Progressive Measures

## Special Issue
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Diverse and Global Perspectives

This year the University Assessment Office [UAO] has been committed to providing solution-based programming to address themes which emerged from data derived from the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement [FSSE] and the National Survey of Student Engagement [NSSE]. In conjunction with the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology various workshops focus on the disconnect found between faculty and our students regarding such things as Writing, Research and Experiential Learning, and General Education. As a final installment to this series of solution-based sharing, a special issue of *Progressive Measures* is being published to provide suggestions for how to successfully approach sensitive topics related to diverse and global perspectives in your classroom.

The UAO felt strongly that this information should be available to the entire campus community in a format that could be later referenced and shared, even among our students. We are especially thankful to our five guest authors: Dr. Kim Pereira—Director of Honors, Dr. Dawn Beichner—Asst. Professor Ciminal Justice Sciences, Dr. Joseph Zompetti—Assoc. Professor School of Communications, Dr. Bill Anderson—Asst. Professor Family and Consumer Sciences, and Ms. Gabrielle Smith—Undergraduate Student in Family and Consumer Sciences for their insightful and innovative approaches to addressing diverse and global issues and opinions in the classroom. We hope you find this publication to be enlightening and inspirational.

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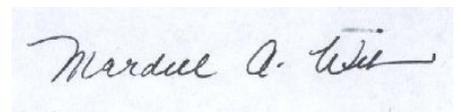
Teaching in a Diverse Society

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If we start with an assumption of true academic freedom we can also assume that there are very few topics, if any, which are taboo in a classroom. Perhaps the very concept of academic freedom was defined and honed to protect not just the right of professors to embark on daily exegeses of myriad topics but indeed to exhort them to engage fearlessly in subjects that may be considered controversial or politically incorrect.

The responsibility that such freedoms place on us is enormous for it assumes more than just the right to broach sensitive issues; it almost demands that we address such topics, for it is only as intellectual provocateurs in the classroom that we can inculcate in our students the art of critical thinking.

It is a sign of the times, of course, that virtually any discussion of religion, race, gender, politics, or sexual orientation is potentially contentious, not least because these subjects are so bandied about on television in sound-bite shouting matches that it becomes difficult to air them in a logical, intellectual fashion. But that is precisely what we must strive to do in our classroom—raise the level of discourse above the cacophony of the public airways into the realms of rational, scholarly conversations.

Although the new century has landed in a more diverse global society as geographical barriers break down in a variety of ways, we now live in a fractured world of terrorists, wars, and widespread diseases. Nations and communities find themselves splintered along religious and cultural divides; race and gender drive political issues with greater intensity and contumely than ever before as they acquire a broader, global context, and all these polemical issues have invaded the modern classroom which sometimes can be more like a war zone than a place for intellectual discourse. The ethnic diversity of student populations makes for a potential minefield of political incorrectness, the fear of which may preclude attempts to address matters of consequence.

But address them we must, all of them; not all in every classroom but surely somewhere in the Academy at large. As long as we avoid stereotypes (unless, of course, that is the point of the investigation) even incendiary issues of race and ethnicity can be handled with sensitivity and insight. It seems odd to say this because it isn't easy to define and devilishly difficult to do (that's when teaching becomes an art and not everyone is an artist), but the key is to avoid making it personal. As long as students are partners in the discussion and can be made to feel that the ultimate objective is greater understanding and appreciation of

sticking points as part of a noble attempt towards racial harmony they will be receptive to our best efforts.

I have found students to be responsive to almost any discussion as long as it is properly contextualized; they are usually willing to accommodate anything related to a larger theme or springing from something in a text. The point is that a debate must be seen as part of the teaching/learning matrix rather than the instructor's need to air his/her own personal agenda. Easy to say, of course, and much harder to recognize what is or isn't a "personal agenda" or political vendetta. Of course, we all have our predilections and I have found it advantageous not to shield them from students; most meaningful discussions will eventually unearth all our biases, so it is much better to acknowledge them at the outset (or as we progress) as long as we can also accept with generosity the proclivities of others.

The ground rules are simple—make students feel they can air their own credos without fear of recrimination. This does not mean we should agree with everything they say; that way madness lies. We should disagree with them when necessary, as long as we accord them the right to disagree with us and one another in a manner that is civil and polite, and if we don't confuse passion for impoliteness. Perhaps the best thing to remember is that however ardently we may feel about "controversial" topics we cannot change people's opinions overnight. We all come to the intellectual table armed with layers of assumptions, presumptions, suppositions, and conclusions; the journey of education is in part a process of redefining one's own credo as we recognize that the uniqueness of each of us makes for a multifarious universe.

Tone is everything when developing strategies to engender successful debates. And setting the right tone must come from the teacher. I don't know whether there is or should be a "how to manual" when it comes to discussing global and diverse issues. Every classroom is different; the dynamics change not only every semester but indeed from week to week depending on the interplay of personalities. What works one year may not the next and an expectation of success based upon past experiences may leave one vulnerable to being blind-sided. Rather than lay down a series of rules, a process which sometimes causes more confusion as everyone struggles to remember what rules are being violated, I always felt that a "professional tone" was the gateway to any successful discussion.

What I mean by professional is simply a manner of comportment that suggests to every student that his/her opinion is valuable to the discussion even if we are in

complete disagreement. It means not sneering or being summarily dismissive, allowing students to complete their thoughts (discussions of sensitive subjects often lead to pleonastic explanations as students struggle to find the right words to express their passions), permitting follow-up statements, and controlling the back and forth flow of arguments and counter-arguments in a fair manner. It also means having the courage to disagree with or stop a line of thought that's getting out of hand or to suggest to students that although they have the right to their opinions, their opinions may not be right, and not ALL opinions are germane to the matter being debated.

Perhaps the best thing to remember is that there are several points of view that may be valid depending on one's perspective. Sometimes that is hard to accept or understand, particularly when we have spent decades convincing ourselves of the legitimacy of our own viewpoints, or in the face of apparently outrageous acts. A case in point is the current national debate on abortion, where one side sees it as nothing short of murder and the other views it as the rightful expression of individual choice; suicide bombings, however abhorrent we may find them, are viewed in some quarters as noble expressions of desperate self-defensive measures. When we say that the killing of another human being is murder EXCEPT in war we are, by permitting an exception, opening the door to a different perspective.

