The Dissonance of "Doing Good": Fostering Critical Pedagogy to Challenge the Selective Tradition of Nonprofit Management Education

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* Presented to ARNOVA in November, 2021

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Nonprofit management classrooms are filled with students who yearn to "do good" in the world and yet, in practice, they confront a dissonance between their vision of doing good and the realities of nonprofit work. This dissonance is in part created by contemporary nonprofit management education (NME) through the development and perpetuation of a selective historical tradition of the nonprofit sector which mythologizes the sector and its work. These traditions and myths of the nonprofit sector are based squarely in white American and Eurocentric values and downplay the histories of people of color and thus perpetuate whiteness as central to nonprofit norms and practice. We present a critical reading of these histories in an effort to help educators and students reclaim and reimagine the histories of the nonprofit sector and offer tenets of a critical pedagogy that emphasizes historical consciousness and a praxis of emancipation so that nonprofit educators and students can re-envision nonprofit theory and practice in the future.

Keywords: nonprofit management education, history, race, critical theory, critical pedagogy

Introduction

Our nonprofit management and leadership classrooms are filled with students yearning to do good in the world through nonprofit organizations. Many want to fulfil a calling to be a part of something larger than themselves, serve others (Bassous, 2015), and dedicate themselves and their professional careers to advancing social justice (Mason, McDougle & Jones, 2020). Yet, when these same students begin to work "on the ground" in organizations, they often confront a dissonance between their vision of doing good in the world and the complex realities they face in day-to-day nonprofit work (see Willner, 2019). This dissonance is deeply rooted in the history and evolution of the U.S. nonprofit sector and reflects a disconnection between the story we tell about the sector,

its history and values and its more complex, oftentimes repressive, and unjust reality (Wagner, 2000; see also Villanueva, 2018; Feit, 2019; Venter, Currie & McCracken, 2019).

In this article, we contend that contemporary nonprofit management education (NME hereafter) is ill suited to address this dissonance for students because contemporary NME in part creates it. More specifically, contemporary NME generates corrosive myths that nonprofit work is inherently good work and that nonprofits are filled with inherently good people doing this good work (Sandberg, 2019). This mythologizing is accomplished in part through the development and perpetuation of a selective historical tradition (Williams, 1977) that has helped shape and legitimate a nonprofit sector that centers white American and Eurocentric traditions and values while downplaying and repressing the collective histories and contributions of people of color. For educators to ably prepare nonprofit students to rise to the ethical challenges of working together in authentic and effective ways (see de Lissovoy, 2010), they must address the dissonance reinforced by contemporary NME. This will require confronting the histories and meanings of the U.S. nonprofit sector (Mason et al., 2019) and engaging with the promise and contradictions of "doing good work" (Wagner, 2000) through nonprofits. More pointedly, educators must address the perpetuation of whiteness in the histories of the nonprofit sector that are foundational to contemporary NME curricula and pedagogy, and which are reproduced through nonprofit practice.

We also attempt to assist nonprofit educators in these efforts by revisiting and critically examining the histories of the U.S. nonprofit sector that are commonly used in nonprofit management classrooms and by presenting tenets for a critical pedagogy that can equip students with the capacity to challenge the selective tradition that underpins contemporary understandings of the U.S. nonprofit sector and its work. It is our hope

that in doing so, we will enable both educators and students to ask vital questions about such issues as white supremacy, moral innocence, and colorblindness (e.g., Applebaum, 2010; Conyers & Fields, 2021; Heckler, 2019; Sullivan, 2014) as well as the tampening and movement capture of racial and social justice organizing (Francis, 2019; Hammack, 2002) relative to nonprofit work and thus to contribute to a more race-conscious nonprofit and public administration field (see Blessett & Gaynor, 2021). We also seek to encourage educators and students to revisit and reclaim the histories and contemporary practices of care work, mutual aid, and philanthropy in communities of color which have too often been excluded from NME (e.g., Freeman, 2020; Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018; SenGupta, 2009). Ultimately, we advocate for an NME curriculum and pedagogy that emphasizes historical consciousness (Giroux, 2020; Trouillott, 1995; see also Heckler & Ronquillo, 2019) and a praxis of emancipation (Giroux, 2020; hooks, 1994) while highlighting the importance of confronting white supremacy in NME and cultivating radical imagination (Ablett & Morley, 2019; Castoriadis, 1987; Kelley, 2002; see also Blessett & Gaynor, 2021) so that students can (re)envision their nonprofit work and develop steps to enact that vision (Bozalek, Leibowitz, & Carolissen, 2013).

This article focuses on critically examining the traditional history and foundations of contemporary nonprofit organizations to encourage educators and students alike to challenge the norms that flow from them, accept complicity in their perpetuation, and initiate alternative approaches that center the lived experiences and personal expertise of those they and their nonprofits purport to serve (see Nickels & Leach, 2021; see also Blessett & Gaynor, 2021) and to foster belonging for those who have been marginalized by the NME canon. The article unfolds as follows. First, we discuss our social locations. Then we provide an overview and critique of contemporary

NME and present a critical reading of mainstream histories of the U.S. nonprofit sector and make a case for (re)claiming the history and contemporary work of the nonprofit sector. Next, we outline tenets NME educators can draw on to help students develop historical consciousness and encourage radical imagination towards an emancipatory nonprofit praxis. We conclude the article by noting some challenges educators may face in responding to our call to action and offer recommendations and strategies to meet those challenges.

