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Two Women Professors Search for Tools to Teach Social Justice

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Background of the Study

We came to the University as new faculty in August of 2001 and were hired to teach in two different colleges. We eventually came together, fueled by a mutual interest in issues of social justice. In a faculty development workshop, we began to uncover what was really important to us as professors, particularly at this small, private university situated in a major, urban, multicultural city. With the hiring of a new president, the institution was going through changes. The new administrative protocol seemed to be larger classes and stricter admission standards. We heard that admission criteria would be raised thereby limiting access to higher education for many students who have been educated in the city's public schools. After our experiences in teaching at the urban campus, we believed that those students, mainly students of color, did not possess the prerequisite skills and/or test-taking abilities that higher standards would demand. We also heard that the university was concerned about enrollment. Class sizes needed to reach a minimum number, necessitating cancellation of some sections and combining others. We were concerned that these new planned changes would reduce access for those students who generally have more difficulty gaining admission to academia. Once admitted, larger classes would reduce the personal attention that many of these students want and need. The possibility that the university would be taking this new direction concerned us. Our ideas about what social justice has meant for the university and what it should continue to look like in the future began to take shape.

We knew that the university was founded on principles of social justice. The university's history substantiated what we felt was foundational to the institution. Its very creation in 1945 was "considered an experiment in the imagination" of the city (Gross, 2003). According to Gross, the city was segregated by race and religion. Discrimination was pervasive in social organizations, business, housing, and higher education. The college that was the university's forerunner was no different (Gross, 2003). The key event that shaped the university was in 1945 when the college president resigned rather than support practices of discrimination by the college board of directors. Faculty and students voted to break the institution's ties to the governing board and walked out. From this crucible of racial and religious defiance and a commitment to social justice, our institution of higher learning was born (Gross, 2003).

Many institutions of higher education claim to support diversity and equal opportunity. We feel this important value must be supported and embedded in institutional practices. We want to insure that social justice is treated seriously as part of the university's pedagogical practices. It must not be glossed over to meet standards or simply included in a mission statement for the purposes of satisfying an accrediting body. Thus, we decided to investigate which pedagogical tools would contribute to raising student consciousness about social justice issues. We offered our courses to different populations since we taught at both the university's urban and suburban campuses, and at a corporate site. We had observed the student differences in our classrooms—gender, race, ethnicity, and class. As we worked to enhance and guide student learning in this multicultural population, we saw that students needed to be challenged to appreciate similarities and differences.

Purpose of the Study

One of the promises of higher education is that instruction cultivates critical thinking and insight into social reality, and, ultimately, contributes to a more just society. The disappointment is that coursework does little to help students begin the process of critically examining their own thinking, feelings, and desires. The purpose of our study was to discover how university coursework acquaints students with the issues of democratic community and social justice, to help them begin to examine the issues more critically, and provide students with an impetus to work for change in their communities.

The study was initially conducted in one course in the college of education's educational leadership department during the summer semester 2003. It then continued during the fall 2004 semester in four courses: two courses in the Department of Educational Leadership with two sections of Social Foundations of Diverse Communities. The other two courses were in the bachelor's of general studies program: ProSeminar in Critical Skills and Diversity in the Workplace. The study asked the following questions:

1. In one semester of coursework designed to acquaint students with issues of social justice, do students experience a change in their:

- Definition of social justice?
- Recognition of practices relevant to social justice in their organizations?
- Sense of responsibility for contributing to change in the distribution of justice?

2. What specific type of pedagogy promoted movement toward change?

Theoretical Framework

We have chosen the framework developed by Bigelow, Christensen, Karp, Miner, and Peterson (1994). Their "social justice classroom" (p. 4) guides our choice of pedagogy for the study. Consistent with their elements of the equitable, socially-just classroom, we designed our courses so they were: 1) grounded in the lives of the students, 2) critical, 3) multicultural, antiracist, pro-justice, 4) participatory and experiential, 5) hopeful, joyful, kind, and visionary, 6) activist, 7) academically rigorous, and 8) culturally sensitive (p. 4-5).

Another framework that guided our focus for cultivating critical thinking in learners is that of Paul and Elder (2002). They suggest that to be a critical thinker, learners must develop their abilities to monitor their egocentric and sociocentric tendencies. They must examine critically their point of view and conformity to the thinking of their social group, such as nation, culture, profession, religion, family, or peer group. Paul and Elder suggest that the mind has three distinctive functions; thinking, feeling, and wanting. A dynamic interrelationship of these functions is constantly communicated about what is going on in our lives, our feelings about those events, and the things we want to pursue – where to put our energy. Paul and Elder also contend, "We need to develop critical thinking skills in dialogical settings to achieve genuine fair-mindedness. If critical thinking is learned simply as atomic skills separate from the empathetic practice of entering into points of view that we are fearful of or hostile toward, we will simply find additional means of rationalizing our prejudices" (p.340).

