad poles in emphasis and direction relative to multiculturalism, not only in the U.S., but in the West more generally. On the one hand, the value of cultural diversity is taken as a moral and ethical given—that is, its value derives from the objective moral value that stems from a better understanding of "the other." On the other hand, the value of cultural diversity is tied to its function in support of free and open societies and democratic political/governmental structures that serve to institutionalize cultural liberty in support of an engaged and empowered citizenry that has the orientations, knowledge, sensitivities, and skills required to help create and maintain such societies (Harreveld, 2012; Henry, 2012).

Contradictions in Messages and Effects

This definitional muddiness is added to by the fact that certain goals and objectives of historically normative multiculturalism seem to work against what many proponents say it stands for. Though some openly state that these goals should be seen as largely aspirational and ideal, many of these traditional tenets nonetheless carry great weight in the public discourse surrounding multiculturalism and multicultural education (Henry, 2012). Equity, equality, access, and social justice are still the standard messages transmitted by mainstream multiculturalism and multicultural education. In and of themselves, they seem innocuous enough. However, to the extent that they are tied to a narrow and overly aggressive preoccupation with different group identities and media celebration and encouragement of reductionist definitions of these identities, they pose a risk.

The fixation of mainstream multiculturalism and its multicultural educational policy manifestation on features of ethnic or racial particularity (including superficial outward markers of group identity) in ways that encourage "fortress" mentalities of defensive, inward, and exclusionary withdrawal poses a risk to the socio-cultural outcomes they seek to achieve. This can, in effect, create an atomizing form of identity which leads persons to focus their creative energies and concerns on the pursuit of their particular ethnic qualities and can result in persons and communities extracting themselves from the broader socio-cultural, political, and economic context in which they live.

This would seem to create a dichotomous structural and conceptual schizophrenia that works against multiculturalism's traditional goal of creating a more open and "level" society and a more freely heterogeneous and cross-sectional cultural polity (Wright, Singh, & Race, 2012). In the case of a society that has institutionalized multicultural pluralism and legally structured cultural liberty, this situation can even result in ethnically/racially identified communities living—by choice—in relative cultural isolation such that they either loose, or fail to develop, the skills and attitudes necessary to successfully navigate and fully engage society (Harreveld, 2012).

Central to this journey are both the superficial and deeply engrained markers of culture, the different perspectives regarding life on Earth that cultural identity sets in motion and the mechanics of language and verbal interaction between human beings through which we attempt to attain understanding, find common ground, and achieve a felt sense of belonging.

Multiculturalism and multicultural education with this type of emphasis on identity can, then, actually create liabilities out of what they seek to extol as transcendent virtues. In the case of societies in which socio-political elites have purposely worked to marginalize certain ethic, racial, and/or religious communities, a defensive withdrawal and sequestration in resistance response can work to create powerfully deleterious downward leveling norms that further distance the community from the benefits and opportunities associated with mainstream socio-economic and cultural structures and venues (Cassell & Nelson, 2013; Cavieres, 2011; Portes, 1998).

Beyond this, the reality of social change seems to argue against reductionist and essentialist views of identity propounded by traditional strains of multiculturalism. Identity is more complex than this. It is multilayered, multidimensional, and subject to change and redirection as persons move through various stages of life and/or confront and address various challenges to their belief systems, social positioning, or health and well-being. It can also be dramatically transformed by

various forms of knowledge, experience, and skill acquisition (Wenger, 1998).

Headwinds and Riptides

Although many believe that there is an increased need for multiculturalism and multicultural education in the wake of the 9/11 attacks and the resulting ethno-religious profiling and wide-spread xenophobia, the rise of Islamist extremism and the global War on Terror have produced a powerful and largely conservative backlash against multiculturalism in Western Europe and the U.S. This has been exacerbated by immigration patterns, contracting economies in both the Eurozone and the U.S., the boarder security/illegal immigration debate in the U.S., and concerns of some conservative elements that multicultural policies impede coalition building and promote a politics of resentment (Henry, 2012).

In addition, there is a progressive backlash to both the construct and patterns of implementation of multiculturalism and multicultural policies on the part of certain indigenous people and people of color. This is largely due to feelings that the movement has not made a meaningful place at the table for the group in question or anger over the fact that actual practice lags behind aspirations and ideals stated as goals and objectives. In some cases, this goes so far as to become aggressive "anti-multiculturalism" and propounds deep and abiding doubts as to the efficacy of the entire construct.

