

SOCIAL JUSTICE COLLOQUIA AS A KEY COMPONENT OF TRANSFORMATIVE TEACHER EDUCATION

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EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE COLLOQUIA

ADED Faculty started discussing how SJ emerges in our separate courses, desired more formal discussions, & decided to start readings

ADED Faculty started discussing SJ articles at regular meetings

- Troubled By:
- Definitions of SJ
 - Desire to take ACTION
 - Desire to share SJ commitments more formally with students

Colloquia have recurred every fall 2012-2015 with evolving topics

Developed the ADED Colloquia in Fall 2012

Developed a subcommittee to imagine how SJ could be emphasized in Senior year

TOPICS & STRUCTURE

Topics

LGBTQ

Culturally-Relevant
Pedagogy

Race

Poverty

Students' Considered
"At Risk"

Service Learning

Structure

- 4 1-hour sessions (2 consecutive sessions on two Fall Fridays)
- Interdisciplinary grouping (math, social studies, language arts, & science)
- Groups of about 24-30
- Led by an ADED faculty member
- Fall follow-up in Practicum seminars
- Some years, spring follow-up in Inquiry seminars

INSTRUCTIONS FOR STUDENTS

If we believe in a social constructivist view of learning, we, as teachers need to have awareness about social issues as we shape our pedagogical practices and interactions with students, parents, and colleagues. On Friday, September 6th and Friday, September 20th, from 8:00-10:00am, you will participate in discussions around social issues in schools. These discussions will be interdisciplinary, meaning you will be talking with faculty and secondary pre-service teachers in various disciplines (English, math, science, and social studies). These discussions will be led by an ADED faculty member who is an expert in the topic being discussed. Attendance and active participation is mandatory. A two-page reflection paper about this experience is due electronically on Friday, September 27th.

STUDENT REFLECTION ASSIGNMENT

◉ Reflection format: 3-2-1 Response

3—Describe 3 things you learned during the colloquium that INTRIGUED, SURPRISED, or ENLIGHTENED you.

