implicit—that "teachers and teacher educators cannot just close their
room doors and teach 'progressively'; they need to be aware of the ideol-
and political bases of the current struggles over the schools" (p. 4). Con-
tantly, they emphasize the "need to talk to their students and their com-
in new ways, and see their schools and communities as places for these dialogues" (p. 4).

CHAPTER 15

CHRISTINE SLEETER

Sara Carrigan Wooten, Reagan Mitchell,
Kenneth Fasching-Varner, and Roland Mitchell

Education cannot function as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration
of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring
about conformity as it beomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men
and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover
how to participate in the transformation of their world.

—Paulo Freire (1970)

CHRISTINE SLEETER, THE PERSON
BEHIND THE SCHOLAR AND ACTIVIST

Christine Sleeter grew up in a small segregated community in Southern
Oregon (Sleeter, 2008a). In her town, she says, there was very little repre-
sentation of difference, particularly racially.

Sleeter (2008a) talks about growing up with a sanitized perspective of
American history that is at odds in many ways with the scope and approach
of scholarship she has gone on to produce in terms of expansive understand-
ings of multicultural education. Citing some of the metanarratives about
U.S. history found in Lowen's (2008) Lies My Teacher Told Me, Sleeter (2008a)
states, "I learned that racism ended with the Emancipation Proclamation,"
that American Indians were "noble" figures in history, and that U.S. history is largely a story of steady progress toward freedom and justice" (p. 116). In the process of learning about her own family background, Sleeter determined, through DNA testing, she was 68% sub-Saharan African, not Chinese as she had been led to believe by her own family members. Sleeter (2006b) writes, "I carry a history and legacy of not only European American immigration, but also of Appalachia, of slave ownership, of African Americans passing as White and leaving family behind, and of Jim Crow" (p. 121).

Initially, Sleeter examined her own racial and ethnic history as an outgrowth of a personal interest in her identity. Given her work in multicultural education, it seemed natural that she would publish about this identity work relative to engaging preservice teachers about their identities. Sleeter suggests that family history work can be used to frame one’s own history and the relationship between identity and privilege. Sleeter’s use of modeling the complexities of coming to understand one’s own identity is consistent with her career first as a teacher, then as a scholar and activist.

Sleeter began her teaching career as a learning disabilities instructor in 1972 at Roosevelt High School in Seattle, Washington. She remained there for five years before entering the doctoral program in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where she served as a teaching assistant until 1982. Sleeter was awarded her first professorship in 1982 in the Department of Education at Ripon College in Wisconsin. She taught there for three years before joining the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin–Parkside, where she remained for nine years and was granted full professorship status. In 1995, she made the long journey to California to assume a full professorship in the College of Education and Professional Studies at California State University, Monterey, a recent addition to the California State University system. In 2004, she retired and was awarded emeritus status. Sleeter continues to teach, though, and has enjoyed numerous visiting professorships, including at San Francisco State University from 2009 until 2011. Earlier in her career she also held summer positions at the University of Washington (1987, 1989, and 2007).

Sleeter holds four degrees. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Willamette University in 1970. Sleeter earned an additional Bachelor of Arts degree in Secondary Education from Central Washington State University in 1972. In 1977, she received a Master of Arts in Curriculum & Instruction with a concentration in learning disabilities from Seattle University. In 1981, she was awarded her PhD in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 1981. Her doctoral dissertation was entitled, "Student Friendships and Cultural Knowledge Related to Human Diversity in a Multiracial and Mainstreamed Junior High School."

Similar to so many other stories of great educators who found themselves immersed in the passion of teaching through somewhat roundabout means, Christine Sleeter initially entered an urban education program in Seattle, Washington, because she thought living in Seattle was more thrilling (Darde, 2013). As a part of that program, she was required to live in the Black and White working class neighborhood of the school where she was assigned to. This arrangement allowed her to get acquainted with her parents and others living in the neighborhood. In the Civil Rights movement was winding down in the early 1970s, the Sleeters believed that racism within the United States had been largely removed (Akanite, 2012). However, as a result of living in a community that was different from the one that she grew up in, she underwent a radical reevaluation regarding the continuing role of racism within the United States. Through these experiences, Sleeter developed a profound respect for coalition building and learning from people who had life experiences completely different from her own. Concurrently, during this period of teaching in urban Seattle, she came in contact with a group of multi-racial educators who were trying to develop multicultural education curricula for elementary schools, as those spaces became increasingly diversified. As a white woman new to that particular urban Seattle community, Sleeter struggled with how to initiate herself within those conversations.