Methods

To answer the research questions, five major activities defined the study. In addition to the activities or pedagogical elements, students responded to a pre- and post-course survey that gathered information on their thinking, feelings, and desires about social justice in their daily lives, particularly in their work lives. Questions in the survey revolved around the issues of defining social justice, recognizing relevant practices in the workplace, and responsible action for change. The pre-course survey was completed on the first day of class and the post-course survey was completed on the last day of class to identify substantive changes. The post-course survey also asked for feedback on the course design to determine what specific pedagogical elements contributed to deeper understanding.

Pedagogical Elements

The study focused on five major pedagogical elements that were: group activities consisting of focus and roundtable groups; a set of guidelines for classroom discussion; the GRECSO model; reflective journaling; and selected texts and readings. We describe each of the pedagogical elements below.

Focus and Roundtable Group Activities

The focus group activity specifically allowed student teams to explore the group's thinking, feelings, and desires concerning issues of social justice. Trigger questions allowed students to dialogue with one another and negotiate and construct meanings while they critically examine their points of view. All focus groups used the same set of trigger

questions but the professor of the class chose the specific medium of videos to view or short articles to read and then discuss in focus groups. Readings were taken from *Rethinking Our Classrooms: Teaching for Equity and Social Justice* (Bigelow, Christiansen, Karp, Miner & Peterson, 1994). Selected videos represented race, gender, sexual orientation, class, and disability.

The Roundtables were whole-class activities to “explore a new way of meeting together to think about shared ideals of equity, appreciation of differences, shared leadership, authenticity, values clarification, and self-reflective listening and speaking” (Gabriele, 2003). A facilitator read a script organized as follows: introduction, purpose, format, guidelines for speaking, guidelines for listening and responding. For example, in the College of Education courses we used a Roundtable after students viewed the video, *Educating Peter* (HBO Primetime, 1993). The video focused on the full inclusion of a student with Down Syndrome in a third grade general education class. In the University College Program at the corporate site, three Roundtable sessions were conducted following the viewing of each of three videos. The professor facilitated the process following the video on race, and students conducted the process following videos on gender and sexual orientation. The students recorded their reactions to the session in their journals in class immediately after the Roundtable sessions on the videos.

Guidelines for Classroom Discussion

A set of classroom guidelines to shape discussion was distributed on the first day of class and referred to throughout the semester. These eight guidelines (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2002) were developed by Lynn Weber, director of the women’s studies program at the University of South Carolina and first published in *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 18 (Spring/Summer 1990). The guidelines were intended to focus the students on key issues of social justice and help students define, recognize and take responsibility for social justice in their own workplaces and communities.

GRECSO Model

GRECSO (Dalmadge, 2003) highlights six socially-constructed categories of gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation plus the category of disability. The GRECSO model was introduced early in the semester as an interactive process for exploring social construction of diversity categories. In class, before the model is introduced, we asked students to write their definition of social justice. The acronym GRECSO is written on the board horizontally with each term written out. A horizontal line is drawn and students are asked to come up with the traditional categories for each of the terms. As the categories of privilege and power are placed on top, the model ends up looking something like this.

| Gender | Race | Ethnicity | Class | Sexual Orientation | Ability |
|--------|-----------------------|-----------------|----------|--------------------|----------|
| Male | White | American | Have | Heterosexual | Abled |
| Female | Black/People of color | Alien/Foreigner | Have not | Homosexual | Disabled |

As the model was drawn on the blackboard, students were asked, “Where do you place yourself on this grid? What do you notice about the values society assigns to the different categories?” After the first presentation and discussion of the model, students were asked if their definition of social justice had changed, and if so, to rewrite it. We addressed the GRECSO model throughout the semester to promote critical thinking about the categories in relation to students’ personal contexts.

Reflective Journals

Students in all the courses submitted reflective entries in their offline journals or online in the course website group discussion forums. Giancarlo and Facione (2002) contend that reflective journals provide an opportunity for metacognitive self-correction:

Rather than mindlessly repeating one’s own errors of reasoning, or being misled by the errors of others, one is able, through meta-cognition, alone or with the help of others, to reflect on one’s own thinking. By applying critical thinking skills to the products of one’s own critical thinking—namely the judgments formed—one is able to analyze, interpret, explain, and evaluate one’s thinking by the standards of good reasoning. (p.18)

In some cases we asked students to record their reflections on readings and dialogues in a journal that they brought to each class meeting. At the end of the semester, students scanned their journals and composed one-page conclusions reflecting on the themes and issues that emerged in relationship to leadership, diversity, and/or social justice.