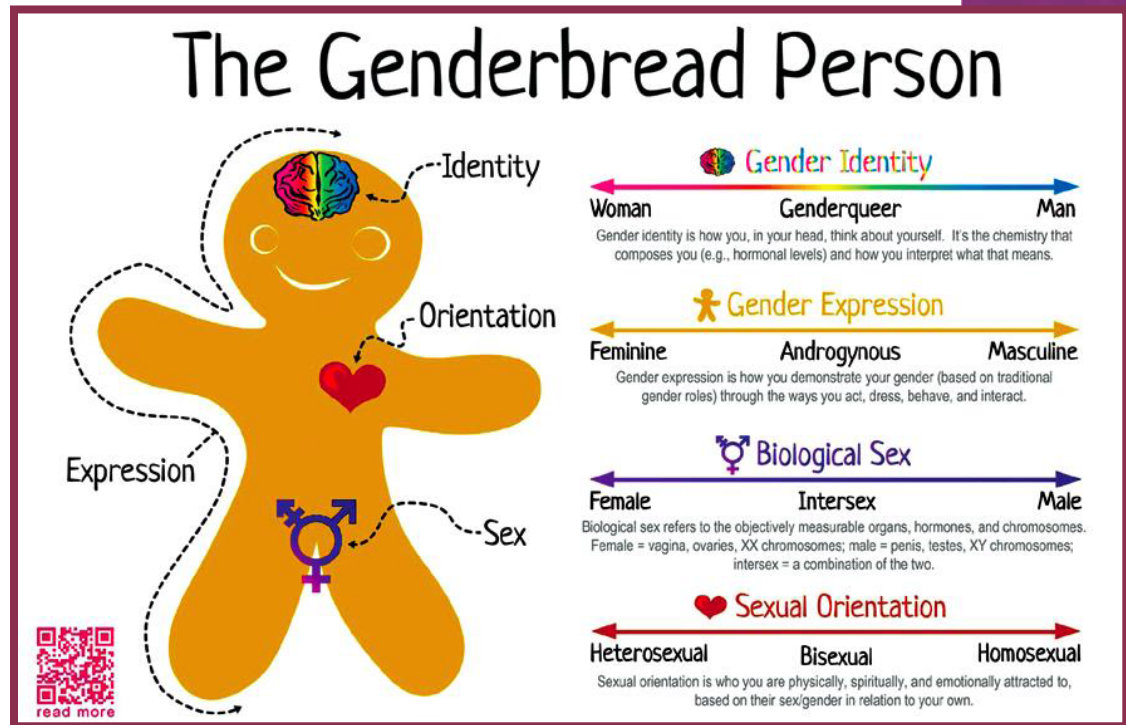
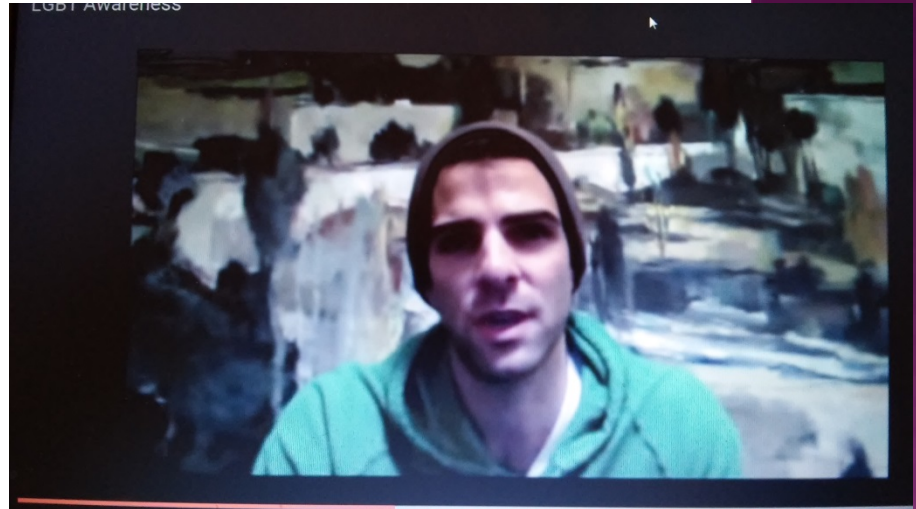
2—Describe 2 things that challenged your thinking in some way, perhaps in ways you found slightly uncomfortable or stretching.

1—Synthesize what you gained through these sessions into one image—a simile or metaphor—that represents what you will take away from this experience. Tie what you have learned to your practicum experience, in essence, answering the question, "How will what I've learned from this colloquium make me a better teacher."

An example of an image: "What I have learned about myself as a teacher through the social justice colloquium is that a teacher is like a chambered nautilus. As she grows in teaching experiences, her understanding about students grows, adding a new chamber onto her shell, expanding her living space to make room for new knowledge."

