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Scholars interested in effecting change are often drawn to critical lenses for their ability to provide powerful analytical tools for diagnosing injustices in educational practices. Yet this same feature can make critical work difficult to sustain, betraying a power that turns caustic when it prompts a descent into cynicism. *Discerning Critical Hope in Educational Practices* offers important insights in learning to handle this double-edged nature of criticality.

This collection of essays does not envision a utopia, but rather, remains rooted in the present with eyes wide open to what Apple describes in his foreword as the commodification of education under neoliberalism (p. xv). With its genesis in a 2011 American Educational Research Association panel discussion, the volume's premise is that the awakening brought about by exposure and dedication to critical theories can often disintegrate into a form of despair, the result of losing a hope that has proven to be naïve. Instead, those dedicated to awareness and action need to adopt critical hope, a notion the

editors define "not only as a crucial conceptual and theoretical direction, but also as an action-oriented response to contemporary despair" (p. 1). Importantly, critical hope cannot be broken down into either of its halves, and must stand whole: this insistence suggests criticality is not complete without hope, nor hope without criticality. Furthermore, the authors tell us critical hope is a process which is never complete, a facet which hints at an inherently infinite nature for the concept and experience alike.

As they explore these principles, the essays blend critique, theory, and case studies. In so doing, the authors offer multiple levels of reflection: on our own pedagogy, on the ways we teach pedagogy to others, and on the broad role of education in society. The contributors represent a wide spread of educational contexts, from early childhood to higher education, making this book of potential interest to a wide audience. For instance, teacher educators who include antiracism work in their pedagogy will likely appreciate Boler's description of a contentious relationship with a student in her educational foundations course who resisted rethinking his worldview. Using a Buddhist lens, she offers a nuanced way to view these interactions, providing compassionate interpretations of students' perspectives while recognizing the need for patience towards ourselves as educators when we become emotionally entangled in such moments. In a sense, Boler's chapter is an enactment of critical hope, a fleshed-out and human portrayal of the praxis that she suggests can flow from theory.

Those who study higher education leadership will also find worthy reading here. Through his critique of the "HOPE Project" at the University of Stellenbosch, a South African university historically associated with apartheid, Van Rinsum argues that corporate social responsibility must incorporate criticality to avoid being a preemptive "management of meaning" on the part of university authorities (p. 94). For those who establish partnerships across institutional lines, Bozalek, Carolissen,

and Leibowitz's chapter will also be of interest. They detail a joint venture between the historically advantaged University of Stellenbosch and the historically disadvantaged University of the Western Cape: a course designed with the intent of opening up space for students from both backgrounds to connect and experience dialogue across difference. The professors integrated pedagogical practices that are unconventional at the university level, such as drawing pictures and attending a dance performance, to re-level the playing field for students not typically seen as high achieving. While the results were promising, a close reading shows the positive examples cited came from in-person encounters, even though the majority of the course was taught online. This examination raises questions: can authentic dialogue happen in virtual contexts? Can digital pedagogies help carve out space for critical hope? While the answers to these questions are not explored in this book, they may provide a promising avenue for future research.

The authors draw on a rich literature base for developing the concept of critical hope, which they identify as originating with Freire. Similarly, conceptual frameworks help provide depth of argument, such as Keet's utilization of Malabou and Derrida to argue that naïve rather than critical hope is engendered by the failure of contemporary human rights education to live up to its potential. Throughout the volume, the authors wisely draw from epistemically diverse sources and a range of texts, including those based upon individual and communal experiences. For example, Warmington presents counter-storytelling based in a Critical Race Theory frame in order to illuminate black British educational activism. His work provides important ballast to the frequent marginalization of communities of color through scholarship that presumes to speak on behalf of a group in which it is not grounded. He notes, "In Britain, black writing is too often marginalized in public debates; it is

assumed that black communities are problems to be theorized by white intellectuals" (p. 113) – an insight that points to the editors' wisdom in bringing together a truly multinational array of perspectives.

Further, the interaction of these perspectives makes for a multifaceted book. Unlike many edited volumes, which are often essentially a compilation of chapters, the authors in *Discerning Critical Hope in Educational Practices* make a point of drawing from and building on each other's ideas. Their success in this regard means the experience of reading is somewhat akin to listening to a nuanced conversation – a point made in Zournazi's afterword on the place of hope in dialogue, which suggests that the chapters in the book are, in a sense, in dialogue with each other.

However, just as in-person conversations often contained dropped threads, some readers may pick up on missed opportunities to converse between authors. Cruz, whose essay is a reflexive performance counter narrative from her perspective as a Filipino, is concerned with the central question, "How might those immersed in the negative aspect of colonial violence – those against whom education has been utilized as a tool of dispossession – use critical hope?" (p. 130) Her essay is an eloquent meditation on the epistemic violence of colonialism as rooted in control over the valuation of sources of knowledge. In this context, Horton's chapter seems out of place. As a philosopher of education, he sets out to offer what he calls "selective investigations of the signal meaning of hope" as a "transhistorical and cosmopolitan force" (p. 153-4). Yet even with this expansive lens, he re-centered precisely that which should be decentered by offering extended attention to Bacon, Kant, and Hegel. This presumption – that such a narrow spectrum can be (mis)taken as a universal representation – suggested an unfortunate conception of philosophy as a provincial discipline able to maintain a Eurocentric, Western focus even in a collection of essays whose authors cast wider nets. Moreover,

readers may find it difficult to connect these thinkers' abstract ideas on hope to the finely wrought concept of critical hope expanded upon in other chapters. Given that the other contributors to the volume did not draw on these sources, the effect was to reinscribe the "traditional" Western canon with authority.
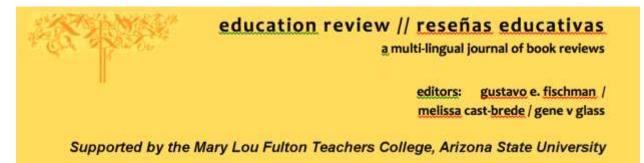
This critique aside, *Discerning Critical Hope in Educational Practices* offers crucial insights for scholars who have struggled to find a more flinty-eyed hope to replace the naïve hope they have abandoned. The authors offer a keen assessment of the reasons despair is a frequent threat to the ability of those who want to work for change; for example, Fischman and Haas illustrate how narratives of redemption play into naïve hope and therefore ultimately fuel despair (pp. 61-62). This despair must be resisted; as Glass writes in his chapter, "Despair thus expects both too much and too little of the individual. It denies our connection to a legacy of resistance and struggle that has secured the ground on which we stand and that gives direction to our creation of a better tomorrow" (p. 109). The way forward, Fischman and Haas suggest, is to recognize that making space for critique also expands the space for hope – an insight that is easier to recognize in the abstract than in practice. Readers will likely find value in the authors' real-life examples of their own educational practice, moments when they realized the importance of abandoning naïve hope or struggled with the challenges inherent in adopting critical hope.

These moments are not clear-cut; they may even seem dissatisfying. Zembylas presents an example of a Greek-Cypriot teacher who engaged in antiracism work focused on discrimination against migrants. While the teacher felt frustrated she did not have as great of an impact on her students and colleagues as she wished, Zembylas's evaluation of this teacher's practice suggests that this way of measuring often overlooks the presence of hope. Instead, he suggests, "the measure of "success" has less to do with the number of minds that are changed by the end

of the year and more with the spaces and openings that become available for the process of transformation" (p. 21).

   Ultimately, the use of the word "discerning" in the book's title is significant. It suggests critical hope is already present and needs only to be sought out. The authors call us to look more closely at our own educational practice in order to tease out what is hopeful. Throughout their essays, they collectively reassure us this project does not ask us to abandon our criticality, but rather to recognize that valuing hope is in fact an essential part of critical work. This understanding assists us in our role as educators, teaching us to reject despair as surely as we do naïveté. As such, the insights in *Discerning Hope in Educational Practices* help us to turn away from cynicism in order to harness the potential power of critical hope within theoretical frameworks for critical research.

About the Reviewer

Lisa Gilbert is a doctoral student in education at Saint Louis University, where she teaches elementary methods of social studies instruction. A former museum professional, her research interests include the learning that takes place in non-classroom spaces, as well as the use of critical theories related to race, gender, and class to explore ways in which individuals relate to historical narratives.

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