The Authors' Social Locations

It is vital to be consistent with the critical stance we outline in this article and acknowledge that our social locations shape our consciousnesses and thus inform this work, contributing both "strengths and weaknesses" as well as "blind spots and opportunities for illumination" in it (Au, 2011, pp. 12, 13). While acknowledging that these categories and identities are socially constructed and thus fluid, the first author identities as a white, cisgender woman who is a former nonprofit practitioner trained as a cultural anthropologist with an emphasis on postcolonial theory and historiography. The second author identifies as a white, cisgender, "able"-bodied woman who is a former nonprofit practitioner trained within the academy as a critical theorist in a predominantly poststructuralist frame.

It is also imperative to note that while our training and work as critical theorists enables us to attend to and critique issues of power and privilege in NME, we also must acknowledge our own complicity in the issues regarding whiteness and white supremacy in NME that we lay out below. We are implicated in the multiple systems of oppression we are interrogating. Echoing the refrain that defines this work, we seek to "do good" by critiquing the unacknowledged hegemony of whiteness in the historical

mythologizing of the American nonprofit sector and by providing critical pedagogical tools to resist it. Concurrently, we know that we are not immune from the oppressive forces that have institutionalized and reproduced whiteness in NME. In short, we approach our engagement with whiteness and white supremacy in NME here as a necessary and initial step forward.

Contemporary NME

Academic programs dedicated to the education of managers of nonprofit organizations are a relatively recent academic focus. Scholars have documented the emergence of U.S.-based NME programs in the 1980's followed by rapid expansion in the 1990's (Mirabella, 2007; Mirabella & Nguyen, 2019; Mirabella & Wish, 2001). Although situated in multiple disciplines, including business, public administration, social work and philanthropy, the curricula across NME programs largely share a focus on management, and have been guided by a common set of curricular standards developed by the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council (NACC) and, more recently, by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs and Administration (NASPAA).[1] Critical scholars have expressed concerns that NME is increasingly driven by the values of the neoliberal marketplace, resulting in a standard curriculum that emphasizes efficiency and economy over approaches that may promote social change (e.g., Blessett, 2018; Mason et al., 2019; Mirabella & Eikenberry, 2017; Mirabella & Nguyen, 2019); excludes vital questions about the historical, philosophical and social underpinnings of the sector (see Blalock, 2018; Burlingame, 2009 for discussion); and downplays the values of pluralism, collaboration, and care essential to nonprofit work (Sandberg & Elliott, 2019). NME also involves what Giroux (2020) characterizes as positivist approaches to knowledge construction and dissemination that emphasize objectivity,

reliability, consistency, and quantitative prediction and which deemphasize values, feelings, and subjectively defined meanings (p. 37). Accordingly, the issues nonprofits contend with become largely technocratic in nature and divorced from social context and struggle thus more readily "solved" through market-based approaches. Giroux (2020) explains that this form of objectivism "represents … not simply the elimination of intellectual and valuative conflict, but the suppression of free will, intentionality and collective struggle" (p. 37). This paradigm has profoundly impacted NME curriculum and pedagogy by encouraging educational practices that undermine reflection, displace democratic processes and goals, obscure the relationship between knowledge presented in the classroom and the economic and political interests such knowledge supports, and ultimately justify prevailing inequitable institutional arrangements, conduct, and beliefs (Anyon, 1978; Mirabella & Nguyen, 2019).

Such critiques, while profound, also fall short when they do not address how neoliberal market discourses reinforce existing discourses of whiteness in NME (cf., Heckler, 2019; see also Apple, 2017). As Lipsitz (1998) explains, whiteness operates in the U.S. as a "structured advantage" that produces unfair gains and unearned rewards for whites while impeding asset accumulation, employment, housing, and healthcare for members of racialized minoritized groups. Whiteness is institutionalized, enshrined in law and policy (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), and embedded in organizations (Ray, 2019). A dominant, white-created racial frame provides an overarching and destructive worldview, reinforced through an interconnected set of stereotypes, ideologies, interpretations, narratives, images, language, emotions, and actions, that extends (Feagin, 2013) and intersects (Collins, 2019) across other divisions such as class, gender, and age and which helps to structure, normalize, and make sense of society. Contemporary NME, with its emphasis on rational technique, has largely avoided

acknowledging and confronting the ways in which the nonprofit sector perpetuates whiteness and the myth of white supremacy concomitantly with neoliberal marketization. This omission of a serious, sustained analysis of the foundational racial structure of the U.S. and its entanglement with neoliberalism is not unique to NME (see Apple, 2017). Despite its pervasiveness and impact, whiteness remains largely unacknowledged, unspoken, and unexamined particularly in academic spaces. As the unmarked category "against which difference is constructed," whiteness is "everywhere in U.S. culture, but it is very hard to see" (Lipsitz, 1998, p. 1).