I'd like to close with something I alluded to earlier. Is it possible that not everyone can do this? There seems to be a sense (inherent even in such publications as this) that if one is a teacher at a university one should be able to address sensitive issues with aplomb. But character, personality, background, and training have to come together harmoniously to create the ideal teacher. When we hire professors how much attention do we pay to a candidate's ability to address these issues? We make judgments based on degrees earned, publications in one's field of expertise, recommendations from colleagues who like them, on-campus interviews during which, because we are precluded from asking personal questions, we avoid sensitive issues altogether, and that indefinable comforter, "chemistry." In some cases we never even observe them teach a class. Where in this process do we discover that these potential colleagues are capable of handling matters of race, ethnicity, and gender, particularly when these issues are not obviously associated with the discipline? Where, for that matter, did anyone find out these things about us when we were hired?

We are a liberal arts university, where every discipline is only a part of a larger, general whole. Thus the ultimate focus is on the interaction of human beings with one another and their world. Education is fundamentally a journey towards discovering our place in the universe as a society of men and women. As teachers, whatever our discipline, we are therefore constantly engaged, if we are doing our jobs well, in probing the obvious and recondite questions about who we are, about our essential humanity. I began this essay with a grandiose statement about academic freedom and the duty to be provocateurs. In closing I have to ask, "Am I capable of doing that? Am I even qualified to be here? And did those that hired me use the right tools to make that judgment?"

Thinking, Talking, and Teaching on Race Revisited: Incorporating Derrick Bell's 'The Space Traders' into the Social Science Curriculum

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In an earlier pedagogical article, Russell (1996) proposed a writing assignment which centered upon students reading and responding to a hypothetical scenario. Students read Derrick Bell's (1992) short story, "The Space Traders," in which aliens visit the earth and offer the United States' government gold, chemicals to eliminated environmental pollution, and a safe nuclear engine and fuel in exchange for the entire African American population. After reading the scenario, Russell's (1996) students were required to write an essay addressing the plausibility of the proposed trade. I implemented Russell's assignment in three Criminal Justice Sciences courses at Illinois State University. This article provides an overview of students' responses to the assignment and describes the utility of the assignment in providing a forum for discussions of our nation's history of race relations, as well as contemporary social inequalities.

Summary of Bell's Scenario

Derrick Bell's (1992) fictional year 2000 provides the backdrop for the hypothetical space trade. The United States is in dire straits; pollution is at an all time high, natural resources are depleted, and the economy mirrors that of a third world nation. Moreover, the United States has witnessed an unprecedented "retrogression of civil rights protections" (Bell, 1996: 163) and race relations are not auspicious. The world that Bell has created is one that cleverly exaggerates existing racialized stereotypes: more than half of the Black population is imprisoned within the confines of the former inner city areas. In response to street crime, the government has built high walls around the former urban centers and armed guards provide around-the-clock surveillance.

In the midst of all of this turmoil, one thousand ships from outer space arrive along the Atlantic coast. The aliens bring with them treasured economic and environmental resources that the United States desperately needs: gold to restore a nearly bankrupt government, chemicals to repair the polluted environment, and a new nuclear engine and fuel to relieve the nation's depleted supply of fossil fuel. In exchange for these treasures, the visitors want only one thing: "to take back to their home star" the United States' entire African American population (Bell 1992: 160). The visitors give the United States' Government sixteen days to consider the proposed trade.

The story details the sixteen days following the proposal. Despite some citizens' concerns regarding the trade, including the aliens' decline to elaborate on the fate of the traded African Americans, popular opinion favors the trade. Executive orders are implemented that bar anxious Blacks from leaving the country until the proposition is resolved. The government accepts the proposed trade by approving the 27th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which declares that Congress has the right to call any citizen for special service in the name of protecting the needs of the country. The Amendment is eventually ratified by a 70-30 margin. All Blacks are ordered onto the space ships. Ironically, Bell's (1992: 194) scenario ends on Dr. Martin Luther King's Day, with the following scene:

> The inductees looked fearfully behind them. But, on the dunes above the beaches, guns at the ready, stood U.S. guards. There was no escape, no alternative. Heads bowed, arms now linked by slender chains, Black people left the New World as their forebears had arrived.

The Assignment

Russell's (1996: 115) original assignment read as follows:

> After reading 'The Space Traders,' write an essay which addresses the following (1) Is the scenario Bell describes plausible or is it incredible? (2) Make a *persuasive* case for *why* the Space Traders hypothetical could or could not occur today and (3) You should utilize course materials, newspaper, journal, magazine articles, etc., to make your argument. The assignment must be 3-4 typed pages (750-1000 words).

Students' Responses

Reasons Why a Space Trade Could Happen

The overwhelming majority of the students (70%) concluded that the space trade was indeed plausible. Many students began their papers seemingly surprised by the position that they took and the availability of evidence to support their position. As one student noted:

> The scenario presented in Derrick Bell's story is a frighteningly realistic one. As a society, we often seem to view ourselves as being progressive and beyond the shameful racist behavior exhibited in this work of fiction; in reality, we are not so very far removed from some of these actions.

Students who believed the space trade was plausible offered many varied responses in support of their position. Some students framed their positions in terms of historical examples of racism; others focused on contemporary inequalities. Table 1 provides an overview of students' justifications for why a trade could take place.

Historical Evidence. Many of the students discussed the plausibility of the trade in terms of the United States' history of race relations. Whereas some students structured their essays around such egregious acts as slavery, lynching, and the treatment of Native Americans, others structured their arguments in terms of institutionalized racism and "White privilege" (McIntosh, 1990). In other words, students recognized not only the legacy of hate-based activities of our nation's history, but also the many ways in which impassivity has contributed to our ongoing social inequalities.

Students' reactions to the scenario carefully documented the many ways in which Whites have exploited Blacks throughout history. Essays detailed the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, the conditions of chattel slavery, reconstruction and Jim Crow laws, as well as the mistreatment of Black WWII soldiers, among other topics. One of the more prevalent themes among the justifications was our government's failure to protect Blacks as a historical constant. The following excerpt discusses the concept of underprotection in terms of lynching:

> There are countless historical documents that list Blacks who were lynched by mobs. These individuals were not given a trial and were often implicated on a White person's allegation alone. During the early portion of the 20th century, innocent Black men were killed every day because of false charges, and the federal government (controlled by Whites) ignored the phenomenon. In a country with this kind of history, our government is certainly capable of deciding to remove Blacks to the benefit of the remaining Whites.