Texts and Selected Readings

We were careful to choose texts for all courses that were particularly relevant for social justice issues. For example, in the summer semester, since the course was concerned with special education topics for educational leaders, the major text addressed how leaders create a caring and effective education for all students. And in the fall semester the course, ProSeminar on Critical Skills, had a text that focused on teaching the standards and elements of critical thinking that lead students to personal and social consciousness. Additional readings included articles that focused on race as social construction and the concept of white privilege.

Results

The guiding research question for the study was concerned with whether or not students experienced change in their ideas about social justice. We decided to look at change in three ways: no change, some change, or major change. We coded all data together and talked extensively about whether students' responses constituted change and if so, what degree of change. Our data came from survey responses, transcripts of audio taped focus groups and roundtable activities, postings online and offline, and reflective journals. We also were interested in how students answered questions on the post-course survey and whether they liked or disliked the pedagogical elements introduced during the summer and the fall semesters. Students also mentioned the pedagogical elements in other forums, like the audiotapes, reflective journals, and online and offline postings. We included these in the analysis.

Definition of Social Justice

To answer the first research question, we explored change in three areas. First we asked: Did students experience a change in their definition of social justice? The data from the pre- and post-course surveys provide starting and ending statements by the students. However, the richer data was gathered from the opportunities that students had to explore ideas when dialoguing with each other, when recording reflections in their journals and in recordings of focus group activities. We analyzed the pilot study's pre- and post-course surveys. They indicated that students began to question their belief systems regarding inclusive education and to see possibilities of achieving social justice for minority groups in their school settings. The study also revealed that students entered the course with undeveloped ideas about social justice issues. For example, on the pre-course survey, one question asked students for their personal definition of social justice. Of the twenty students in the summer class, eleven responded with the idea of "equality." Other ideas that emerged were the concepts of "fairness," "equity," and "opportunity." A few students were unsure of their definition of social justice. One student responded to the definition question with "Not sure. People treated fairly in society?"

Clearly, students began to construct their own meaning of social justice as evidenced by one student's journal entry on the course website.

Since our first class, and the GRECSO exercise, I have found myself reflecting on some of these issues. I find myself thinking about [student name] and what it must be like to be the only person of color in the class. I have wondered what it might be like if the situation were reversed, and I was the "only" white, suburban in a class of urban teachers of color. How would I feel? How would I handle that situation? I think of what it must be like for (student names) to hear us talk about the "problems" in our schools where we have so much in terms of support and resources and compensation.

The course was designed to deepen student understanding of social justice. For example, in the pre-course survey, several students defined social justice simply as equality. For example, "Everyone is treated equal and given the same opportunity," and "Equal treatment for various social groups." To introduce students to a different view of fair and equitable treatment, they read about and discussed the concept of a need-based system of distributing justice, i.e., everyone gets what is needed to succeed (Thousand, Nevin, & McNeil, 2000). After comparing and contrasting their initial definitions of social justice with this need-based system, students deepened their formulation of ideas leading to a more nuanced definition of social justice.

One person's definition of social justice in the pre-course survey was: "Social justice is when the job goes to the most qualified candidate after he or she earned it." In the post-course survey, the same person said, "Social justice is when people have equality of opportunity." We identified this as a clear shift in focus. Another substantive change occurred when one person in the pre-survey defined social justice as the equal treatment of "people that exist in the same environment but have different social interests." In the post-survey the same student defined social justice as "having equitable learning and access opportunities regardless of race, gender, age." The student's definition had sharpened and acknowledged the categories in the GRECSO model.

A salient example of how students changed their definition of social justice occurred in one of the focus group activities. In one group of four, there was some discussion about what social justice really meant in the context of *Seeing Color: A Review of White Teacher* (Delpit, 1994). The point in the reading is that if people say they are color blind, they see people

as all needing the same things, and they miss the point of diversity. This is certainly a departure from a needs based system of distributive justice where everyone might need something different to be successful (because of differences relating to GRECSO). Students began their discussion by talking mainly about race and the need for white teachers to have “color blindness” in their classes of students. After a thoughtful discussion, the group decided it was not colorblindness that was desirable, but actually being able to use diversity as an asset rather than a deficit.

The discussion forum on the course website was another opportunity for students to reflect on their definitions of social justice. A white male recognized his own ‘privilege’ after reading the American Anthropological Association’s Statement on “Race” (1998).