In the U.S., there are quarters wherein the overriding impression is that multiculturalism and multicultural education have not worked well for entire communities—indigenous peoples, African Americans, and Hispanic Americans. The assertion is that the historical emphasis on individual and group identity characteristics serves to exacerbate the exclusion and discrimination that these policies are designed to ameliorate and that the public discourse they employ can actually create constraining concepts of "otherness." Anti-multiculturalists in the U.S. also point to obvious disjunctions between media assertions of change and hope in an emerging post-racial society and what they see as a pernicious Anglocentric cultural, economic, linguistic, and political hegemony (Henry, 2012).

Finally, there is an increasing sense that the current form of multicultural education has simply not made much of an impact on preservice teachers' attitudes or sensibilities over the last 30 years. Sleeter (2008) has opined that most current teacher education practice supports the staus quo, while Lowenstein (2009) can find no evidence of any large-scale empirical studies that reveal changes in preservice teachers' attitudes regarding cultural diversity. Dolby (2012) goes so far as to say that the current aggressive form of "White privilege" self-examination has served to alienate credential candidates, creating resistance and even overt hostility.

In addition, the operational and political environments in higher education are not particularly friendly to multicultural teacher education or attempts to reformulate it. Accountability regimes, standards tied to concepts such as "highly qualified teachers," pressures to focus on content as opposed to pedagogy, and the trend toward the movement of teacher education out of the academy into more purely clinical training venues all work against the very concept of "stand alone" multicultural education classes and academic content aimed at social justice considerations in academy-based teacher education programs.

This situation is exacerbated by the emphasis on "scientifically based research," ever-shrinking budgets, and the current neoliberal emphasis on commoditization of education and the privatization of public schools (Dolby, 2012; Henry, 2012).

The Emergence and Assault of Rival Propositions

The intellectual inconsistencies, conceptual challenges, doubts, and structural impediments discussed above, along with rapidly-moving socio-cultural change in the West, have given birth to a number of rising alternative formulations to traditional multiculturalism and multicultural education. As Dolby (2012) points out, a great deal has changed in the U.S. since the emergence of multiculturalism in the 1960s. The traditionally exclusive focus on human affairs and human society from a legalistic/statutory social justice orientation aimed at scoring political victories and leveraging them into institutional structures designed to alleviate racial discrimination was a natural outgrowth of that time in history.

The emphasis on learning about "the other" and understanding and educating "the other" understood from a perspective of White privilege was also part of this scenario. However, the world has changed. The challenges that the post-industrial West now faces are increasingly global and increasingly involve the inexorable connection between humans, animals, and the global environment.

In addition, the spread of international mass communications, rising levels of international travel including ever-spreading migration patterns of students and workers, the increasingly ubiquitous cross-national digital data and information exchange, and the proclivity of the millennial generation in the West to engage in cross-boarder (even trans-global) collaborative group work via various digital platforms all seem to portend a steady movement away from the reductionist and isolationist forms of group identification and membership discussed above (Dolby, 2012; Wright, Singh, & Race, 2012).

These factors have given rise to a number of alternate conceptual and policy formulations that now challenge the tenets of traditional multiculturalism and multicultural education. Hence, interculturalism, cosmopolitanism, transnationalism, and globalization/glocalization are becoming increasingly influential. Many of these formulations are directed at countering the potentially deleterious disconnections inherent in the historical focus on separatist and defensive forms of group identity. Hence, they seek forms of human interaction based on outreach, cross-cultural communications, and knowledge exchange.

This orientation often carries with it ideas of presumptive intellectual equality between various ethno-religious cultural groups and a genuinely reciprocal exchange and utilization of different cultures' conceptual schema and metaphors for understanding phenomena. This can be traced back to Gardner's (1993) original work on the culturally-situated relevance of the cognitive skills (what he termed intelligences) for solving problems and creating products.

The idea of intellectual equality speaks to an increased interest in academia and among other education practitioners in leveraging the forms of knowledge, cognitive functioning, and intellectual insights available in other cultures to address the complex planetary challenges with which we are now faced. This has been discussed by some from the standpoint of challenging the hegemonic position of Western knowledge in formal education in the West so as to allow for the incorporation of non-Western marginalized peoples' intellectual processes and knowledge bases into new and more global knowledge construction processes (Wright, Singh, & Race, 2012).