Contemporary Examples of Racism. Students who wrote essays describing the plausibility of the trade did not rely exclusively on historical evidence to support their positions; many provided examples of contemporary discriminatory acts and ongoing social inequalities. These essays

Table 1: Students' justifications for why the trade could take place

United States' Race Relations	Negative Perceptions and Stereotypes of Blacks	Contemporary Issues
Slavery	High rates of unemployment	White political power
Jim Crow	More criminal than other groups	Residential segregation
Treatment of Native Americans	Low S.E.S.	Blacks have limited political power
Japanese American Internment	Reliance on welfare	White supremacy groups
Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment	High levels of incarceration	Failure to fund urban schools
Lynching	Gang Violence	Neglect of the African AIDS epidemic
Civil Rights battles	Hip Hop Culture	Hurricane Katrina relief efforts
Mistreatment of Black WWII Soldiers	Poorly educated	Jena 6 case
	Less successful	
	Media images	
	Whites' fear	
	Single-parent households	
Global Race Relations	Abuses of Power	United States' Culture
Jewish Holocaust	Palmer raids	Persistence of racism
Rwandan genocide	Alien & Sedition Acts	White privilege
Sudan genocide	Racial profiling	Selfishness
Armenian genocide	Policies following 9-11-2001	Greed
	Rodney King beating	Utilitarianism
	Wrongful conviction	

underscore what Bell (1992) has described as, "the permanence of racism" in our country. The contemporary justifications included references to racialized stereotypes about Blacks—both as held by Whites and as depicted in the media—as well as the many ways in which our government and our criminal justice system continue to discriminate against people of color.

Many students addressed the aftermath of the Hurricane Katrina disaster and relief effort. Several essays mentioned musician Kanye West's statements from a September 2005, nationally televised, Hurricane Relief Concert. During that broadcast, West pointed out that Black refugees were being portrayed in the media as looters, whereas Whites engaged in the same activities were described as looking for food. Though there was some variation from one essay to the next, students suggested that the incident epitomized the value given to Blacks versus Whites in our country, as well as the gap between the rich and the poor.

Another common theme in the contemporary racism examples was the Jena 6 case, in which a prosecutor charged six Black students with attempted murder, following their alleged assault of a White student. Students' essays provided a detailed overview of race relations at Jena High School leading up to the assault, including school administrators' decision not to punish White students for hanging nooses from a tree on school property. Collectively, these essays suggested that the Jena 6 case confirms that there is a different system of justice in place for Blacks and Whites in this country.

Reasons Why a Space Trade Could Not Happen

Approximately thirty percent of the students believed that Bell's (1992) proposed trade was inconceivable. Table 2 provides an overview of students' responses. Generally, students who focused on the improbability of the trade detailed how the United States has overcame racial divisiveness and made amends for past transgressions. Several students suggested that if the government were to agree to the "The Space Traders" proposition, Blacks would not go willingly. Students addressed the ways in which United States' citizens have united in the past to overcome racial injustices. Some students made reference to the race riots in Chicago and Detroit, whereas others focused on more recent examples, such as the droves of protestors who traveled to Louisiana in the aftermath of the Jena 6 case.

Some of the students who argued that the trade could not take place documented the strides that have been made by African Americans in the post Civil War era. Some papers centered on the topic of economic growth, highlighting the numbers of African Americans in the middle class or the growing numbers of African Americans in White-collar jobs. Others focused on educational attainment, such as how the numbers of African Americans in higher education are increasing, as well as the numbers of minorities who graduate from high school. Several others detailed the numbers of influential African Americans in positions of power and authority. The following excerpt is characteristic of those kinds of arguments:

Table 2: Students' justifications for why the trade could not take place

Historical Lessons Learned	Contemporary Race Relations	Legal and Constitutional Protections
Civil Rights Movement & related protections Abolition of slavery Genocide Japanese American internment	Fewer divisions than the past United States as a melting pot Prevalence of interracial marriages & families Blacks are valued in society Blacks' influence in popular culture	Declaration of Independence 5th Amendment 8th Amendment 13th Amendment 14th Amendment Universal Declaration of Human Rights Affirmative action
Preventative Actions	Black Power	United States' Culture
United Nations watchdog groups Second Civil War would erupt Rioting Global community would isolate U.S.	Prominent Blacks in society Blacks in political power Blacks in U.S. workforce Blacks in military and law enforcement	Diminished importance of race Diversity and multiculturalism

In Derrick Bell's future, African Americans are unimportant and have no influence in our nation's decisions. That is simply not the case today. There is a Black woman, Condoleezza Rice, and a Black man, Alfonzo Jackson, that sit on the President's cabinet. Five of the fifteen cabinet members are actually minorities. Moreover, there are 41 African Americans in Congress and a total of 71 minorities in Congress. There is even talk of an African American man, Barack Obama, running for president next term.

Conclusion

Students' responses to this assignment reflect an overwhelming skepticism of race relations in this country; the majority of students believed that, if given the opportunity, the United States government would participate in the trade. Although the students' lived experiences do not compare to those of their parents and grandparents—who may have taken part in our nation's civil rights' battles and losses—they have been exposed to a number of recent injustices. Students are familiar with the treatment of detainees following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the national dialogue that has surfaced regarding the practice of racial profiling, the government's response to Hurricane Katrina, and the controversies surrounding the amnesty of illegal immigrants, among other topics. They are cognizant of the ways in which race and ethnicity have divided populations. In their lifetimes, they witnessed the Rwandan genocide, as well as the ongoing crisis in Darfur and they seem to be aware of the global struggles for equality.

Bell's hypothetical story, although written over a decade ago, is and will remain a timeless reminder of our nation's history. It provides a great starting point for conversations about our nation's historical treatment of people of color, as well as a forum in which to address contemporary social, political, and economic inequalities. Furthermore, in having classroom dialogues surrounding "The Space Traders," we are doing precisely what Bell (1992: 13) had hoped: we are "moving beyond the comforting belief that time and the generosity of its people will eventually solve America's racial problem." As one of the students so eloquently concluded, the assignment provides us an opportunity to look backward and forward within the context of United States' race relations:

> It has been only a few short generations since the Civil War; indeed, since many African Americans first settled in the US. It has been too short a time to consider the events of the past forgotten history. In this sense, "The Space Traders" is applicable to us today as a warning not to stop making progress in civil rights. Although discrimination and prejudice may still exist in the country, we should be mindful not to grow weary or ignorant of the issues still facing us, lest we find ourselves confronted with a scenario like "The Space Traders."

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Embracing Organic Learning: Progressive Measures for the Communication Classroom

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A few years ago, I began to question the efficacy of standardized and objective tests, PowerPoint presentations, common syllabi in multi-section courses, and uniform assessment procedures. The self-reflection occurred largely as a result from complaints and constructive criticisms from students of color in my classes. They repeatedly reported that such pedagogical activities excluded their voices and were not "fair" – despite their continual claims of being "objective" – measurements of their intelligence. When I asked them what would be fair, they answered that they should be able to demonstrate their competency of the material in either written or oral formats, in a course that examined new knowledge that connected to their own experiences, and through an engagement of knowledge that was more organic than the impersonal and rigid parameters of things like PowerPoint presentations. When I began reading books like Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, I began to understand what my students were saying (Freire, 1996). In other words, the classes I had been teaching – and the classes my colleagues were (and still are) teaching – not only reinforced patterns of oppression, but they also stifled creative thought and learning by (re)producing what Freire calls the "banking" model of education – or what my 5th grade English teacher used to call "spoon-feeding." Top-down, forced learning just so students can regurgitate it later does not foster true, meaningful or organic learning, but rather asks our students to cram for studying to-the-tests that we force. It becomes a rigged-game where students who can digest the right formula at the right time succeed, instead of producing critical-thinking citizens who can process information to their own unique contexts.

In each Communication class, for every semester, there are different exigencies that must be recognized. A class of more than one student is an exciting place where a collection of different experiences, skills and aspirations convene at one moment. The place of the instructor/facilitator adds to this unique moment. If we reject the colonial philosophy of banking or imparting knowledge on the so-called student, then we must recognize that each class for each semester is a different culmination of a multiplicity of voices and energies that can only be expressed if the environment allows them to thrive and breathe.

In what follows, I will provide three examples of how a Critical Communication Pedagogy made a difference for introducing global and diverse perspectives in my classes. These examples do not prove that critical pedagogy will succeed in every situation, for situations are different and require different approaches. However, given the interconnected nature between the communicator, message and audience, the educational methods that focus on the subject's relation to textual production and the different identities between the speaker and audience may benefit Communication education. While some of this paper comes from an earlier publication (Zompetti, 2006), I hope to shed additional light onto the importance of critical pedagogy and civic virtue in our classrooms.

I employed the three following projects which I believe illustrate the empowering potential of a Critical Communication Pedagogy. Other examples of critical pedagogy also exist in our field (Fassett & Warren, 2007; Nance & Foeman, 1993). These two projects, or participant-based interactions, are the interview speech, a less complicated writing exercise, and a civic engagement campaign. Again, these examples should be viewed as merely possible moments of opportunity for the (non)radical classroom, and I encourage others to try their own ideas or, perhaps more importantly, seek suggestions from the participants in the class.

The Interview Speech

The first example is what I call the "interview speech." The description for the interview speech in the syllabus read as follows:

> For this speech, you need to interview someone outside of this class who you do not know. The person must be a different gender than yourself, have a different ethnic and racial background, and must be from a different socio-economic class than yourself. You should ask questions such as: 1) What is your name? What ethnic/racial background/heritage do you have? How old are you? Where do you work? 2) How do you think your gender, ethnicity, and class affect your position/location in society? 3) Do you think people use different persuasive strategies on you than they do with people of different gender, ethnic, racial, and class backgrounds? Make sure you tell the person you are interviewing the reason why you are going to ask them questions before you ask them. Feel free to ask more questions if you need to, especially if their answers lead to

interesting issues. Make sure you tape record (with their permission) or write their answers down so you have their answers when you prepare your speech. Once you have their answers, integrate them into a framework that has an overarching thesis or argument that you develop on your own. Obviously, the more interesting the person and their answers, the more interesting will be your argument. Finally, your conclusion should draw some implication from what you learned from this experience. How does it help you with audience analysis? How does it help you understand your own identity? Is there any other significant implication to your interview that you (and we) can learn? What does it tell us about our society and culture?

The importance of this speech for the persuasive speaking class was threefold. First, by asking the participants to develop an argumentative position in the speech, the speech prepared them for their future persuasive speeches for the course. Second, the speech helped the participants understand audience analysis more than the typical lecture that focuses on demographics. With this speech, the person is able to actually witness how people view things differently, how their values and needs are different, and how we can seek common ground with them at the same time. Finally, this speech permitted the participants to see and understand the differences in identities that they otherwise may not have recognized. This realization occurred not only with the speaker who conducted the interview, but it also emerged with the participants in the audience. As some of their comments will illustrate, this speech helped open their eyes (and mine) to the differences that we may normally be ignorant of or normally fail to recognize.

With this backdrop in mind, excerpts from the participants' actual speeches will illustrate the enormous importance of this assignment. Of course, with each speech ranging from six to eight minutes, I cannot include everything. Thus, what follows is what I believe to be a partial representation of the best comments which still reflect the overall presentations.

The first speaker was Henry. Henry had been complaining that the group discussed racial issues too much. He believed that we should have been focusing on persuasive speaking and persuasion theory. While I suggested that questions of identity are integrally linked to persuasion, Henry dismissed the relationship and became reserved until the interview speech. Since he volunteered to give the first speech, I thought he was trying to get it out of the way. Because he had voiced his frustration with discussing identity, I did not anticipate his speech to be sincere or insightful. I could not

have had a more inaccurate expectation.

Henry began his speech by walking in front of the audience, away from the podium, and stating a rhetorical question, "Does society treat people differently?" He continued, "I am a white, middle-class male who was raised in a suburban neighborhood. I have always thought that everyone has had similar experiences as me. I have always thought that everyone has had similar opportunities. But, after the interview, I am convinced that people are treated differently." Henry then introduced us to his interviewee, Sara, who is a middle-aged African-American woman. Henry has an internship at a local hospital in public relations, and Sara works as a housekeeper at the hospital. Sara apparently has worked at the hospital for at least twenty years and still only earns around $17,000 per year. Despite her loyalty and years of service, Sara is often treated differently than the other housekeepers who are younger and are not African-American. Sara described in detail to Henry how she is mistreated when she shops at the mall or when she goes to eat at restaurants. She even described how different persuasive strategies are used on her than are used for white people. As Henry explained, Sara recently went to purchase a car. When she arrived at the dealership, two white people were looking at cars. Several sales representatives were on duty, but only one went out onto the lot and approached the other couple. Sara just stood there for several minutes, dumbfounded, without any assistance. According to Sara, the experience reflects how older African-Americans are perceived as being poor or unworthy of certain service.

As Henry told us the story of Sara, he became impassioned with empathy and concern. At times, his eyes clouded up, but his voice remained stern and assertive. Henry sincerely appeared to be moved by his interview with Sara. Given his earlier dislike for discussing identity, the audience, too, was enwrapped in Henry's speech. They seemed amazed at his transformation and appreciated his sincerity. When he concluded his speech, Henry declared, "I've learned that society does treat people differently, and that people have predispositions toward other people . . . and I've learned it all from Sara." At that moment in time, it seemed as if everyone in the class, particularly Henry, understood the importance of identity and public speaking.