This paradox between the pervasive presence and impact of whiteness and its erasure relies on "evasive moves" (Lipsitz, 1998) which, in a nonprofit context, include the use of colorblindness (Heckler, 2019), interest convergence (Willner, 2019), and the construction and perpetuation of nonprofits as white space (Anderson, 2015; Suarez, 2020). Here, we are interested in the evasive moves integral to the NME curriculum including moral claims of goodness (see Feagin, 2013; Wagner, 2000) and collective forgetting (see Trouillot, 1995) particularly around the mythologizing of the history of the nonprofit sector. As we will explore subsequently, myriad mainstream nonprofit management textbooks and other academic texts tell a story of the history and evolution of the U.S. nonprofit sector that is "glorious" and which "supports and reinforces the commonly held notion that nonprofit and voluntary organizations and the American nonprofit sector are necessary and inherently good for society" thus legitimating the sector (Sandberg, 2019, p. 27). With this origin story, contemporary NME assertively accents a positive view of virtue, moral goodness, and action for the nonprofit sector and reinforces the notion that nonprofits are spaces for "doing good." This stance belies a more complex and violent history that is irredeemably intertwined with the myth of white supremacy, and which has been "repressive" in its benevolence (Wagner, 2000),

serving to "divide, control [and] exploit" communities of color rather than help them (Villanueva, 2018, p. 27).

Rather than engage with the complexity of this history, contemporary NME instead suppresses and downplays the collective memories, experiences, and contributions of people of color and elevates complicated white historical figures as superior moral figures (Feagin, 2013). Doing so ensures a "collective forgetting" of the nonprofit sector's past (Trouillot, 1995) and perpetuates white ignorance of it. According to scholars, white ignorance involves a pattern of assumptions and socially authorized habits which teach, encourage and reward those in dominant groups to remain ignorant of whiteness (Applebaum, 2016; May, 2006) and the long history of structural advantages afforded to those socialized as white (Mills, 2007. p. 28). Within NME, the sincerely created fictions and collective mythologizing about white superiority presented in mainstream nonprofit histories systematically support, socially induce and legitimate a pattern of ignorance about the nonprofit sector that enables nonprofit educators to perpetuate narratives rooted in racism, ensures that students can remain disconnected from the consequences of the unjust systems the sector upholds (Applebaum, 2010), and negatively influences the academic experiences particularly of Black, Indigenous and other students of color (Williams, Coles, & Reynolds, 2020). As such, contemporary NME ensures that the processes and practices by which nonprofit history is authenticated, ratified, and organized into knowledge remain entangled with the myths of white supremacy.

Selective Traditions in Curricula

School historiography, or the historical accounts selected and included in the curricula from elementary through higher education, have been essential to the production of

national and civic identity in the U.S. (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991; Schissler, 2009). Historians have long acknowledged that their role involves more than simply recording past events. Traditional conventions of history writing call for the construction of narratives that reinforce a sense of unity and coherence, selecting certain meanings and practices from the "whole possible area of past and present" (Williams, 2020, p. 115) and imposing a sense of order on the past (Hendry, 2011). As teaching materials, the historical accounts selected for textbooks are the result of often contentious debates over what writers, editors, political institutions, and social groups deem important to convey to students and what will be neglected or excluded. As stewards and shapers of collective memory, history textbooks are also deeply anchored in national traditions used to legitimize the rationale of the nation and state (Durand & Kaempf, 2014; Hendry, 2011), draw the boundaries for cultural citizenship, and ultimately cultivate a sense of belonging to or exclusion from the national community (Schissler, 2009).

As scholars have noted, the selective traditions presented in U.S. history textbooks, including synoptic texts and edited collections, have long been saturated with whiteness and central to the reproduction of a white racial frame in the U.S. (Brown & Au, 2014; Williams et al., 2020). From the original symbolic narrative of the founding of the U.S., history textbooks have tied American national purpose and identity to the industry, agency, and benevolence of European colonial settlers (McKnight, 2003; Williams et al., 2020) erased Indigenous people's historical, epistemological, philosophical, moral, and political claims to land, and constructed people of color as less than or not-quite civilized (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). Beyond the textbook, these majoritarian narratives are repeated and perpetuated in institutions such as universities, publishers, accrediting bodies, research associations, and conferences (Brown & Au, 2014).

Even with this state of saturation, there is always the possibility of critically reflecting and disrupting selected traditions centered on white dominance in our curricula (Brown & Au, 2014). In fact, it is an ethical imperative to do so (de Lissovoy, 2010). As Feagin (2013) argues, how we interpret our racialized present "depends substantially on our knowledge of and interpretations of our racialized past" (p. 17). The "forces of racial amnesia" in our curricula impact students in profound ways, and we fail students of all racial backgrounds when we fail to encourage them to critique narratives of dehumanization and white domination (Leonardo, 2014). Furthermore, we harm Black, Indigenous and students of color when we let curricular erasures or deficit models distort the histories we teach (Williams, et al., 2020). Following the work of the critical pedagogy scholars cited here, we underscore the urgent need to interrogate the discourses of history, race, and inequality in specific education spaces (Leonardo, 2004; Tuck &Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013) and apply a systematic, critical lens to the histories in NME curricula.