In the U.S. this impetus for alternatives to traditional multiculturalism has been fueled by the rise of emergent scholars working in new areas of scholarship who are carving out new disciplines in the general area of multiculturalism and

multicultural education. In a very real way, they have taken the scholarly baton back from Euro-American scholars who have been studying, writing about, and reporting on "the other." Now "the others" are telling their own stories, defining their own scholarly niches, and self-identifying racially beyond the boundaries of traditional categories (Henry, 2012).

Specifically targeted variants of this search for new ways of thinking and doing have extended into U.S. multicultural teacher education. A major push is being made by critical educators who are openly stating that a major change in pedagogical practice and curricula is required (Henry, 2012). Part of this effort is to move away from the White privilege deficit model to one centered less on guilt-based heuristic inquiry and more on a structural analysis of White racial knowledge aimed at challenging normative concepts of race and culture.

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There is also a mounting shift from multicultural teacher education per se to social justice education in teacher education programs (Henry, 2012). Dolby (2012) has advanced a new approach to multicultural teacher education that moves away from the White privilege deficit model to one based on what she terms "informed empathy" (Dolby, p.67). This approach is centered on emotional aspects of intelligence and seeks to engage the affective elements of human cognition in an effort to gently lead preservice teachers to extend their moral circles to include persons outside of their immediate networks as well as animals and the global environment. The aim here is to create more expansive forms and habits of caring as well as concern and identification with the situations of others that are, in sum, more capable of addressing the pan-global and densely interwoven problems we face in today's world.

Possibilities for New Directions in Multiculturalism and Multicultural Education

As the discussion above illustrates, the foci, directions, circumstances, and operational/conceptual parameters of multiculturalism and multicultural education have played out on an ever-shifting landscape. It has been contested and re-contested over four decades by academics, policy-makers, and education practitioners in public schools. In addition, these movements now face increasing pressures as socio-cultural, political, and economic circumstances are rapidly changing and in doing so, destabilizing their structural and conceptual foundations.

On the one hand, this indicates a need for fresh ideas and new intellectual resources to move the field in the U.S. forward. That is to say, move it away from its original foundations in the civil rights movement of the 1960s and more closely align it with the pan-global problems of today that involve complex interrelationships between humans, non-human beings, and the planetary environment. On the other hand, this historical landscape of change and reformulation indicates that multiculturalism and multicultural education have no defined, lock-step future on the horizon. They are seemingly always open to change, new formulations, and new approaches in practice and in conceptualization of underlying constructs (Harreveld, 2012; Wright, Singh, & Race, 2012). Hence, the possibility of infusing these fields with fresh insights and intellectual points of departure seems always to be at hand.

As was mentioned at the outset, this intellectual and policy environment makes the articles presented in this special issue of *Multicultural Education* particularly interesting at this juncture in the history of the field and the planet. The authors in this collection discuss issues of pan-societal and pan-global concern such as the deepening ecological crisis and crises in the socio-cultural value systems of the West from the standpoint of a multidisciplinary approach that combines environmental learning, sustainability education, multiculturalism, and multicultural education. They examine how these various lines of inquiry can inform each other and come together to provide new ways of thinking about these problems. Of special interest here, they present ways in which multiculturalism and multicultural education can be expanded and reformulated so as to address some of the discontinuities and problematic features and conditions discussed above.

Possible Pathways Forward

To begin with, all of the contributing authors offer conceptual and/or structural points of connection between environmental learning, sustainability education, and multicultural education. For the most part, they see the ever more pressing ecological crisis that is overtaking the West as one deeply rooted in an antecedent cultural crisis. Roger Coss puts this in terms of decaying value systems that point to the need for fundamental changes in the culture and process of education. Chanthou Thoeun states that this ecological crisis puts to the test our values, ideology, and politics, and, further, that it requires a paradigm shift restructuring politics, economics, and education. She goes on to say that, in point of fact, what we are really faced with is a crisis in values, ideas, perspectives, and knowledge and that the world of humans has systematically broken down. Connor Sloan states that our current ecological crisis is directly connected to cultural habits of living and that what is needed now is a radical change in institutional education if we are to deal with the resulting pan-global problems.