Another speaker was Rita. Rita interviewed who she thought was an upper-class Native-American man, named Juaquin. Based on this assumption, Rita did not think Juaquin had experienced any type of discrimination or oppression. Nevertheless, Rita said she was excited about interviewing Juaquin because she wanted to learn more about Native-American culture.

As Rita explained, she found out that Juaquin was actually bi-racial. Juaquin was part Cherokee and part African-American. This fact surprised Rita considerably and startled

her previous assumptions. During the interview, after hearing this about Juaquin, she began to wonder, has he felt discrimination? So, Rita questioned Juaquin about his life and his experiences. Rita then learned that he became wealthy only recently, through a series of successful business deals. Previously, Juaquin had struggled to escape from the ghettos of Detroit and make something of himself. Juaquin told Rita that, as he lived in the ghetto, he had frequent encounters with the police. Assuming that his upper-class status remedied Juaquin's situation, Rita asked him if he felt his current condition was better than the way he lived when he was younger. Juaquin answered that having money helps him to live a better life, but he still has difficulty with the police. Last month alone he was harassed thirty-one times by police officers. As Juaquin explained to Rita, being a Black Indian and driving a Jaguar turns lots of heads. He is often interrogated as if he was a drug dealer. After all, African-Americans and Native-Americans are not seen driving fancy cars if they are in a legitimate line of work. Thus, Juaquin told Rita that although his life is improving considerably, he still faces much discrimination that is solely based on his ethnic identity.

Rita expressed how significant this interview was to her. It helped her question her own stereotypes, since she originally thought Juaquin was only Native-American. Additionally, Rita said, "I thought he was rich and never experienced ordeals with the police. But, he was harassed thirty-one times because he has black skin. Stereotypes are both unconscious and conscious and when we recognize this then we will better be able to discard them and give way to the openness that other cultures have to offer." As she concluded her speech, Rita confided that, "This speech opened my eyes because it forced me to question my own beliefs and dogmas. It allowed me to open myself to other people." When she was done, I could not help but ask myself how many times I have immediately assumed someone was a particular race based on their appearance or economic status. The rest of the audience also seemed struck by Rita's message. As Rita demonstrated, such an assumption can be extremely problematic not only in our everyday life, but also as speakers who want to communicate with our audience members.

This example demonstrates how a Critical Communication Pedagogy can be instrumental in developing speaking skills and appreciating the different perspectives that exist in society. This particular assignment may not be helpful to all or even many of the speech classrooms throughout the country. I realize that I was fortunate to have a small class size and students who were receptive to this approach. However, I believe with some modifications or with a completely different exercise the underlying philosophy behind critical pedagogy can be fruitful for most speech classes.

The Writing Exercise

The second example of a Critical Communication Pedagogy is a simple writing exercise. In one of my persuasion classes, I asked the students/participants to write a lengthy research paper on any subject that they desired with only two criteria: 1) the paper must relate to the concept of persuasion somehow, and 2) the author must make some type of argument supporting their own position. Of course, this exercise is quite broad, but it gives the participant an opportunity to explore areas of their own interest while simultaneously encouraging responsibility of thought and agency. The exercise very clearly breaks from the traditional form of a writing assignment where the student is asked to write on a specific area of the instructor's choosing. Richard Ohmann (1987) discusses one of the problems in assigning the traditional writing exercise:

We tell students to find their own voices, yet most feel subtly and not-so-subtly pressed to submerge their identities in academic styles and purposes that are not their own. They have little understanding of their world, and not all that much experience of it, but the academic paper calls for a knowing posture and for routines of mastery. (p. 252)

Instead, I encourage the participants in the class to find their own discursive space, in what Giroux (1994) describes as the theorizing "about their own experiences" in an effort not only to stimulate responsible agency, but also to create a "rupturing practice, as an oppositional pedagogy in which one pushes against the grain of traditional history, disciplinary structures, dominant readings, and existing relations of power" (p. 135).

At first, the participants of this exercise were hesitant, even scared, at the prospect of writing something that originally seemed so abstract. In our traditional exercises on writing, students become dependent on the ideas and directions of their instructors which discourages creative practices and undermines our concepts of discursive, albeit performative, agency. Indeed, the symbolic placing of the "professor" and his/her supposed expertise in the field of inquiry always already constructs the "student" body of the classroom into believing the professor's knowledge is that which should be emulated, processed, and eventually spat-out. Thus, the participants' immediate negative reaction to this particular exercise was expected.

After explaining the purposes and possibilities of the exercise, however, the class felt much more comfortable. As they would discuss their projects with me after each class session, there appeared to me a sense of liberation and excitement as the participants began exploring the intersections between their own subjectivity, persuasive and discursive events, and their performance in the classroom.

What occurred as the participants presented their writings to the rest of the class was a positive interaction of different

experiences and argumentative positions. Even when conflicting perspectives emerged during the discussions, the pedagogical and performative ruptures in the participants' worldviews created opportunities for self-reflection, self-improvement, and self-liberation from the typical oppressive classroom methods to which everyone had been accustomed. Indeed, as Ohmann suggests, . . . students [sic] should have as much responsibility as possible for their own educations. The habits of expressive power come with actual shared power, not with computerized instruction in sentence-combining or with a back-to-basics movement that would freeze students' language into someone else's rules, imposed from without. Respect the linguistic resources students have; make language a vehicle for achievement of real political and personal aims. (1987, p. 293)

In this spirit, my writing exercise seemingly helped everyone to discover and apply their own skills at inquiry into a powerful display of liberating agency. While other exercises may also help usher in similar pedagogical moments, writing helps the participant engage their own identity with responsibility, communicative acts, and different types of texts. The possibilities are endless, but the opportunity is crucial.

Civic Engagement Campaign

In my Contemporary Communication Issues course, I developed an assignment focused on civic engagement. The assignment reads as follows: Each student will be paired with someone else in the class. The student should choose an issue on campus or in the community in which to develop an activist campaign. The student should develop a plan of creating, organizing and sustaining an activist campaign surrounding their issue of choice. They will then at least begin their campaign sometime during this semester. The student will share with the class, by means of a presentation, what their campaign was/is, how it was planned, how it was implemented, lessons learned, etc. So, the student should choose a controversial issue that either occurs at ISU or the surrounding community or that affects ISU or the surrounding community. Then, the student should develop a comprehensive campaign to 1) increase awareness of the issue, 2) mobilize support for some sort of change, and 3) develop rhetorical strategies to persuade and to confront resistance. Then, the student should put the campaign into action. The campaign does not need to be completed, since time constraints of the semester preclude that. Yet, the student's initiation of the campaign will not only help the student be knowledgeable of the process necessary for a campaign, but it will also require a commitment to initiating social change. The student will report their progress and the work that was done for the campaign in written paper.