Recognized that in diverse contexts, Whites not only often take over or assume that we can figure out answers for themselves. I struggled with whether it would be better just to step back and not become involved or to become involved and, in the process, learn to collaborate and share power. I realized that not becoming involved was a solution because then things never change (Interview with Sleeter, Howe & Lisi, 2013, p. 210).

These early experiences continue to impact Sleeter’s work as an educator, artist, and scholar, as she understands that the process of engaging issues of race and power, “isn’t something I’ve finished or anticipate finishing,” (Interview with Christine Sleeter, Howe & Lisi, 2013, p. 210).

Sleeter is an incredibly prolific author, having published more than 70 articles in peer-reviewed journals. Her voluminous work has been translated from English into Spanish, Korean, French, and Portuguese (Howe & Lisi, 2015, p. 209). Additionally, Sleeter has served on the editorial boards of such prestigious journals as the Journal of Negro Education, the American Educational Research Journal, Race, Ethnicity, and Education, and Educational Remember.

Christine Sleeter is a renowned international scholar whose work has been recognized and acclaimed by educators spanning the globe. In part, this is reflected in the prestigious amount of invited speaking engagements she has commanded, both within the United States and internationally (i.e., Taiwan, South Korea, the Netherlands, Chile, India and Spain).
In all, she has delivered talks at over seventy universities within the United States and abroad. The topics of her talks range from neoliberal capitalism within education to issues of freedom and democracy and multicultural teaching, and the promotion of equity in diverse educational spaces.

Over the course of her career, Sleeter has received numerous awards and honors for her exceptional scholarship and contributions to the field of education. Those awards include the National Association for Multicultural Education Research Award, the American Educational Research Association Justice in Education Award (given to those "individuals who have advanced social justice through education research...[and] exemplify the goal of linking education research to social justice"—AERA, 2015), the American Educational Research Association Special Interest Group Multicultural and Multilingual Education Lifetime Achievement Award, and the Oregon State University Paulo Freire Education Project Social Justice Award. She has also been awarded the Freedom to Learn Award for "[b]ringing...to a synthesis of progressive/critical educational democratic practices upon both formal and informal educational texts"—PFDP, 2013.

The diversity and breadth of Christine Sleeter's work in multicultural education has made a profound, lasting impact on the field of education. In this chapter, we will provide a brief glimpse into the work of a teacher whose intellectual contributions cannot be overstated. Christine Sleeter's academic life has been devoted to asking questions about the role of multicultural education in the place of multicultural education within teacher preparation and education programs, and the field of multicultural education views the alarming rise of neoliberal influence on educational policy in the United States. Though her career spans the country for forty years, beginning with her work as a learning disabilities teacher in 1972, the questions that Sleeter has wrestled with remain pertinent today. These questions include, for example: What is multicultural education? (Bank, 1993; Bennett, 2001; May & Sleeter, 2010; Sleeter & McLeaen, 2009); What are the aims of multicultural education and why is it utility for critical practices in teacher education? (Beyer, 2001; Fox & Brown, 1995; Sleeter, 2012; Sleeter, 2009a, 2009b, 2000c); and How do diverse constructions of (dis)ability within education policy impact children with different learning styles and disrupt the learning process? (Sleeter, 1996).

Herein, we provide a succinct overview of some of the main themes of Christine Sleeter's scholarly work and discuss the ongoing significance of her intellectual legacy, particularly for those who are committed to delving into such issues and concerns.

From this point forward, we basically center a number of Sleeter's theoretical arguments. A portion of this chapter is devoted to how she used multicultural education specifically. We conclude with an annotated bibliography of many of Sleeter's major works and those of other scholars who have been influenced by her expertise.