Robin K. Perry puts it in terms of a cultural crisis in the way people think and behave towards each other and the environment which lies at the root of the current ecological crisis and states that educators have a special charge to realize that we currently educate our students not to solve this cultural crisis, but, rather, to reproduce it cross-generationally. Kristen E. Clark puts the situation in very similar terms, that is, the need to change the cultural basis for the ways people approach each other, and behave toward each other as part of addressing snowballing ecological crises.

This close connection between environmental learning and sustainability education (in their roles as mechanisms for addressing ecological problems) and multicultural education is discussed further by Thoeun when she suggests that educational means of addressing ecological issues should be through multicultural educational settings wherein multicultural education has been augmented to include systems thinking and environmental content. She also states that multicultural education and environmental education share three key ideas that undergird both educational approaches: the importance of

a local and global context, the importance of seeking social justice in the act of education, and the call to reform education in response to hegemonic and often damaging ways of knowing.

The closeness of these connections is particularly noticeable with regard to multiculturalism, multicultural education, and sustainability education. This is, to a great extent, due to the fact that the latter represents a paradigm shift in environmental education. Sustainability education is not exclusively interested in issues of ecological science. It also has a pronounced focus on how sustainable living practices will be implemented. Therefore, it must look at socio-cultural formulations, economics, and the real world actions, processes, and planning that must be done to ensure policy recommendations are realized. This creates powerful common interests with multiculturalism as the latter can serve as an integral part of the search for conceptual benchmarks and implementation strategies (Marouli, 2002).

Coss points to the research of Marouli (2002) on multicultural environmental education as clear evidence that environmental education and multicultural education are, in fact, closely linked through a hybrid discipline that stresses reaching out to culturally diverse populations and understanding, respecting and utilizing their perspectives in environmental education and efforts to address serious ecological problems through means of cultural pluralism and cross-cultural understanding. He describes ways in which music instruction can assist in just this type of cross-cultural outreach. Both Clark and Sloan follow in this vein in their discussions of the instructional value of cultural competence—working across cultures to meet the needs of all students while honoring and leveraging students' cultural backgrounds. Sloan goes even further to state that human identity is directly connected to the global community—hence, he uses a very expansive concept of "belonging" in working with his students.

So it is that they seek to lay the basis for social justice by creating balance in social systems and better integrating the culture, nature, and environment with which we are all constantly surrounded into our human essence. This process involves learning about other cultures and applying what one learns. It also means going beneath the surface, beyond the superficialities of culture-ethnic markers and into belief systems and conceptual frameworks. Charlane Starks echoes this sensibility when she states that understanding a place from the standpoint of urban education means viewing issues through the eyes of a diverse student population and from the vantage point of their backgrounds.

These authors spend a good deal of time discussing systems thinking and systems dynamics and how these inform the relationship between environmental learning, sustainability education, multiculturalism, and multicultural education. Sloan describes students acquiring the ability to know how to think in whole systems within the operative structure of learning communities in which they are surrounded by culture and place and can experience identity construction through multiple stimuli.

Clark discusses system dynamics from the standpoint of the whole, the collective, in which the loss of any given element or node diminishes all the others. This is, in fact, a functional and structural argument for inclusion and access. Problem solvers, she tells us, will need to view the world as a web of interconnected relationships in which all are made stronger by the presence and actions of one other. So, the survival of one is dependent on the other. She characterizes this as the foundational structure of the natural world.

Clark extends this systems principle to the social constructions of the human world, characterizing human communities as complex systems that need pluralism / diversity so as to support the functional interdependence of its members by putting them into positions from which they can draw strength from each other. She describes her use of Community Based Instruction as a way to teach her special needs students about interaction with others, the interconnectedness of a community structure, the different roles that different persons fill and how they are complimentary in nature. The point being that everyone is part of the web of life and that when minorities are undervalued, discounted or silenced, it is a loss to the entire social system. The clear message is that classrooms should be environments of social equality in which students work collaboratively in community structures.

Perry also sees systems architecture as a critical element in the natural world. She characterizes sustainability as a dynamic balance between elements of the natural world (including humans). It is, in essence, a condition of harmony among differences. Sustainability is dependent upon relationships to which individuals contribute and are, in turn, affected by other members of the larger network. Diversity has value in terms of the health of the system. The key to successful system development is the achievement of a dynamic balance, that is, finding the optimal values for all system variables. This translates into human systems as a form of collective social justice in which the optimization of every individual impacts the overall environment of the system in a configuration that can best be described as a form of complimentary pluralism.