I want to emphasize that unlike many classes, this class allows students to choose the contemporary issue and campaign that they will implement. In other words, the

students have the freedom and latitude to discover pertinent issues that affect them directly. In the spirit of civic engagement, the assignment is meant to foster excitement and passion in the student, so they will choose an issue that will motivate them. Additionally, it offers students the opportunity to explore concepts involving global and diverse perspectives that they may not experience in other courses.

Since this assignment and redesign of this course occurred for the first time this semester, I cannot report, yet, on the value or the impact this assignment has made. However, after a mid-term course evaluation, what I can state is that students thus far have found this assignment engaging and important for their lives. Many students have expressed that they were not very excited about the course at first, but this assignment has changed their minds about the significance of civic engagement. Three of my students, in fact, have stated that they no longer care what grade they will receive at the end of the semester, because this assignment has taught them that their issue is very important, and it transcends the value of the grade placed on the course experience.

Conclusion

All three assignments have in common not only the philosophical premise of critical pedagogy, but also a more engaged sense of civic virtue. But a Critical Communication Pedagogy embraces much more than just civic virtue. It holds as fundamental the individual ability for self-reflection. It encourages the organic development of ideas. It eschews stifling and suffocating notions of commonality and efficiency. It forces the recognition of diversity of experience and ambition. It requires an acknowledgment of responsibility. And, it fosters a sense of community and performative agency (Butler, 1993). This civic virtue and sense of reflection are important in our efforts to address issues such as standardization and top-down assessment requirements. In other words, critical pedagogy allows movement for change by eliciting ideas from all participatory parties, based upon their experiences. Additionally, a critical pedagogy requires us to question and perhaps even shuck mandating anything, particularly standardized curricula and tests. Pragmatically, such standards may be met for adequate funding or certification, but overall, a school or educators should focus more on learning and inclusion of experience, rather than teaching to such standards.

Perhaps decision-makers will not be so easily swayed about the importance of a more critical pedagogy. We can hope that a call for securing and embracing academic freedom, along with citing the many court decisions that uphold academic freedom as precedent, can also help in this pursuit. I would like to be idealistic, or perhaps naïve, enough to think that the best educational approach is the one that ultimately services and teaches our students the best. If decision makers ultimately look at the bottom line, perhaps referencing the value of critical thinking skills for business

careers, as has been done in California (Lazere, 1987), could provide some additional incentive to allow a more critical approach for our teaching in the classroom. Additionally, I would like to think that with the continual criticism of No Child Left Behind, scholars and teachers alike will finally take notice of the pitfalls of placing too much faith on so-called standardized and objective testing, as well as rigid and formulaic teaching devices such as PowerPoint.

In short, a Critical Communication Pedagogy allows students and instructors alike — as participants and facilitators — the opportunity to share in their subjectivity and agency, especially with issues involving diverse and global perspectives. It blends the heteroglot of cultural and social experiences into a unique moment of expression and excitement (Bakhtin, 1981). It deconstructs the traditional hierarchy of the classroom. And, it reveals for participants a possible mode and method of liberation that may not otherwise be seen or experienced. Hopefully this paper has provided some valuable examples of how to approach organic and experiential learning from a different perspective. A Critical Communication Pedagogy forces all of us to come to grips with difficult choices, risks and contradictions. However, in those crucial moments of decision-making, critical pedagogy provides an opportunity for both empowerment and resistance, through a recognition of personal agency and performative, albeit discursive, responsibility.

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Stereotype Threat: Teacher and Student Awareness

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It seems that almost everyone is aware of social stereotypes. Students may be especially aware of the academic stereotypes for specific groups, particularly if those students are a member of that group. Certainly students bring these cognitive structures with them into the classroom. But, do currently held stereotypes influence teaching and learning? The answer is yes, and this is apparently regardless of whether the individual believes the stereotype or is simply aware of it..

Stereotypes are organized prior knowledge specifically regarding groups of people. They are schemes of attributes, beliefs, category labels, and expectancies concerning whatever social group is salient to the observer (Mackie, Hamilton, Susskind, & Rosseli, 1996). Schemes are cognitive structures for abstract knowledge that designate the defining features and attributes of a given concept and activate when one needs an explanation for an effect for which causal information is vague or ambiguous (Stangor & Schallor, 1996). Accordingly, and despite the fact that stereotypes are essentially rooted in assumption (Hoffman & Pasley, 1998), they influence our interpretation of new information. When "impressions are well developed and judgments have been made, people are in effect validating their already held impressions, and they focus on consistencies" (Fiske & Taylor, 1991, p.128). Because a perceiver needs to detail and condense large amounts of incoming information continuously and simultaneously, the process is not indiscriminate but dependent on our existing schemes.

Everyone has the capacity to stereotype others

Cognitive categorization and interpretation of environmental events, and of other individuals, occurs naturally and efficiently very early in life (Anderson, 2005). As a result, people are routinely unaware when they are engaged in stereotypical thinking (Spencer, Fein, Wolfe, Fong, & Dunn, 1998). When the perceiver is unaware of a stereotype being activated, their judgment and subsequent actions can be skewed (Spencer et al.). Ellis (1989) writes, individuals "have remarkable capacities to observe, reason, imaginatively enhance their experiencing, and transcend some of their own limitations, they also have an incredibly facile and easy propensity to ignore reality, misuse reason, and rigidly and intolerantly invent gods and demons…" (p. 158).

Self-schemas allow people to efficiently process and utilize self-relevant information, but in the process, individual perception is inevitable. The process is subject to information loss due to the effects of existing knowledge, lack of knowledge, misconceptions, and/or currently held beliefs (Vickers, 2000). So, although categorization is efficient, information loss, or bias, occurs as groups are recognized rather than individuals, producing something of a group caricature. Because of this bias, the standard by which the stereotype is assessed can be reasonable or unreasonable and each individual's social stereotypes can differ (Hoffman & Pasley, 1998; Mackie et al., 1996). As people gather information and build on beliefs about their own group, or others in their society, their interpretation adds to existing understanding, and stereotypes, of their environment. Stereotypical knowledge then influences a person's beliefs and behaviors (Stangor & Schallor, 1996).

The simple categorization of individuals into labeled groups supports the idea of in-group/out-group differences and influences how later information is processed (Mackie et al., 1996). When information that is inconsistent with a currently held stereotype is encountered, that information may be contested or completely denied (Baron, Byrne, & Johnson, 1998). However, people can also hold stereotypes of groups with which they have had little information or no real contact (Stangor & Schaller, 1996). By doing so, categorization can lead to prejudice, and may influence the maintenance of stereotypes by actually converting schema inconsistent information into schema consistent information (Stangor, 2000).

Once a stereotype has become known in society, it becomes self-perpetuating and influences social behavior in that culture (Stangor & Schallor, 1996), even when individuals may not be consciously aware of the stereotype. Some stereotypes are so common and well known that they are quite often acknowledged as fact rather than belief. So, certain social groups are identified with reputations of limited ability and these reputations, regardless of merit, are "very popular among lay people" (Croizet, Dèsert, Dutrèvis, & Leyens, 2001, p. 297). Members of a prevailing group can convincingly validate the stereotypes they hold by pointing to actual behaviors of the stereotyped group. When perceivers are not conscious of their activated stereotypes they may even act in a manner that helps elicit verification of a stereotype when interacting with members of a stereotyped group (Spencer et al., 1998).

Stereotype and academic success

A possible cause of academic underachievement among stereotyped group members may be rooted more in the perception of their situation than in the individual's academic abilities or preparation (Steele, 1997). Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan (1991) report that when a

situation causes an individual to feel controlled, this in turn decreases the person's sense of autonomy and decreases academic motivation.

Stereotypes place some students at greater risk of academic underachievement than others. Steele (1999a) reports that during the 1990's the national college-dropout rate for African-Americans was approximately 25 percent higher than the rate for whites. For those who finished college, the grade-point average of African-American students was significantly lower than that of whites. Furthermore, African-American high-school seniors were almost three times more likely to score below basic achievement levels in mathematics and reading than white students (Croizet et al., 2001). But, poor academic preparation for those students fails to explain the difference. Even with equal preparation, African American students underachieve in college (Steele, 1997). A possible explanation could be stereotype threat.

Stereotype threat exists when students for which there is a prevailing negative stereotype concerning their academic abilities are in a situation that could conceivably confirm the stereotype for others (Steele, 1997). When the effect of stereotype threat was controlled, by informing students that the test they were preparing to receive would not be an indicator of their academic abilities, Steele and Aronson (1995) were able to practically eliminate the gap between black and white students. Similar results were found for others when a test was labeled as diagnostic of athletic intelligence as opposed to natural athletic ability, where there is no existing stereotype (Stone, Lynch, Sjomeling, & Darley, 1999).

However, stereotype threat is not limited to minorities (Aronson, Lustina, Good, Keough, Steele, & Brown, 1999; Croizet & Claire, 1998). Even though Dweck (1999) reported that bright girls are the highest achievers in grade school, she noted that this is before societal norms contrary to female achievement gain momentum. Women are then often stereotyped as having lesser abilities in math (Croizet et al., 2001; Quinn & Spencer, 2001). Additionally, Eisenberg, Martin, and Fabes (1996) reported that teachers were found to treat male and female students differently in a great number of studies.

Although both male and female students are objects of stereotypes, stereotypical traits attributed to female students are typically more negative (Jussim & Fleming, 1996; Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999), and members of such negatively stereotyped groups are at risk of facing greater stress and anxiety in specific settings (Aronson et al., 1999). As well as the possibility of engaging in less coursework in a specific subject in the future (Marsh & Yeung, 1997). When told that a particular exam was known to produce gender differences, females scored significantly lower than males (Spencer et al.). When the exam was replicated but introduced as having no gender discrepancy, the gender differences disappeared.

Stereotype threat

Stereotype threat refers specifically to feeling at risk of confirming a widely known negative stereotype about one's self or one's group (Steele, 1997, 1999a). Stereotypical beliefs can be quite pervasive and compelling, and perceivably "lead targets to confirm them" (Croizet et al., 2001, p. 298), especially in academic testing situations when the exam is framed as diagnostic of abilities (Osborne, 2001). Although an individual may be more apt to confirm another's expectation in novel situations (Jussim & Fleming, 1996), the potential of stereotype threat exists for someone who belongs to any group for which a negative stereotype is widely known, and that negative stereotype is perceived as relevant to the current, specific situation or academic domain (Osborne; Steele, 1997, 1998; Steele & Aronson, 1995).

The relationship between stereotype threat and academic performance is probably influenced by anxiety, frustration, evaluation apprehension, identity, self-efficacy, and distracting thoughts (Quinn & Spencer, 2001; Steele, 1997). To varying degrees, people fear being reduced to a negative stereotype (Steele, 1997, 1998) and anyone could experience anxiety at being evaluated. But, those who are members of a group for which a salient negative stereotype exists suffer a significantly increased level (Spencer et al., 1999; Steele, 1997). Even if most realize that a stereotype cannot be erased by simply surpassing stereotyped expectations, "minority students may wonder whether they are being viewed through the lens of a stereotype rather than judged on their own merit and recognized for their full potential" (Cohen, Steele, & Ross, 1999, p. 1313). As a result, operating under apprehension or fear of failure could not only threaten to expose personal limits, but reduce one to the stereotype associated with one's group, and perceivably indicate that an entire race or gender is somehow substandard (Steele, 1997).

Furthermore, one does not need to actually believe the stereotype, or be currently mindful of it to suffer stereotype threat (Sekaquaptewa & Thompson, 2003; Steele, 1997). Although threat is more likely when an individual is made aware of the "dimension of difference" (Steele, 1997, p. 618), people need not be a continuing target of a stereotype to be affected (Croizet et al., 2001; Aronson et al., 1999). The prospect of being negatively stereotyped can elicit feelings of doubt or low expectations, and hinder intellectual performance in situations where a negative stereotype is relevant (McIntyre, Paulson, & Lord, 2003; Sekaquaptewa & Thompson; Smith & White, 2001; Steele, 1997). Even though there may be subtle differences in the experience (Spencer et al., 1999), anyone, regardless of race or gender, can experience stereotype threat (Aronson et al., 1999; Croizet & Claire, 1998; Steele, 1999a).

Stereotype threat exists when a negative stereotype becomes a possible explanation or interpretation, for an event, experience, or situation that has potential bearing on the individual's self-concept (Croizet et al., 2001; Stangor, Carr, & Kiang, 1998; Steele, 1997). Even the simple recognition of the stereotype can impair academic performance in a particular domain or academic subject. Enduring stereotype threat in a specific domain can lower expectations of success and decrease motivation (Spencer et al., 1999). Individuals may then become exhausted or disillusioned in domains where the additional caution and alertness that stereotype threat creates are continuous or common (Steele, 1999a).

Stereotype threat is activated within an individual by the simple acknowledgment that a negative stereotype could apply to them in a given setting. Activation results in an "inefficiency of processing" (Steele & Aronson, 1995, p. 809), a psychological state that is well-defined by the cognitive awareness of existing stereotypes and a strong accompanying motivation to avoid being evaluated by these stereotypes (Spencer et al., 1999). Once stereotypes are activated, a "perceiver's initial confidence in their performance was no longer relevant to their task predictions" (Stangor et al., 1998, p. 1196). At this point, stereotype threat actually becomes more salient than knowledge of one's own capacity to succeed in the task at hand.