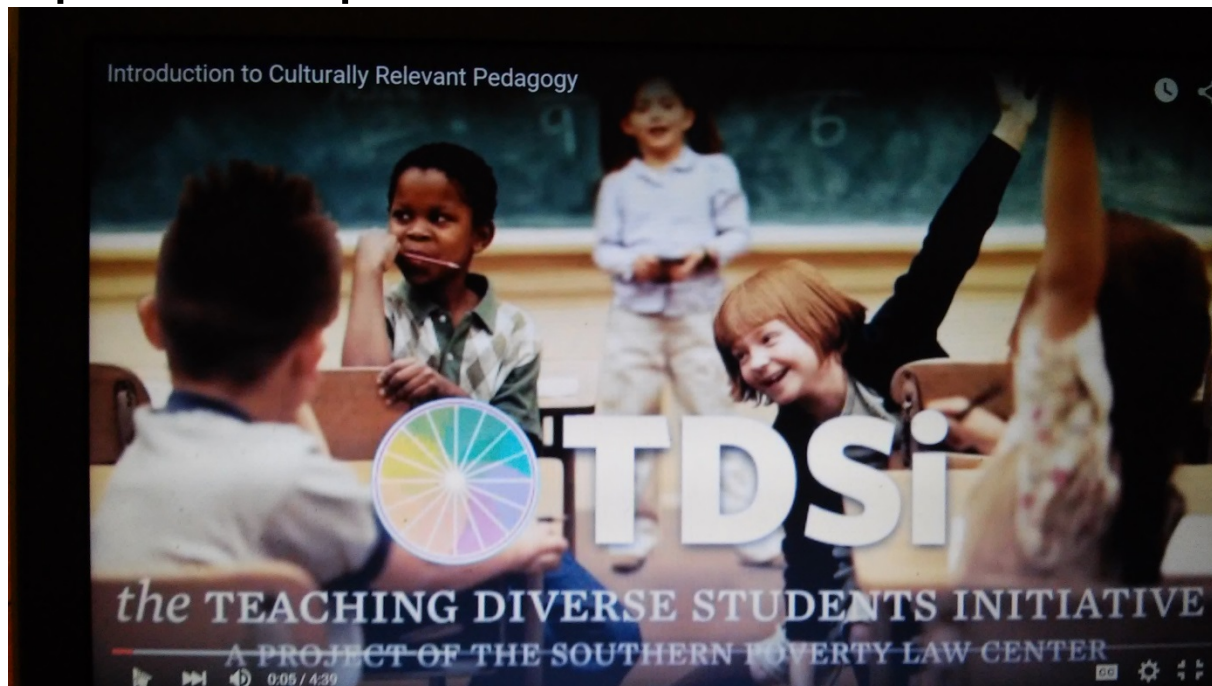
CLASSES: LGBTQ

- Provides background on gender identity, gender expression, biological sex, and sexual orientation
- Addresses how LGBTQ issues arise in classrooms, extracurriculars, and policies



CLASSES: STUDENTS CONSIDERED “AT RISK”

- ◉ Untangles the codes embedded in the term “at risk”
- ◉ Invites students to consider their own preconceptions about who is “at risk”



Troublemaker? Are We Sure?

Did Jorman think staying in school was equivalent to “selling out”? When he dropped out of Clinton High that spring, he had a lot of company. Half of New York City’s ninth-grade public high school students fail to graduate within four years.²⁰ Some educators fear that the real statistics are even grimmer, as those pushed into GED or alternative certificate programs are often counted as graduates, and the city’s department of education fails to track students who “disappear” between eighth and ninth grades. Sometimes students “disappear” for no reason.

In speaking to the Advocates for Children of New York, Ruby Garcia, also a former student at Clinton High, noted that after she transferred to another school, Clinton High somehow “had no record of me and could not help me. After wasting about a year, I managed to graduate at the top of my class (and on time) at a different school.”²¹ Even Ruby Garcia’s brief comment suggests that there is something amiss about Cosby et al.’s “culture of failure” theory. How come Ruby excelled academically as soon as she switched schools? According to her, “Classes [at Clinton High] were too full and teachers seemed more focused on their checks than the product of their teaching.”²² Approximately 4,600 students attend Clinton High, and there is not a single librarian to serve them.²³

Students like Jorman do need help. However, it does not then follow, as Cosby intimates, that Jorman failed *Brown*. What if segregated schools failed Jorman?

Jorman first moved to the United States from the Dominican Republic when he was two years old, alone with his mother. Life in the United

CLASSES: SERVICE LEARNING

- ◉ Explores the elements of service-learning
- ◉ Identifies exemplary service-learning class-based and school-based programs
- ◉ Discusses equity and access to service-learning opportunities



Service Learning Promotes Positive Youth Development in High School



Both youths and communities benefit when students engage in service learning in and out of school.

By Jonathan F. Zaff and Richard M. Lerner

Nurturing young people's civic actions, motivations, and skills can have lasting benefits for both youth and society. This dynamic of mutual individual and societal benefit is a cornerstone of the Positive Youth Development perspective, which emphasizes young people's strengths and the potential for healthy growth (Lerner 2009). As an emerging theory of civic development and broader social contribution, Positive Youth Development asserts that internal assets (such as values and motivations) and the external assets in the lives of youths (such as civic and prosocial experiences in school and other arenas) work in concert to promote confidence, competence, connection, character, and caring — and to encourage young people's contributions to family, community, and civil society. These individual and social variables form the civic context in which youths develop (Zaff, Malanchuk, and Eccles 2008).

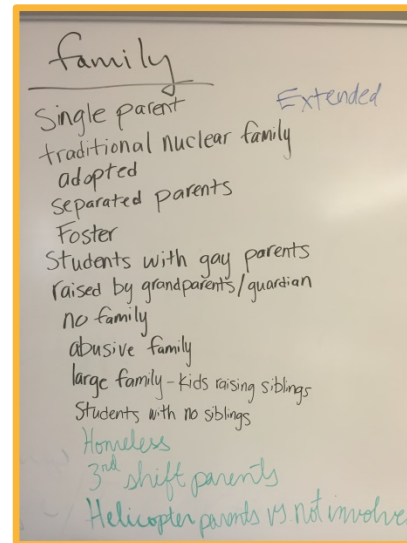
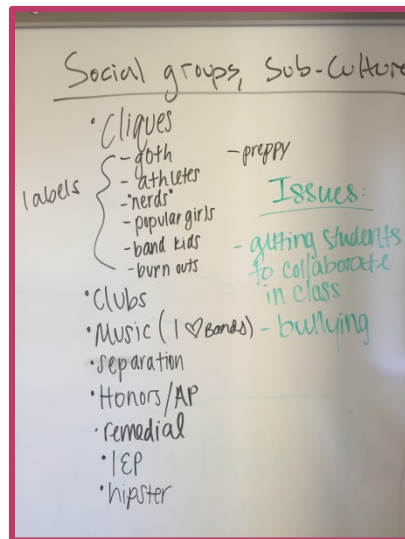
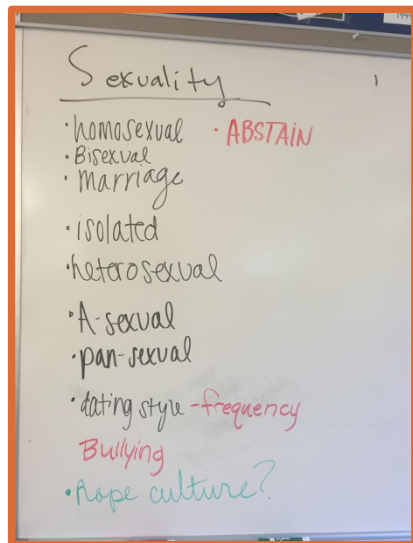
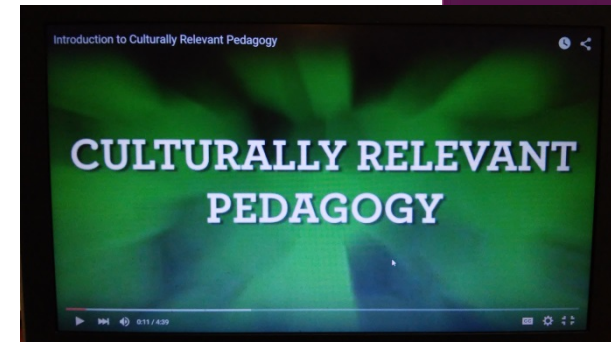
Service learning has become an important strategy for encouraging positive youth development and civic contribution by young people. Through service learning, young people experience valued civic participation in their communities and learn to identify community problems, prioritize solutions, and implement problem-solving strategies (Finn and Checkoway 1998). Service learning can help students develop civic motivation, skills, and commitment to continue contributing to civil society and democracy (Flanagan and Sherrod 1998).

For example, high school students who participated in Madison County Youth in Public Service demonstrated significant increases in civic efficacy, civic knowledge, social capital, and commitment to remain involved in the community (Kahne and Westheimer 2006). These students from a rural East Coast community spent a semester learning about government and then worked in small groups with government agency

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CLASSES: CULTURALLY-RELEVANT PEDAGOGY

- Provide background on CRP/CRT
- Invite students to generate examples of 10 different “realms of culture”
- Exploring home contexts as a way to identify different aspects of culture



Gloria Ladson-Billings

But That's Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

FOR THE PAST 6 YEARS I have been engaged in research with excellent teachers of African American students (see, for example, Ladson-Billings, 1990, 1992b, 1992c, 1994). Given the dismal academic performance of many African American students (The College Board, 1985), I am not surprised that various administrators, teachers, and teacher educators have asked me to share and discuss my findings so that they might incorporate them in their work. One usual response to what I share is the comment around which I have based this article, "But, that's just good teaching!" Instead of some "magic bullet" or intricate formula and steps for instruction, some members of my audience are shocked to hear what seems to them like some rather routine teaching strategies that are a part of good teaching. My response is to affirm that, indeed, I am describing good teaching, and to question why so little of it seems to be occurring in the classrooms populated by African American students.

The pedagogical excellence I have studied is good teaching, but it is much more than that. This article is an attempt to describe a pedagogy I have come to identify as "culturally relevant" (Ladson-Billings, 1992a) and to argue for its centrality in the academic success of African American and other children who have not been well served by our nation's public schools. First, I provide some background in-

Gloria Ladson-Billings is associate professor of education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

formation about other attempts to look at linkages between school and culture. Next, I discuss the theoretical grounding of culturally relevant teaching in the context of a 3-year study of successful teachers of African American students. I conclude this discussion with further examples of this pedagogy in action.

Linking Schooling and Culture

Naïve American educator Cemel Feweswardy (1993) asserts that one of the reasons Indian children experience difficulty in schools is that educators traditionally have attempted to insert culture into the education, instead of inserting education into the culture. This notion is, in all probability, true for many students who are not a part of the White, middle-class mainstream. For almost 15 years, anthropologists have looked at ways to develop a closer fit between students' home culture and the school. This work has had a variety of labels including "culturally appropriate" (Au & Jordan, 1981), "culturally congruent" (Mohatt & Erickson, 1981), "culturally responsive" (Cazden & Leggett, 1981; Erickson & Mohatt, 1982), and "culturally compatible" (Jordan, 1985; Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1987). It has attempted to locate the problem of discontinuity between what students experience at home and what they experience at school in the speech and language interactions of teachers and students. These sociolinguists have suggested that if students' home language is incorporated into the classroom, students are more likely to experience academic success.

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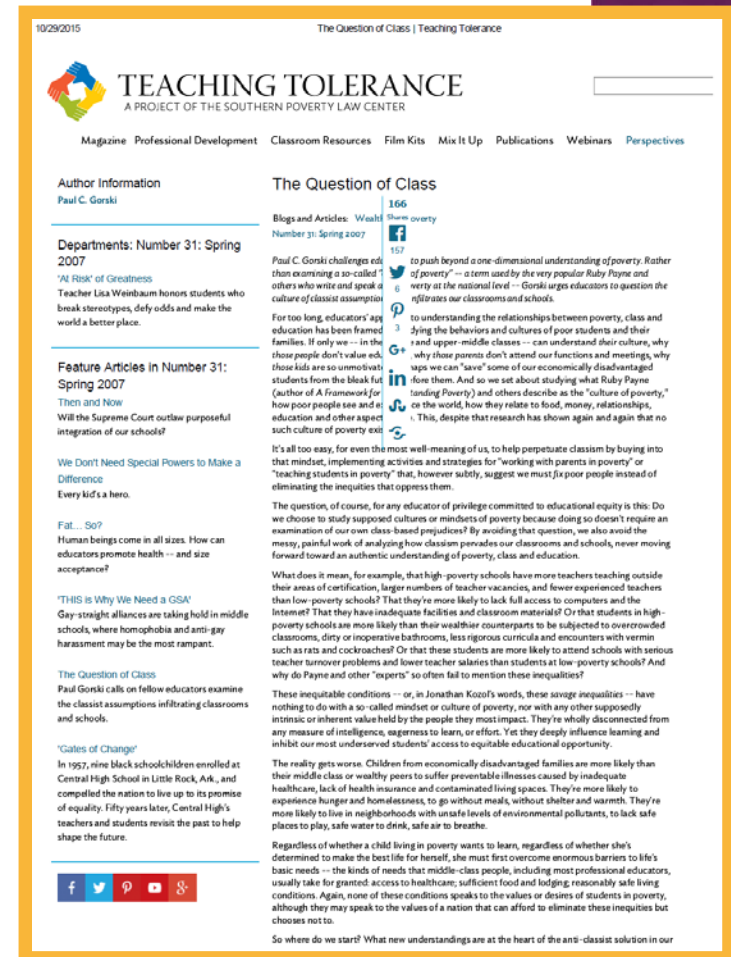
CLASSES: RACE