MAJOR THEORETICAL ARGUMENTS

Christine Sleeter has made remarkable contributions to the field of education, and the areas of multicultural education, antiracist education, and teacher education, specifically. Some of the guiding theoretical arguments in Sleeter's work include critical race theory (Sleeter & DelBanco, 2004; Yosso, 2002), critical disability studies (Sleeter, 1987a, 1995), 1998, and critical pedagogy (Sleeter, 2011c; Sleeter & DelBanco, 2004; Sleeter & McLaren, 1993). Sleeter is one of the most influential multicultural education scholars of our time, having generated a large amount of knowledge on the application of multicultural education in the education of preservice teachers (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995; Tosto & Sleeter, 2010; Sleeter, 1993a, 1993b, 2011d), and remains deeply invested in and concerned about the policy implications of the movement to take control of public education (Sleeter, 2004, 2005, 2008b).

Throughout Sleeter's work is a commitment to culturally responsive pedagogy that seeks to decolonize a standards-based curriculum (Gay, 1995, 2010; Sleeter, 2010b; Sleeter & Cornbleth, 2011). Part of this work is embedded in a tradition of recognizing and resisting the ongoing White supremacist aims of education (Hall, 2005; Giroux, 1992; Gundlach, 2000; Sleeter, 2010c; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008).

The intellectual commitment Sleeter has made in regard to carrying out the transformation of structural and institutional power within education is fundamental (Grant & Sleeter, 1986a, 1986b; Hoffman, 1990). Critical theories, postcolonial theory, critical race theory, queer theory, and critical disabilities theory are all major components of her work. These theories have allowed her to more thoroughly examine the "interlocking structures of race, class, gender, and disability, how these structures are translated into inequities in schools and universities, and how teachers, teachers education, and communities might resist" (Sleeter, 2010a).

As a former learning disabilities instructor, Sleeter maintained a steady focus on disability studies within the context of racial and class discrimination in education. One example of how Sleeter situates her critique of educational practices is when she states that the concern of special education categories. Sleeter (2010a) asserts that the category of learning disabilities arose as an attempt by White middle class parents to differentiate themselves from the minority students of low-income families and that it is difficult to change.
came into prominence in the 1960s and that it was educators who developed the four syndromes of (mental retardation, slow learner, emotionally disturbed, and culturally deprived) to explain the failure of lower-class minority students. As Feirt & Cowen (2009) note, disability categories, especially the "soft" categories that require subjective judgment in making referrals and diagnosis decisions, can be separated from other mechanisms through which professional class whites continue to segregate children of color.

Sleeter recalls feeling troubled during her time as an LD instructor that the job required her to classify students who were failing in classrooms as disabled, and to invoke a brain-based rationale in order to teach them. Sleeter (2010a) states that organic damage was presented as the basis of the learning disabilities category because: (a) it suggested that disability could be overcome or reversed from; (b) the reading deficiencies in white middle class children were addressed and did not result in an interrogation regarding the quality of their households; and, (c) it distinguished the category of learning disability from mental retardation, while simultaneously stigmatizing the child in both spaces. Furthermore, Sleeter (2010c) identifies 1960 as the year learning disabilities was sanctioned, thus creating a space by which financial resources were designated to establish classes and train teachers. Sleeter's critique of the category of learning disabilities calls on all educators to question the degree of inaccuracy a student developed on flawed foundations in classrooms and children. Pushing against this educational psychological approach to children who learned differently, Sleeter argues that helping general education teachers to learn how to teach a wider diversity of students more effectively is a better and much more tangential solution (Sleeter, 2010a).

In recent years, Sleeter's view on the neoliberal drive for school accountability. The powerful capitalist motivations that are embedded within the standards and accountability movements in education are an area of focus that Sleeter has highlighted as being of particular importance. She identified two major ideological views of society that have emerged in tension with one another over the course of the past forty to fifty years (Education Radio, 2012). The first is the view that the success of a society can be measured in terms of how well it serves those who live within it. The second is that the success of a society by how well it develops and promotes mechanisms of profit accumulation. Inherent in the latter view is the argument that the democratization of social services undermines the ability of a society to generate wealth. However, as Sleeter has noted, this view of societal accountability has almost exclusively resulted in those at the top of capitalist markets being the sole beneficiaries of the profits they generate.