Disidentification

Negative social structures and/or events make it difficult for some students to identify with certain academic fields, and chronic stereotype threat can lead to disidentification with the subject (Steele, 1997). In order to reduce the stress, the student may begin to care less about the situations and remove themselves from academic subjects that are perceived as causing stress, eliminating the domain from their self-concept (Cohen et al., 1999; Steele, 1999b), thereby removing the threat and discomfort (Aronson et al., 1999). Consequently, "disidentification offers the retreat of not caring about the domain in relation to the self" (Steele, 1997, p. 614). When a specific subject is devalued, it has little effect on individual self-concept (Griffin, 2002; Marsh & Yeung, 1997). Other members of the stereotyped group may also support this abandonment to the extent that it becomes a group norm. Whether individual or corporate, academic disidentification is a high, but not uncommon, price to pay for comfort (Steele, 1999a).

Yet interestingly, and in opposition to prevalent stereotypes, what places students at risk of stereotype threat is not weaker academic identity with a subject but greater academic identity, and increased proficiency in the area. An individual must care about their performance in a specific domain to be bothered by the potential of being stereotyped in that domain (Griffin, 2002; Steele, 1997, 1998). It is possible for any student, in any subject, to experience stereotype threat

(Aronson et al., 1999), but it is, in fact, the most skilled, self-assured, achievement-oriented students who are the most impaired by stereotype threat (Steele, 1999b).

How can educators address stereotype threat?

Explicit feedback could moderate stereotype threat. Since continuous stereotype threat in a specific domain can lower expectations of success, possibly leading to disidentification, it would seem that expectations could play a mediational role in a threatening situation. Although, some research does not support this supposition (e.g. Sekaquaptewa & Thompson, 2003; Spencer et al., 1999), high standards are a natural part of effective teaching and just, critical feedback should be given in the belief that the student is capable of reaching those standards (Steele, 1999c). However, for students under stereotype threat, such standards and feedback must be made explicit. Test instruction that calls attention to intellectual ability cause difficulty in stereotyped test-takers (Croizet & Claire, 1998). Even remedial work may be misperceived as a trigger for stereotype threat (Dweck, 1999; Steele, 1997). However, when feedback is intentional and specific, students are more likely to trust and respond to the criticism (Cohen et al., 1999; Steele, 1999c). Feedback is then perceived as non-diagnostic (Cohen et al.). Educators should seek to counter stereotypes by communicating a clear belief in each student's abilities and chances for success through persistence.

Constructive modeling can be an efficient and effective way of teaching (Bandura, 1986). Susceptible students are aware that teachers and administrators in their school are conscious of stereotypes and might be suspect of their aptitude and their future (Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995). For instance, female teachers, as role models, may inadvertently strengthen the "good woman stereotype" or "instruct girls about the necessity of renouncing the self… in the name of being good women" (Gilligan, 1993, as cited by Harter, Waters, & Whitesell, 1997, p.157). Certainly the same is true for male teachers and the socialized ideals and expectations for male students. However, teachers can guard against their own language and actions that could encourage gender, or ethnic, stereotypes and promote open, on-task discussion in the classroom. McIntyre et al. (2003) suggest that reminding female test takers of women's accomplishments in the relevant field could moderate stereotype threat. Further deliberate efforts in modeling can be directed toward exposing stereotypes as assumption and viewing tests as non-reflective of race or gender. Teachers should seek to be continually aware of the historic disadvantages of stereotyping students and consistently aware of their role as a model in the classroom.

Wise schooling could also help eliminate stereotype threat. Wise, in this respect, reflects "a manner that discourages expectations and attributions of racial bias and that minimizes stereotype threat" (Cohen et al., 1999, p. 1303). Research indicates that

a lessening of student's anxiety levels, improves academic performance of potentially stereotyped students (Quinn & Spencer, 2001; Sekaquaptewa & Thompson, 2003), and helps to avoid the resulting process of disidentification. Steele (1997) strongly suggests more optimistic relationships between teachers and students, focusing more on challenging students with realistic achievement goals instead of on academic problems and failures that could discourage or demean students, and the purposeful creation of a sense of *belonging* within the school for these students. Such a practice may prove helpful for students who face a subculture that marginalizes academic accomplishments. The belonging of the student is now assumed and not suspected (Steele, 1997).

Conclusion

The cause of underachievement among members of negatively stereotyped groups seems to be rooted more in the situation than in the individual. With the fact that most studies pertaining to stereotype threat have been conducted with college students, the quantity and quality of research seems irrefutable; **s**tereotype threat lowers the performance of negatively stereotyped college students on tests. It has consistently been shown that the removal of stereotype threat would close the academic performance gap that exists between races (Steele, 1997; Stone et al., 1999; Aronson et al., 1999), genders **(**McIntyre et al., 2003; Quinn & Spencer, 2001; Spencer et al., 1999; Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995), and socioeconomic status (Croizet et al., 2001).

Not to overlook the many valuable facets of this body of research, but two points appear especially prominent and subject to change. First, it seems clear that in order to understand people, as opposed to a stereotype, one must seek to understand the situation that surrounds them and their perception of the situation. Secondly, stereotype threat may cause an individual to suffer effects similar to stigma because its power is derived from the same desire to maintain a positive, competent self-image (Aronson et al., 1999). Stigma can result from any "attribute that is deeply discrediting" (Goffman, 1963, p.80). Saylor (1990) views stigma as the disagreement between expected attributes and actual attributes, where such a difference could exclude an individual from having a *normal* social identity and social acceptance. Vickers (2000) portrays stigma as a deeply held shame. Elaborating this issue of shame, Scrambler (1984) described "the disgrace associated with certain conditions, attributes, traits, or forms of behavior" (p.203), where such an individual is "essentially imperfect" (p.204).

Reducing stereotype threat improves the performance of the members of a stigmatized group and virtually eliminates the gap between groups. When students are influenced by stereotype threat in the classroom, they are more likely to confirm what they already believe than they are to engage in critical reflection and learning as a change-of-mind

experience. Perhaps it is also here that "wise schooling" and "explicit feedback could moderate stereotype threat." The simple act of letting students know that the instructor is aware of stereotypes but does not rely on them could serve to reveal and weaken the threat. Arguably of more value would be making students aware of the existence of stereotype threat, allowing them to name and move beyond any anxiety. In each instance, student and teacher awareness of the existence and influence of stereotype threat weakens negative effects.

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