- ◉ Explores race in the media and makes the argument that race is pervasive and always implicitly a part of all education
- ◉ Opens up discussion about how the majority of U.S. teachers are white women for an increasingly racially/ethnically diverse student body
- ◉ Discusses how teachers can diversify the curriculum and honor all students' funds of knowledge



CLASSES: POVERTY

- Highlights connections between poverty and education in America.
- Explores teacher candidates' definitions of poverty and conceptions of how poverty might influence their field and student teaching experiences.
- Engage teacher candidates in deliberative discussions framed around Gorski's article - The Question of Class- and his challenge for educators to transform their consciousness and practices in the classroom.



STUDENT FEEDBACK

CRP: "Another time where I was challenged was during the culturally relevant pedagogy session. Two peers gave opposite answers on the role of teachers, one suggested that if we know a kid has a rough situation going on we could be more lenient and another suggested that as teachers it is our job to make students motivated. I found that I was uncomfortable by the usage of "making" students be motivated as it seemed negative, but I also did not like letting students automatically get a pass."

At-Risk: "I found that was uncomfortable during the students considered "at-risk" meeting. Based on relative personal beliefs, and previous information learned in class, I found it very hard to reach the conclusion that "African American males, who are poor" was a final answer for "at-risk" youth. I understand that it is important to recognize individuals who are often incorrectly identified in order to "change the pattern," but narrowing the definition was tough. I was comfortable discussing this, it was just difficult to recognize these issues from a viewpoint opposite of my "base conclusions on evidence, it could be anyone" personal stance."

LGBTQ: "The first session I attended was the LGBT meeting, and I learned something I had not previously known about school clubs. I had heard about the federal Equal Access Act in terms of religious non-curricular clubs, but not in terms of students starting Gay/Straight Alliances. This allowed me to gain a better understanding of how far some schools may go to avoid any open discussions of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. For example, to hear the example of schools eliminating all non-curricular groups to avoid having a GSA was truly alarming."

Overall: "The colloquiums were to me like food is to a dog. This is because I am very interested in getting my hands on knowledge, and the colloquiums allowed me to do so. These colloquiums will allow me to address certain situations in a better way. This will in turn allow me to be the best teacher possible."

- Positive evaluations for colloquia.
- Students liked opportunity to talk with students in other programs
- Also moments of discomfort

EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE COLLOQUIA

How these SJ Colloquia have impacted our program since 2012:

- Developed a new Introduction to Social Justice in Secondary Education course
- Infused new field experiences (detention center, ESL placements, magnet schools, etc.) in junior methods courses
- Included SJ elements in seniors' spring portfolio exhibition
- Collaborating as a faculty to conduct research about ADED students' cultural diversity awareness

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

◉ 4 Groups:

- LGBTQ, Culturally-relevant pedagogy, race, poverty

◉ Questions:

- How does this social justice topic manifest in teacher education coursework, field experience, and student teaching?
- What challenges and possibilities exist for discussing this topic with preservice teachers?

FURTHER DISCUSSION

- ◉ In what ways can social justice commitments be manifested in teacher education programs?
 - What are programs doing?
 - What more can be done?
- ◉ What challenges and possibilities exist for furthering these commitments?

QUESTIONS?

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