Since the 1980s, business has become the driving force of standardization and accountability within education (Education Radio, 2013). This shift has led to an increase in the number of reforms, with a focus on test scores and standardized testing. These reforms have often led to the neglect of the needs of minority students, and have perpetuated the existing inequalities in education. As Sleeter has argued, the pursuit of neoliberal efficiency has led to a neglect of the social and emotional needs of children, and has contributed to the perpetuation of systemic racism in education.

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The need to understand and undo the movement to democratize curriculum (Sleeter, 2010). With an exclusive focus on the achievement gap, other issues that are actively serving to undermine equitable education are being ignored. Sleeter notes the impact that this has had on teacher education, where the focus is now on training future educators to implement rigid curricula, while teacher education programs in universities and colleges are rapidly being undermined and replaced by organizations tied to corporate profit-making and the subversion of democratic ideals is central to Sleeter's recent work and critical commentary (Sleeter 2007, 2008b, 2008c, 2009c, 2010d).

Sleeter operationalizes her neoliberal critique via an examination of the role of state-based teacher education programs (2009a, 2009b, 2009c). She notes her criticism in reference to the reverberations of deficit oriented educational programs such as "A Nation at Risk" and "No Child Left Behind." Standards and accountability modeled on corporate measures of assessment as well as proficiency centered policy have increasingly become the means of measuring student success and engagement (see, 2000; Bohn & Finn, 2000, Kumashiro, 2000). In response to the recontextualization of education policy, "reform," Sleeter extends her analysis to include neo-conservatism, according to Sleeter (2008c), this form is shaped by which education looks a corporate paradigm. The school is consequently transformed into a feeder system for all levels of the corporate workforce.

Sleeter's (2008b) critique also considers the impact of all of this on pre-service teacher preparation. In that regard, she takes issue with the constructivist paradigm of teacher education. She points out that homogeneity occurs due to teacher education programs' emphasis on "academic ability" (Sleeter, 2009b, p. 1490), which results in the further perpetuation of dominant cultural epistemologies. Sleeter's solution to this issue is critical; it involves the development of culturally and pedagogically diverse measures by teacher education programs in order to incorporate and support preservice teachers from marginalized communities (Sleeter & Dossey, 2007). Additionally, Sleeter (2008b) critiques the neglect of multiple cultural perspectives and experiences in marginalized communities, suggesting instead that teacher education programs should require their students to engage in field encounters. Requiring this, according to Sleeter (2008b), would help prepare teachers to make connections with their students' cultural backgrounds as well as confront the stereotypes they embody.

Sleeter has attended to the historical roots of multicultural education, citing the Civil Rights movement as a major impetus for societal and classroom transformation (International Journal of Multicultural Education, 2013). Along this line, she views multicultural education as a...
critical component of broader social justice work within the United States specifically.

Sleeter builds on her resistance curriculum by asserting the need for deeper discussions of multiculturalism in education. Her concerns arise from the deconstructive legacies of "A Nation at Risk," "No Child Left Behind," and more currently "color-blindness" and "post-racialism." Historically, Sleeter (1990a, 1990b) reminds us, multiculturalism's foundation was built on the reassurance of the Civil Rights Movement. However, she highlights the problem with current conceptions of multiculturalism as resulting from White educators' racial knowledgement of its counterpoints in progressive and radical social movements. Sleeter (1990a) takes her critique further in warning against valuing multiculturalism solely for teaching techniques. (p. 233). She asserts that multiculturalism may longer be seen when understood as a dialogue between teachers and community members. Furthermore, she institutes multiculturalism as social movements which positions the teacher and the community in a coalition with each other for the express purpose of "preparing schools to serve their interests and those of their children" (Sleeter, 1990b, p. 232).

THE CONTINUING CALL TO WORK

Beginning in 2008, Sleeter (2008a) turned her scholarly attention to what she refers to as her Critical Family History project. On her website devoted to this project, Sleeter (2013) briefly discusses the origins and rationale of Critical Family History:

Critical family history research is a novel form in the process of placing family history within an analysis informed by critical theoretical traditions. It draws from critical theoretical traditions, a genealogical and ethnographic analysis of how one's family has been constructed within and through relations of power. To be useful, a critical theory identifies specific social relations, the roots of those relations, and how they can be changed. Since multiple historical traditions have emerged in connection with multiple social movements, I draw on insights from critical theory, critical race theory, critical feminist studies, and critical humanist problematizations. (Critical Family History, 2013)

