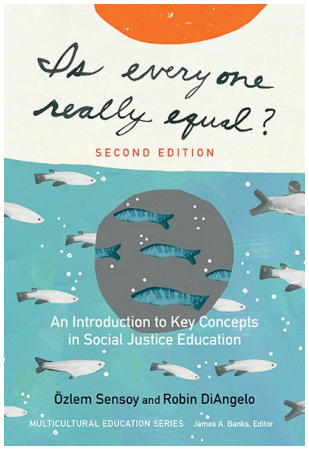

Is Everyone Really Equal? An Introduction to Key Concepts in Social Justice Education

Sensoy, Ozlem; DiAngelo, Robin
Teachers College Press, 2017

Book Review

Tags: diversity | multicultural education | social justice

Reviewed by: Frederick Ware, *Howard University School of Divinity*
Date Reviewed: March 23, 2018

This book is one among fifty others within the Multicultural Education Series. According to the series editor James A. Banks, these books "[summarize and analyze] important research, theory, and practice related to the education of ethnic, racial, cultural, and linguistic groups in the United States and education of mainstream students about diversity" (xiii). Özelm Sensoy and Robin DiAngelo's book focuses on social justice. For distinction from the commonplace notion of social justice, Sensoy and DiAngelo use the alternative term "critical social justice." By critical social justice, they mean: (1) recognition of unequal social power relations at the individual and group levels in society; (2) understanding of one's place within these relations of unequal power; (3) critical thinking on what knowledge is and how it is produced and acquired; and (4) action informed by the best understanding of what social justice is and sound methods for its realization in society (xxi). Sensoy and DiAngelo provide guidelines for teaching and learning social justice.

The book consists of twelve chapters. The chapters include: pictures; charts; figures; vocabulary lists; boxes for definitions of key terms and reminders of ideas and concepts if discussed in a previous chapter; questions for discussion; and instructions for learning activities. The authors intend for persons to read the chapters in their numerical order. The content of the book is cumulative, with each chapter building upon the one that precedes it.

There is an underlying logic in the linear progression of the chapters. Chapters 1 and 2 deal with instructional matters, providing students with guidelines for learning social justice course content (6-18), instructors with guidelines for grading student performance (19-21), and both with an overview of critical theory in social justice courses (25-27). Chapters 3 to 5 define the concepts and operations of culture, socialization, prejudice and discrimination, and oppression

and domination (36-40, 51-57, 61-73). Chapters 6 to10 define ableism, sexism, racism, and classism and describe how they pervade social institutions (82-86, 104-115, 123-129, 142-144, 156-162, 177-182). Chapter 11 refutes 13 common statements that are used to discredit social justice education (186-197). Based on Sensoy and DiAngelo's definition of critical social justice, Chapter 12 specifies four learning outcomes for social justice education and crafts possible scenarios for illustration of the kinds of actions for each outcome (200, 203-204, 207, 211).

Though written primarily for white readers, Sensoy and DiAngelo's book merits consideration by all readers interested in social justice education in pluralistic society. The series editor notes that "most of the nation's teachers are white, female, and monolingual" (xii). Using the terms "we" and "us" throughout the book, Sensoy and DiAngelo acknowledge their associations with this demographic group (120). Given the fact of intersectionality – that any one person has multiple associations – race or ethnicity cannot be a person's only identification (138, 175). The complexity of human subjectivity warrants the concern of all persons with social justice in a world characterized by ever-increasing diversity.

https://wabashcenter.wabash.edu/resources/book_reviews/is-everyone-really-equal/

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