Methods

Locating and Selecting Texts

The focus of this study is the scholarly production of the history of the nonprofit sector in the U.S. As such, for this essay, we reviewed academic texts on the historical origins and development of the nonprofit sector in the U.S. The texts selected for analysis include those that help facilitate the creation of a sanctioned body of knowledge for the nonprofit sector and for nonprofit managers viz. NME especially as it relates to engendering a common norm or sense of understanding of the "American nonprofit story" (see Phillips, Lawrence & Hardy, 2004). We did not set out to complete a comprehensive review of the literature. Rather, we developed a purposive sample of

history texts commonly used in NME classrooms in order to examine how the history of

the U.S. nonprofit sector is discussed and treated. We defined our inclusion criteria as

chapters from nonprofit management and leadership textbooks, standalone scholarly

texts devoted to detailing the history of the U.S. nonprofit sector, and peer-reviewed

papers focused on nonprofit history published in mainstream nonprofit-focused

journals. The principal criterion for including a text in this review was that it provides

an explicit and detailed historical analysis of the origins and development of the sector.

In order to manage the scope of the study, we did not include studies that focused

primarily on the history of philanthropy, charity, philanthropic traditions, or

volunteerism in our review[2] nor did we examine the development of nonprofit or social

sectors in countries other than the U.S. We applied a three-part sampling strategy. First,

we identified nonprofit management and leadership textbooks that provide an

introduction or synopsis of the history of the nonprofit sector. This initial search yielded

five textbooks, four of which have multiple editions (See Appendix A). We found that

the textbooks drew from a small set of historical accounts that were slightly edited and

republished in those multiple editions. Second, we identified peer-reviewed sources

referenced in the textbooks. Third, we searched for additional relevant peer-reviewed

journal articles and books from academic presses. Again, we found limited scholarly

attention to the history of the sector (see Smith, 2020). Since this initial broad search

identified a small number of articles that met our criteria, we performed a secondary

keyword search in the peer-reviewed journals *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector*

Quarterly, *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, and *Journal of Nonprofit Education*

which uncovered few additional sources. Ultimately twenty-five texts were included in

the sample for analysis.

Analyzing the Texts

Next, we performed a close reading of the texts. Drawing from critical discourse analysis to read, interpret, and identify patterns of meaning within the textual language (Wodak & Meyer, 2015), we examined the selected texts' discussion of the origins and development of the sector, including each text's attention or inattention to power, race, and communities of color. Following the tenets of discourse-historic analysis developed by Wodak (2015), we posed the following questions of the text: (1) how are persons, objects, events, processes, and actions named and referred to? (2) what characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena/events, and processes? (3) what arguments are employed? (4) from what perspectives are these nominations, attributions and arguments expressed? and (5) are the respective utterances articulated overtly, intensified, or mitigated?

Our findings suggest that NME textbooks have been central to the reproduction of a selective tradition that simultaneously attributes the origins and purpose of the U.S. nonprofit sector to the agency of white, primarily male European settlers and ties the nature of the sector to a quintessentially "American" national identity of benevolence. At the same time, NME texts downplay the realities of racial oppression and inequality and largely elide the contributions of people of color. We explore these findings in detail below.

Nonprofit Histories: Revisiting the Past

In writing the earliest histories, scholars were cognizant that they were helping to "invent" the idea of a coherent nonprofit sector (Hall, 1992). The idea of a distinct nonprofit sector is a relatively recent concept in the U.S., spurred by changes to the legal code, the retraction of the federal government beginning in the 1960's (Silber, 2001) and the growth in the number of legally recognized nonprofit organizations. At

the time, historians were aware that their efforts to write a history of the sector were "part of a push by the key infrastructure organizations to enhance the legitimacy of [the idea of a unified sector] and strengthen its negotiating power with the state" (Smith, 2020, p. 392). Lamenting that nonprofits were "barely recognized" (O'Neill, 1989), "poorly understood" and "obscured by mythology" (Salamon, 2012), they made explicit arguments for a history that could bring unity to scholarship that was "fragmented and particularized" and legitimate the nonprofit sector as an area of study and research. A clear history could also have practical application, enabling organizations to "forge an awareness of themselves as distinct and coherent" (Hall, 1992, p. 14).

Yet, writing a traditional history of the sector posed multiple challenges. How could scholars craft a coherent narrative out of the "astonishing" diversity of nonprofit, philanthropic and voluntary action in the U.S. (O'Neill, 1989)? Should they use the nonprofit corporation as the "essential framework" for nonprofit activity (Hammack, 2002) when nonprofit organizations had only become a "significant and ubiquitous part" of the U.S. in the "very recent past" (Hall, 1992, p. 13)? Concurrently, they and their colleagues were debating the question of whether it was even possible to constitute a distinctive organizational sector from a set of organizations known for "delivering a wide variety of seemingly unrelated services" and defined by a relatively new form of federal tax status (*ibid*). Restricting attention to nonprofit corporations could not capture the "vast realm of unincorporated associations" whose assets or ideology "did not merit" formal institutionalization (Hall, 2016, p. 4). Developing a "single definition" or "singular, predetermined telos" (Hammack, 2002) of the emergence and development of the nonprofit sector would be a "fallacy" (Hall, 1992). Was the answer to use a broad scope of inquiry focused on the "long and diverse history" of voluntary action (Holland & Ritvo, 2016, p. 59), or the "various ideas and institutions that constitute the nonprofit

domain" (Hall, 2016, p. 4)? Reading the contemporary nonprofit sector into the past was indeed a "hazardous" endeavour (Hall, 1992).

Despite this explicit debate and uncertainty about writing a traditionally coherent and unified history of the sector, scholars have consistently invoked an origin story that sits squarely in European and white American traditions. Origin narratives, as Dunbar-Ortiz (2014) reminds us, are powerful narratives that shape the "core of a people's unifying identity and the values that guide them" (p. 3). By situating the origins of the nonprofit sector within European religious traditions of charity and early Puritan settlements, scholars locate the birth of the nonprofit sector in the most traditional origin story of the U.S. and associate nonprofits with an idealized charitable and democratic ethos of the earliest settlers. In the early days of "our colonies," Holland and Ritvo (2016) state, the first English settlers in the new world "emphasized the practice of charity" (p. 15). They also rejected European monarchies and hierarchies (ibid), embraced self-governance, enacted fundamental democratic ideals of freedom and equality, and reinforced the natural rights of citizens including freedom of speech, assembly, and worship (Hall, 2002).

In locating the origins of the nonprofit sector squarely in the settlers' benevolent and democratic impulses, these histories attribute the genesis of the sector to the actions of elite, white, male colonists and reinforce an association between whiteness and masculinity with a mythologically superior European rationality (see Feagin, 2013). Any contributions or resistance from the Indigenous people whose land the colonists seized is erased or dismissed (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014) with a single note that the English settled in areas with "sparse native populations" (Hall, 2006). Any plurality, diversity or conflict is supplanted by what Ladson-Billings (2016) calls a "homogenized we" subsumed under an aura of colorblind universalism. Thus, when Hall (1992) argues that

voluntary organizations supported by private contributions were "the quintessential American contribution to the democratic idea" (p. 13), he does not question the exclusions and contradictions embedded in who was deemed quintessentially American.

These historical accounts of the sector, particularly those selected for NME texts, systematically positions white, propertied men as singular heroic figures who contribute to the development of the sector: Benjamin Franklin returns from Europe with knowledge about voluntary associations for tradesmen (Hall, 2016, p. 6), and the Puritan preacher Cotton Mather encourages voluntary and neighborly associations (Hammack, 2002, p. 1644). The roots of the laws and norms of nonprofit governance are located in the development of elite institutions such as Harvard, Yale, and Dartmouth, which resembled nonprofits "in important ways" including self-governance, having no owners or stockholders, maintaining exemption from taxation, and accepting donations and bequests for charitable purposes (Hall, 2016, p. 5). By the mid-eighteenth century, elites, and the middle class, "upwardly mobile" merchants, artisans and commercial farmers increasingly turned to voluntary associations to achieve their goals (Hall, 1992).

As Bonilla-Silva (2018) reminds us, a color-blind abstract liberalism has often been used to mask the realities of racial inequality. All these authors invoke Tocqueville's observations of independent voluntary associations to underscore their place in the heart of American history and identity. In their texts, Hall (2016) and Holland and Rivko (2016) cite the same passage from *Democracy in America* (1831) beginning with "Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions constantly form associations." Holland and Rivko explicitly link Tocqueville's observations of pluralism to the roots of the nonprofit sector, citing the "citizens" in American democratic society who regularly come together to meet the diverse needs of those at

the margins of society (p. 61). Hall is slightly more circumspect, noting that Tocqueville "somewhat exaggerated the universality" of voluntary associations in the U.S. (p. 9). Still, he argues, widespread participation in these broad-based associations was "probably the most powerful and effective school of democracy" (p. 13). The examples are abundant: associations became the "preferred vehicle for social movements promoting reform," the Roman Catholic church began creating a "benevolent empire" of schools, orphanages and social welfare organizations, and the government relied on voluntary associations to reconstruct the South after the Civil War (pp. 8, 10). Whites who committed specific acts of racial oppression are largely unacknowledged. Examples of the contributions of non-white actors are often what Swartz (1992) calls "compensatory," that is, adding a small number of examples that do not challenge the overall claims of the text. Indigenous people are rarely mentioned in these accounts (See Foxworth & Ellenwood, 2022). References to both the "darker possibilities" of voluntary associations and the exclusion of African Americans, immigrants, and women from full legal and cultural citizenship merit just one or two lines (Hall, 2006; 2016).

The most recent version of the Powell & Steinberg (2006) texts has taken a more constructivist approach and recognized more conflict in the formation of the sector. In the history of associational life and the nonprofit sector of the third edition of the Powell and Bromley text, which replaces the Hall chapter, the author provides extensive detail about the "complex, and sometimes strained, relationship between voluntary action and democratic practice" (Soskis, 2020, p. 23). Even as Soskis (2020) revises and expands the history of the sector, the sector's origins are traced to the benevolent intentions and corporate charters of the colonies and the essential American propensity for charity and benevolence. In their text, LeRoux and Feeney (2015) identify the origins of the sector in a more pluralistic tradition of "citizens" forming neighborhood groups, associations,

and congregations to "socialize, worship, share common interests" and engage in voluntary efforts to "meet the needs of the less fortunate in their communities" (p. 43), yet miss the opportunity to critically engage with the ways discrimination and exclusion shaped differential access both to citizenship and to associational life.

Of the histories of the American nonprofit sector we examined, just one fully acknowledges the long history of exclusion and marginalization that shaped who had access to the ideals of freedom and free association in the U.S. As Hammack (2002) explains, throughout much of U.S. history, states and courts limited nonprofit activity to "maintain slavery and segregation, to implement Protestant values, to sustain traditional gender roles, and to support dominant notions of order" (p. 1641). State laws were restrictive well into the twentieth century, narrowing formal recognition of nonprofit organizations in ways that favored white, Protestant men in the Northeast and upper Midwest (Hammack, 2002). State governments created regulations and judges used their discretion to deny many other groups based on race, gender, sexuality, and class (see also Silber, 2001). It is striking, then, that Hammack's work, including any specific references to the racial and gender exclusions in the formal structures of nonprofit organizations, is not included in textbooks.

For students of NME, the potential implications of this selective tradition of nonprofit history are profound. Colorblindness in our curricula has fostered a "conceptual impoverishment" that skips over, misrepresents, or downplays the significance of troubling aspects in U.S. history, often replacing key historical moments in the development of nonprofit organizations with "redemptive tales of a continual forward progress" and denying students the agency to engage critically with the past (Reynolds, 2019, p. 354). In the silencing process, lines are also drawn between those who are deemed a part of an American identity and thus worthy of remembrance and

those who are not considered central to the formation of cultures, societies, and institutions today (Lidher et al., 2020). The exclusions inherent to this selective tradition may also shape which students and practitioners see themselves "in the mirror" as central actors in the past and present of nonprofit and voluntary action in the U.S. (Takaki, 1993). The ways we narrate the nonprofit past also shape what is deemed as valid forms of nonprofit practice in the present (see Chapman & Withers, 2019).

Critical Pedagogy for NME

What then are the possibilities of a pedagogy that challenges this selective tradition? As educators, we have a clear, ethical imperative to correct distorted views of the past and intentionally include histories and perspectives that have been excluded from the traditional curriculum. The study of history may assist us to place events and perspectives in context, understand how the past impinges upon the present, and ultimately foster the development of more capable practitioners and scholars (Gibson & Stolcis, 2006). Following Smith (2020), we believe that history should be included as a "major feature of nonprofit education" and underscore the need to "speed up the development" of new histories of nonprofit and voluntary action (p. 390).

At the same time, we caution against rushing to replace one set of absolutes with another (hooks, 1994, p. 32) or in this case one selective historical tradition with another. Instead, we argue that the current state of NME education calls for more attention to critical pedagogy in the NME classroom. If NME's selective tradition has discouraged students from examining the role that nonprofits have played in perpetuating systems of power and domination, critical pedagogy encourages us to connect learning to fundamental questions of values, ethics, power, and justice (Giroux, 2020). By embracing the agency of students to confront complex and difficult histories,

critical pedagogy creates spaces for them to develop an understanding of how the mythology about the sector was produced and work to reform or transform ideas, institutions, and practices (see Reynolds, 2019). Here we argue for greater attention to two components of critical pedagogy in NME classroom as developed by hooks (1994), Giroux (2020) and others: (1) a *historical consciousness* that engages students in honest and accurate analyses of the production and effects of a singular historical tradition of the sector and (2) a *praxis of emancipation* that encourages agency and engages the imagination of students to identify and create alternatives.

Historical Consciousness

The histories analyzed above, typically taught in nonprofit management classrooms, are so consistent and unchallenged that they can appear as "the tradition" or "the significant past" for nonprofit and voluntary action in the U.S. (Williams, 1977, pp. 115-116). In such histories, there is little room for alternative narratives or "intellectual, moral, and political conflict" (Giroux, 2020, p. 39), reinforcing a sense that historical events as well as the accountings of them by historians are context free. The result is both an "ideological hegemony" that saturates and constitutes our daily experiences and behaviors and a historical amnesia that detaches structures from the social and political forces that give them meaning (pp. 22, 31). We argue instead for *historical consciousness* by which nonprofit educators encourage students to recognize the social constructs that serve to mystify and mythologize historical events often in service of an elite or dominant culture (see Giroux, 2020).

