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**Multicultural education** is frequently content about the cultures of different groups, often groups considered non-white, which creates the idea of white being the “default race.” Non-white groups are taught about in terms of “contributions” or other additive language.

The teaching of multicultural content operates from the assumption that the problem of racism is an underappreciation of different cultures, and therefore the solution is the celebration of different cultures. What makes this problematic is that 1) it does not address power 2) in defining discrete cultures, people and cultures are necessarily reduced in complexity.

Critical multiculturalism can address systems of power, but most incarnations of multicultural education are “liberal multiculturalism” which focuses on surface level culture.

Surface level culture can be defined as the parts of culture that are easily identifiable to people outside of that culture; for example, food, language, dress, music, holidays, and traditions.

**Ethnic studies** involves the teaching of content that critically examines the systems of power and oppression created by white supremacy.

Ethnic studies challenges the Master Narrative, which is a focus on white, Eurocentric versions of history. The Master Narrative frequently omits events in history that are unfavorable to white people or rewrites it in such a way as to make the event seem progressive. For example, “The Age of Exploration” or “Westward Expansion,” both of which involved the genocide of indigenous groups and the exploitation of indigenous resources.

Ethnic studies centers the stories and resistance of communities of color and tribal sovereignties. There is an intentional shifting of content to critically examine resistance to and liberation from white supremacy.

Ethnic studies empowers students to learn from their ancestors and continue to resist all forms of oppression by strengthening their sense of racial, ethnic and tribal identities.

**Culturally responsive teaching** is a pedagogical practice that recognizes the funds of knowledge and cultural wealth of students. Culturally responsive educators understand that culture is the lens through which all people see the world regardless of race.

Culturally responsive teaching is mindful of the social-emotional impacts of learning in a racialized world. The culturally responsive educator considers how intersectionality in their students’ identity impacts learning, and regularly reflects on how their own identity affects the classroom community.

Cultural wealth is seen as a positive, and the culturally responsive educator works to shift from a deficit model of thinking about diversity and culture to intentionally learning about students’ lives and experiences to develop culturally relevant content. Additionally, educators consider and make room for culturally relevant content from the lived experiences of their students, centering the experiences of students of color.

A culturally responsive educator values a problem-posing approach to teaching and classroom management as opposed to the banking model. A culturally responsive educator’s role is to move students to become independent learners who manage their own learning and conflict resolution with guidance from the educator using restorative justice practices.

**Critical pedagogy** aims to engage students in an exploration of their world in order to gain a political and critical consciousness. It is based on the belief that historical events are the result of a series of contradictions and their solutions.

Humanizing pedagogy is a component of critical pedagogy that encourages learners to recognize oppression doesn’t just happen and they are agents of change.

Educators who employ critical pedagogy accept that the practice of teaching can never be apolitical when systems of oppression exist. Educators see education as a tool of resistance and liberation.

Critical pedagogy transforms the learning environment from one of passivity to one of action and change. Students don’t learn for the sake of learning, but learn to understand the how and why of social systems that oppress certain groups and privilege others.
MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

ETHNIC STUDIES

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY