

Name

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# 0 (Model response)

### Response to Rigney (2018), Review of “Is Everyone Really Equal?”

Rigney’s review of “Is Everyone Really Equal?” provides a chapter-by-chapter overview of a book by Sensoy and DiAngelo. Per his reading, Sensoy and DiAngelo’s book helps “readers make sense of complicated and contentious social structures that have broad material consequences” (p. 219). Rigney situates the relevance of the book within the need for teacher education programs to emphasize social justice issues. That is, he argues this book is worth reading because it can help teachers identify their own biases and blindspots and better understand issues of social justice and injustice.

One passage that stood out was near the end:

Instead of leaving the reader in a sociologically induced stupor, [Sensoy and DiAngelo] provide detailed suggestions for action and reflection for members of both dominant and non-dominant groups. Their explanation of allyship (when individuals use their privilege to support those in oppressed groups) provides detailed behaviors members of dominant groups can use to resist and undermine oppressive structures.

This is such an important point because I know that many people can be upset or demoralized by discussing the types of issues this review mentions, such as racism, classism, and oppression. Many Americans do not want to discuss these ideas, and I think much of that hesitancy is because they may be afraid to dive into areas where they are guilty of hurting others as well as not being able to do anything about it. I know that most teacher candidates are white, so they belong to the dominant group. I want to learn more about the detailed behaviors that I and other members of dominant groups can use to be allies for others. I only wish Rigney included these tips in his review—but I guess a review is meant to get the reader interested in reading the original book.

One area that pushed my thinking comes from the first page of the review. Rigney paraphrases the authors’ five guidelines for helping readers struggling with social justice pedagogy. Numbers three and four are so important. I see people use anecdotes, brief stories, to prove their points in online discussions all the time. Actually, one can think of most political memes as anecdotes on steroids. Memes often take one idea, or one perspective, and amplify it as if it is the only way of understanding the situation. The steps in the review say that we have to be critical of anecdotes and also keep a handle on our own emotions. I know I sometimes struggle with this when discussing divisive issues with others. Like I mentioned in my reflection on the passage above, discussions about race/class/politics can be stressful. Sensoy and DiAngelo’s book seems to want

to help readers better engage in difficult conversations, and I believe this is imperative for all citizens, but especially for teachers.

Since this is the first reading in this course, I cannot connect it to other readings in this course. But this text does remind me of social media memes and discussions I see online. In my own social media spaces, some people were really upset about the entire concept of Black Lives Matter, for example. A person on my feed would post “All Lives Matter” in response. But I can see in Rigney’s review how the authors of this book would respond: Racism is only racism when it is done by those with power in a society. The reason that Black Lives Matter is an important idea is that black people have been systematically hurt by the dominant society, especially, in recent news, by some forms of policing. So, of course, all lives matter, but because the dominant group has done and continues to do things that harm black people, it’s important to make the specific point that Black Lives Matter. Maybe someday we will not have a need for that phrase, but, right now, it is worth repeating.

As to discussion, this review is a tough text to discuss because it is so short and also packed with information. I guess some good discussion questions might be:

- Which of the chapters Rigney mentions would you most like to read? What if you could choose only one to read? Why did you choose that one?
- What other professional groups—beyond teachers—could benefit from reading the Sensoy and DiAngelo text? Why?
- What lessons might we, as preservice teachers, take away from this review and/or from the book it reviews?