Nonprofit educators can help students become aware of the hidden assumptions that underlie the nature of knowledge and its production by inviting them to consider how dominant narratives about the sector were formed (Swartz, 1992). We encourage

educators to embrace an ethos of what Trouillot (1995) calls "historical authenticity."
Rather than approaching the past with unquestioning fidelity, Trouillot urges honesty
about the ways we represent the past in the present. Historical authenticity begins with
understanding that historical facts are never deemed equal or neutral, and instead
represent what or who held power, and what or who did not, both in the past and in the
present. This also includes attending to the active production of silences in history,
which enter the process of historical production from the moments that certain facts are
recorded or remembered, assembled into authoritative archives, retrieved, and
constituted into narratives, and written and conferred as significant records of the past.
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underlie the nature of knowledge of the sector by inviting them to consider how
dominant narratives about the sector were formed (Swartz, 1992). Adapting the
questions used in our analysis may offer a useful starting point, asking students to
discuss "Who is named in this history and who is excluded?" "How are people and
events described?" "Who is this history for? Whose perspective or interests does it
privilege?" and "Whose stories are being left out, and why?"

As we encourage students to interrogate the production of silences in nonprofit
history and attend to the "absent presences" of minoritized voices (see Apple, 2017), we
must also intentionally expand our sources to "correct sanitized, repressive, and
monovocal portrayals of historically marginalized cultures and groups" and "reflect
multiple and collective origins of knowledge" (Swartz, 1992, p. 342). More pointedly,
the voices and perspectives of people of color must be given strategic priority in the
curriculum (de Lissovoy, 2010). Fortunately, scholars have produced a range of studies
that explore the richness and complexity of nonprofit and voluntary action in the U.S.
over time. In our own classes, for example, we have turned to Freeman's (2020) study

of Madame C.J. Walker to expand our understanding of Black women's giving and challenge long-held assumptions by connecting philanthropy with voluntary action, social and political activism, and nonprofit and grassroots organizational development in Black communities in the U.S. Other studies expand our understanding of the myriad ways that racialized communities encountered nonprofit organizations in the past. SenGupta's (2009) study of public welfare reform in nineteenth century New York, for example, considers the internal dynamics of African American volunteerism and mutual aid, offering insight into the ways they struggled in and against the systems that sought to reform them. Chapman and Withers (2019) complicate the "standard account" of social work history, highlighting the contradictions between Jane Addam's antiracist principles and the ways she upheld racist assumptions in her writing, practice, and activism. We have found each of these texts (there are many more) useful in providing students a fuller understanding of the possibilities and limitations of "doing good" and helping students situate nonprofit organizations and voluntary associations as sites of struggle, where people are making meaning, advocating, and organizing for their communities, and grappling with the realities of racism, sexism and other forms of exclusion and discrimination. Nonprofit educators may also invite students to discuss how we might locate other perspectives and experiences that have been excluded from nonprofit history and consider how their inclusion challenges assumptions and expands our current understanding of nonprofit and voluntary action.

A Praxis of Emancipation

A critical pedagogy for NME also requires a *praxis of emancipation* that encourages educators and students to "go beyond" current structures of domination to identify and create alternatives (Giroux, 2020, p. 44). A praxis of emancipation embraces the agency of students and encourages critical thinking as "a fundamental political act" which

positions students as capable of using their individual capacities and collective possibilities to intervene in the world. It is also reflexive, encouraging students to develop an awareness of the social construction of their own individual biographies as well as their relationships with others. In our own classrooms, reflection, autobiography, and structured discussion have been essential in assisting students to critically examine their relationship to the sector and their motivations to "do good" through nonprofit work such that they contemplate how their "good work" may in fact contribute to systems of oppression (see Applebaum, 2010, p. 181; Reynolds, 2019). For educators, developing a praxis of emancipation may require more risk-taking, including recognizing our own complicity and biases (hooks, 1994). Educators, particularly those socialized as white, need to engage with the rich literature and debate over the complex role of whiteness in discussions of race and racism (see Applebaum, 2021; Ladson-Billings, 2016; Leonardo, 2004). Such critical self-examination and reflexivity require a persistent openness to understanding the ways in which students and educators continue to reproduce the evasive moves that perpetuate whiteness in NME and in the whitewashing of nonprofit history.

While this critical self-awareness may prove unmooring, uncomfortable and perhaps even disillusioning to some, it can relieve educators and students from the "delusion of rational mastery" of their nonprofit study and practice and thus open up space for reimagining both the past and the future in alternative, perhaps radical ways (Ablett & Morley, 2019, p. 6). Educators serve students by helping them channel strong emotions and reactions into intellectual curiosity (Reynolds, 2019). If the scope of NME remains narrow, then the selected tradition of the past and present will "short circuit our imaginative and normative capacities to change and create new current conditions" (Eagan, 2014, p. 39). By actively fostering imagination, educators can encourage

students to see "that which is not or not yet" (Castoriadis, 1987), reconceive of themselves as "more than cogs in a system not of their making," (Eagan, 2014, p. 39) and develop shifts in their own research and practice.

Much of the envisioning of possibilities for the future has been fostered through social movements and integrating the rich array of scholarship on social movements introduces new possibilities for the NME classroom. As Kelley (2002) explains, "the most radical ideas often grow out of a concrete intellectual engagement with the problems of aggrieved populations confronting systems of oppression" (p. 8). The conditions of social movements enable participants to "realize that things do not always have to be this way" and to imagine something different (*ibid*). Attention to the history of social movements also allows students to grapple with the complex interplay between formal nonprofit organizations and movements for social change. For example, as Francis (2019) recovers the history of the NAACP in the early twentieth century, she finds that funders engaged in "movement capture," using their financial leverage to redirect the NAACP's agenda away from the issue of racial violence. Beam (2018) challenges a "flattened history" of LGBTQ social movements, tracing their transitions to official nonprofit status, and highlighting the tensions and development of often "profoundly anti-institutional" organizational structures. Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018) explores the politics and realities of disability justice, detailing how sick and disabled queer/people of color have built alternative communities of mutual care. Hyde (2000) examines how feminist social movement organizations embody a range of feminist frameworks in their approaches to governance, ranging from anti-authoritarian and collectivist to participatory to bureaucratic. Each of these examples, which can be assigned readings in nonprofit courses, invites students to consider how nonprofits have

both limited and facilitated social change, to examine an array of nonprofit organizational practices and processes, and to experiment with new approaches.

Finally, as emancipatory imaginaries are most effectively "created and recreated in collaboration with others" (Ablet & Morley, 2019, p. 6), we encourage NME educators to foster a democratic ethos for their pedagogy that includes sharing decision-making power with students, developing relationships, demonstrating respect, removing barriers to participation, and connecting the classroom to relevance and meaning in students' lives. Such democratic practices in the classroom reinforce the values and skills central to effective civic engagement (Norman-Major, 2021) and encourage students to take risks to develop "new examples, issues and approaches" that are relevant to their lives and their work (Lopez-Littleton, 2016, p. 287). As nonprofit educators, we can ask students to contemplate a new vision for nonprofit work and their role in it. In this sense, students may develop a greater sense of "critical civic agency" (Reynolds, 2019) and a praxis of "conscious, lucid activity" that moves beyond the application of existing knowledge (Ablett & Morley, 2019).

Conclusion

We opened this article with the argument that NME is currently unequipped to address the dissonance between the promise of "doing good work" and the realities of nonprofit practice. We have argued that NME effectively promotes a selective and exclusionary origin story of the sector that is steeped in white dominance. We also proposed two tenets of critical pedagogy for the NME classroom. These include an emphasis on historical consciousness to prepare educators and students to consider and confront dominant narratives about the nonprofit sector and the oftentimes hidden processes by which they are formed as well as a praxis of emancipation to encourage educators and

students to radically imagine, explore and experiment with alternative organizational forms, practices, and relations.

Our argument includes steps towards correcting the NME selective tradition and creating more space for critical engagement with the history of the sector. We recognize that educators and students may face social and institutional barriers to integrating critical perspectives and encouraging radical imagination in the classroom. These include hierarchies of power between educators and students, academic precarity of the professoriate, disparities in hiring and retention of faculty of color, white students' discomfort and resistance to discussing race and other forms of oppression, and a wider political context that polarizes and stigmatizes critical approaches -- all forces that can hamper authentic dialogue and critical engagement (Mason et al., 2019; Mirabella & Nguyen, 2019). We need to address structural barriers to ensure that peer-reviewed nonprofit journals, textbook publishers, conferences, and accreditation processes actively include critical perspectives. Progress has been made in some of these arenas (e.g., Eikenberry, Mirabella & Sandberg, 2019; see also Coule, Dodge & Eikenberry, 2020), but much more can be done, for example, to include critical scholars on the editorial boards of prominent peer-reviewed nonprofit journals, to actively seek out and incorporate critical scholars on academic conference panels, to support doctoral students and junior scholars to undertake critical work, and more. It is also imperative that our institutional hiring, promotion, and retention practices intentionally support scholars of color who center critical perspectives in their work.

Additionally, the pressures nonprofits face resonate with Kelley's (2002) reminder that when "we are constantly putting out fires, responding to emergencies, [and] finding temporary refuge" it can be "difficult to see anything other than the present" (p. 11). Yet, as we have argued, perpetuating a selective and romanticized

nonprofit past will continue to reinforce the exclusions of the present and distort possibilities for the future. Critical engagement with nonprofit history and its silences offers a clearer, more accurate understanding of nonprofits as sites of struggle and possibility. Intentional correction and expansion of curriculum and pedagogy can foster a sense of belonging for educators and students who have been excluded from the traditional NME canon, challenge and shift what is defined as effective nonprofit management and shape how students research, engage and practice with greater ethics, equity and empathy in their communities.

Declaration of Interest Statement

We have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

Endnotes

[1]Guidelines for NACC and NASPAA accreditation of nonprofit programs can be found at NACC (2015) and NASPAA (2019), respectively. Additionally, a robust discussion of the accreditation of nonprofit programs and standards for nonprofit program accreditation can be found in volume 7 of the Journal of Nonprofit Education and Leadership.

[2]The literature on philanthropy, charity, philanthropic traditions, and volunteering is robust and requires--indeed, deserves--its own critical study. Examples of such studies include those by Rich (2019) on philanthropy, Dean (2020) on charity, and Eliasoph (2013) on volunteering.

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