Starks utilizes a systems thinking approach to frame variables so as to link interdisciplinary studies, multiculturalism, sustainability education, place-based pedagogy and community in the study of urban school teaching. This approach is based on factoring in the whole environment under study in order to understand and address various complexities of the place in question. Nonlinear thinking is utilized in an effort to understand how all the elements and variables come together to create the patterns in the setting and to uncover dense and multifaceted issues. All system variables or nodes are important to the overall operational pattern in the system.

Doe A. S. Hain-Jamall views systems thinking as a foundational element in the holistic thought system of indigenous Americans but not innate in the thought systems of Euro-Americans, although the latter have begun to take this line of thinking up over the last century or so. The systems features stressed by this author relate to the nature of the interactions one system element has with other elements. An ecosystem is not just a collection of species, it is a community characterized by networks of interrelationships. Further, the parts of the whole can be understood only within the context of the whole.

The way in which environmental learning, sustainability education, and multicultural education intersect in the work and thinking of the authors in this special issue with regard to reaching out to other cultural configurations to engage in pedagogies of cultural competence and using systems thinking to define the nature of the realities they are dealing with in the classroom creates powerful junction points at which environmental learning and multicultural education can impact one another. In the process, we can see that some of the problematic issues with regard to multiculturalism and multicultural education discussed above can be addressed.

The outreach involved in cultural competence and the application of the cross-cultural methodologies of multicultural environmental education work against

the tendency for reductionist group identification in traditional multiculturalism by pulling people and ideas from different cultural backgrounds together in efforts to address ecological problems and issues. This is an expansive and genuinely empowered collectivist form of multiculturalism.

Likewise, the use of systems theory—which runs to the center of environmental learning and sustainability education—in engaging students in classrooms brings to the fore mechanisms such as interconnectivity, interdependence (including reciprocal interdependence in group work), dynamic balance, and inclusion. This serves to create an open and expansive form of multicultural engagement that works against atomized forms of group identity that can serve to constrain interaction and even shut persons out of meaningful forms of political and economic engagement. The overall effect is to allow differences to exist in operative juxtaposition to one another in systems configurations that enable them to inform and support each other. This makes for very powerful working and learning venues.

We see something similar with regard to the issue of intellectual hegemony. Again, even in societies like the U.S. that have institutionalized cultural liberty, there are often very powerful and exclusionary thought systems that serve to marginalize entire peoples and literatures. However, Perry points out that education for sustainability asks teachers to address their own cultural assumptions and work to understand the beliefs of their students in an effort to help their students become aware that words can carry powerful assumptions that have been taken for granted for millennia.

These cultural assumptions form the basis of hegemonic propositions that can block out opportunities for a deeper understanding of whole ranges of possibilities associated with a non-favored or marginalized point of view or idea. This idea finds its counterpart in multicultural education in the collaborative learning modalities Dolby (2012) has adopted in support of her Informed Empathy instructional approach.

Clark describes classrooms as learning communities in which systems dynamics are actively taught in an effort to achieve balance through interdependency. This works to support intellectual and cultural pluralism and diversity so as to ensure that no individuals or groups are marginalized and silenced and is clearly aimed at lessening certain forms of intellectual hegemony that can result from status differentials in classrooms.

Hain-Jamall's discussion of the thought system of the Euro-American individualistic society in comparison to that of the Indigenous American collectivistic society makes the point that these two different intellectual constructs and thought systems cannot be related to one another on the basis of "better or worse." They are different by design and accomplish different tasks. Misplaced hegemony of one over the other may simply run the risk of making what is of value in the subordinated/marginalized formulation unavailable to all and, thereby, deprive members of a multicultural society of a variety of useful tools for interpreting various phenomena. In addition, research shows that students can "code switch" between holistic and analytic mindsets in response to verbal cues. It would appear then that individualistic and collectivistic mindsets are available cross culturally, each having advantages in certain situations with regard to certain tasks.

Thoeun points out that cross-generational socio-cultural and intellectual reproduction often works to uphold social, economic, and educational inequities. She finds a way of disrupting such cyclical reproduction in the writings of Hannah Arendt. Arendt advocates for reconceptualizing the past on a generational basis, breaking tradition and leaving behind false legacies in search of more authentic bases for the future. It is, Arendt tells us, in this lack of tradition that societies can find creative habits of mind capable of working against hegemony.