Sleeter's work in this area is in keeping with other theoretical work that identifies the family unit as an institution itself, replete with sociocultural silences, erasures, and revisionist narratives that serve to maintain hegemonic racial ideologies (Lasater, 1975; Colliner, 1998). The work of historical memory making has proven to be a useful teaching strategy with White preservice teachers, whose superficial understandings of race and racism often inspire oversimplified and unbalanced reflections on their family histories.
learning of students who are culturally and linguistically diverse might be strengthened. Within this project, multicultural education remains imperative. Multicultural education has been an important venue since the 1970s for naming and examining ways in which racism works and how racism interacts with class (Kushchcloski, 1997; Mansfield & Kehoe, 1994). Multicultural education also works on a practical level to build a sense of "we" that values diversity. While the term "multicultural education" prompts many people who are unfamiliar with its work to think of cultural awareness activities, Sleeter rejects this commodification. Instead, civil rights and social justice activism that gave birth to multicultural education is (or should be) at the core of its work (Nagda, Gurin, & Lopez, 2005; Oakes & Lipman, 2006; Sleeter, 1993; Sleeter 1990a, 1996b, 2000a, 2004d, 2012).

Sleeter's work serves as a reminder of the importance of maintaining humility, the most resonant feature of the intellectual credibility of her work. Sleeter's brief background that opens this chapter speaks about her "radical reconception" she undertook as a result of being compelled to live and work in a community that was the cultural opposite of her own. Sleeter's openness in the face of her "radical reconception" is a reminder to educators of the necessity to maintain humility and to understand it as a source for engaging in transformative community and schooling practice.

This brief chapter on Christine Sleeter's life, work, and intellectual commitments is by no means complete. Rather, we invite our readers to approach this discussion as a combination of introduction and homage to an individual who has committed her life to inciting others to identify, question, and resist the oppressive structures permeating our educational systems. Sleeter's discourse calls for a disavowal of complacency as well as a critical need to move beyond an over-reliance on academic jargon to place the holistic praxis. However, praxis for Sleeter does not constitute a series of educators stepping in from ivory towers to monitor marginalized communities. Praxis in her world emerges as coalitions between teachers and community members work closely together to place an emphasis on putting power back in the hands of the community. In Sleeter's hands, critical pedagogy, multiculturalism, and anti-racist education move from fashionable terminology, inserted into everyday speech as markers of superior intellectuality within the academy, to calls for action, for the explicit and critical purpose of opening doors to engage overlooked and ignored voices.

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ChristineSleeter


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WORKS BY SIEFTER


In this chapter Siever provides a critical examination of the concept of learning disability categories in the early 1980s as a result of the perspicacity that America had to contend with the educational system to deal with the

Union. Along with the Society's launch of a symposium in 1955 and political reform movements of the time that in the United States linked education and racial justice, the opportunity for specific segments of the population to meet the prescribed standards caused the government to create five categories that Siever notes have created a social and cultural class. According to the text, these categories allowed some protection for struggling white middle class children while simultaneously developing a stigma for poor children of color.


Today, every institution in the United States, this review piece by Siever, and Grant provide a critical look at the daunting literature up to and through the mid-1980s. Each article in this volume, which helped readers to think about and analyze the literature, have served as the only guide to an overview of the fundamental literature in the field of multicultural education, and as a catalyst for continued work in the field. Siever and Grant are often cited upon for their analyses of music, and their work is often criticized for its lack of attention to other groups, including African American, Asian American, and Native American students, among many others.


In this article, Siever takes a look at the conceptual critiques of multicultural education, from the critical perspectives for social justice objectives, perspectives that seem to be the dominant or acknowledge the limitations of multicultural education's inability to accommodate the larger education system. The article addresses why Siever might argue that the main challenge is to build a more equitable system of education.


Organized into three sections, with a total of fourteen chapters, Nunn's seminal volume provides for Siever's work on empowerment in education, and brought together multidisciplinary perspectives to confront how multicultural groups are disempowered through schooling, to think through what strategies might be used against educational contexts, and the role that such acts might play in an empowering type of education. Throughout the book, the role of dialogue, engagement, and connection are explored within the context of thinking through the value and role of empowerment in education. This text, along with its contemporaries such as Siever's, Empowering