Once again, the efforts of these authors to define a working relationship between environmental learning and multicultural education has yielded strategies for avoiding pitfalls associated with traditional multiculturalism and its related policies. We see how systems-based learning configurations and cross-cultural communications can serve to disrupt potentially deleterious intellectual hegemony that works to belie the promises and aspirations of multiculturalism in the West, even in culturally liberal societies, by making intellectual equality among and between different cultural groups impossible.

Finally, we come to the question of empathy. This has actually been advanced as an instructional alternative for mainstream multicultural teacher education currently found in the academy (Dolby, 2012) and appears to be an alternate formulation to the "White privilege" social justice approach that appeared on the scene in the late 1980s. It calls for a move away from the abstract textualization of the field based on Cartesian analytics (e.g., critical heuristics) and toward an approach to multicultural teacher education based on the affective role of emotional intelligence, what Payne (2006) refers to as practical consciousness.

Coss describes the role of emotional intelligence in extending our ability to feel with others and understand their perspective beyond the purely human sphere and into all natural systems. Hence, emotional intelligence is now viewed in some quarters as essential in pursuing sustainable lifestyles. Music, then, given its emotional power, becomes a tool for building empathy. This line of thought regarding the extension of emotion/empathy beyond the human sphere lies at the center of Dolby's (2012) Informed Empathy instructional approach.

It calls for a move away from the abstract textualization of the field based on Cartesian analytics and toward an approach to multicultural teacher education based on the affective role of emotional intelligence.

In connecting identity and culture by way of place and community through means of reflective cultural dialogues that put students in the place of another person or an environmental feature, Sloan works to have students create an expanded moral circle of concern and caring that stretches beyond their own immediate relationship network to include non-human entities. Hain-Jamall points out that non-Western societies have a great deal to teach us in this regard. Indigenous American concepts of respect for other life forms, harmony, balance and reciprocity in dealing with the land all point toward the type of informed empathy and extended moral circles that Dolby (2012) discusses and Sloan describes.

Clark's use of Community Based Instruction to create understanding, interconnection, and relationships as well as her use of balance in social systems to create an open from of "otherness" are all methods aimed at the meaningful inclusion of students in her classroom and the demarginalization of students operating in that learning community. As alluded

to above, these serve the effort to create informed empathy for other persons as they are based on the overarching presupposition that all persons are valuable parts of the web life and the loss of any of them would damage the whole.

The work of these authors in using the core systems dynamics inherent in environmental learning to provide a platform for the operation of multicultural sensibilities and methodologies from an expanded perspective allows practical consciousness through the operation of emotional intelligence to create the conditions for the sort of extension of students' moral circles described by Dolby (2012). In doing so, they once again demonstrate the power of interdisciplinary environmental learning and sustainability education to avoid pitfalls associated with traditional multiculturalism, multicultural education, and multicultural teacher education.

Conclusion

What can be taken from this collection is that the work of scholars investigating the interdisciplinary cross-fertilization of environmental education, sustainability education, and multiculturalism/multicultural education/multicultural teacher education can provide multiculturalists with intriguing avenues for creating a new multiculturalism for the 21st century. This work is aimed at constructing sociocultural venues within which difference can enrich the collective without consuming itself and rendering the multicultural schematic moot.

In particular, these lines of inquiry seem to hold out intriguing possibilities for addressing problematic issues concerning divergent realties of practice and aspirational rhetoric around the phenomenon of ethno-cultural and religious group identification, knowledge hegemony that works to suppress the type of intellectual equality necessary for genuine empowerment, useful cross-cultural exchanges of information and knowledge, reaching out across cultural divides generally, stimulating movement toward affective forms of knowing and empathy-based instructional methods in multicultural teacher education.

In fact, the systems theory-based approaches that underlie environmental learning and sustainability education appear to produce effects similar to those that result from the imposition of constructs and policy measures increasingly presented as potentially useful alternatives to traditional multiculturalism and multicultural policy. These approaches lead us toward cosmopolitanism, which is increasingly seen as an operative alternate form of praxis for cultural sensitivity capable of leveraging the creative power of difference within the unity of a larger socio-cultural polity. Hence, this may be the next iteration of multiculturalism and multicultural education as those ever-evolving fields intersect with the call for environmental sustainability.

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