I guess being a white male does give me advantages that I never thought about. Every year we sit down as a class and look at the faces of all the Presidents on the wall. I ask what the kids see. At the start some of the kids say things like, “They are old.” Soon it becomes apparent, usually to the girls, that they are all men. Then it is noticed they are all white. This is what every minority has to overcome. What every woman has to overcome. In this country it [is] still assumed or at least voted [on] that only white men can be president. That is over 200 years of precedent. That’s what we are dealing with...that’s a lot of history (COE student, personal communication, July 28, 2003).

Recognition of Relevant Practices

Continuing to explore the question of change, we asked: Did students experience a change in their ability to recognize practices relevant to social justice in their organizations? Again we coded pre- and post-course surveys looking for evidence of minor or major changes, or no change. In response to the question, “How do your organization’s current practices agree or disagree with your definition?” one student responded in the pre-survey: “I think all students are treated pretty fair.” In the post-survey the same student said, “I think it [the organization] does what is fair for the most people and most economical, not necessarily the best for all.” Some students did not respond to questions in the pre-survey, but had strong answers to questions in the post-survey. We interpreted this to mean that students experienced a significant change during the course. For example, one student, who identified himself as an educator for 25 years and who now serves as a guidance counselor, did not respond to the pre-survey question regarding relevant practices. In the post-survey he said, “We segregate students of low ability and elevate students of high ability (based on narrow standards).”

Some students developed their ideas more deeply about issues of inclusive practices in the pilot study within their organizations as evidenced by one student who said in the pre-survey, “I believe we adhere to this [practices relevant to social justice issues] – at least try.” In the post-survey, the student said, “Somewhat – it is too easy for a teacher to say this student is holding the rest of my students back. And then the student is dropped from your class. Interventions with the teacher should be made.”

Analyzing the focus group transcripts provided another example of how students view relevant practices of social justice in their schools. For example, a group discussing the article, *Whose standard? Teaching standard English* (Christensen, 1994), came to the agreement that teachers need to hear their students’ stories first, before they begin to correct non-standard language. The idea in their discussion was that teachers need to make students feel that they are worthy and have a lot to say before teachers begin to correct writing errors. In response to a trigger question regarding which social justice issues will have the most long-term implications, the team agreed the long-term consequences would be a sense of belonging for students, opening up to others, sharing, and willingness to learn the standard. “The first thing they need to know is what they [students] have to say has value and that it is important.” In another example, after reading *Why students should study history: An interview with Howard Zinn* (Miner, 1994), a team recognized that the one-sided teaching of history was slanted to the European point of view. Students thought the social justice issue here was to recognize that “there is another side of history.” The team agreed that changes in the way history was presented in textbooks would benefit everyone.

Reflective journaling provided another source example of recognizing relevant practices. During an online discussion forum two women talked about racism in their culture as youngsters. One said she was raised in her church to look at herself and her church friends as Greeks and everyone else as Americans. She said, “It just goes to show how unexpectedly and easily racism pops up in every culture.” The other woman said they were not allowed to talk to the Catholics next door even though they were the same race.

Sense of Responsibility

The final part of the research asked: Did students experience change in their sense of responsibility for contributing to change in the distribution of justice? We did not find much evidence of this type of change. Possibly we need to reframe the question on the survey. More importantly, we need to directly address this subject more during class discussions. The

data from the surveys and reflective journals produced more information than the focus groups about whether or not students experienced a shift in their sense of responsibility for change. In the survey results, one person, who identified herself as a science teacher, initially thought that she took responsibility through her modifications for one student who was “handicapped,” and who was already identified as someone with special needs. In the post-survey she said, “I realize now that it is my job to seek out ways to accommodate students so they can stay in my class and be successful with the proper support and encouragement.” We saw this person making a major shift because, after the course, she viewed inclusive practices as her individual responsibility and not that of the system.

In the online reflective journal postings one student wrote about practices regarding the homeless.

Those of us who look for real answers appear to be radicals because public life is filled with a great concern for appearances . . . there are many making money tearing down ghetto high rises and converting them to condos. Also if the problem is out of sight, then it is out of mind. That is why we [police department] clear the homeless from the street and the city when a visiting official’s motorcade is scheduled to pass. It makes it easier to give the appearance that we are solving the problem. In reality we are just moving, hiding the mess.

Another student wrote in his reflective journal regarding his sense of responsibility for practices in his organization. He questioned how inclusion would work in a system of limited resources. “Perhaps we will have to give up some things in order to have a world of full inclusion in our schools. Maybe then it would be a conscious choice.” In another section of his journal, this same student felt he went through “a real paradigm shift” during the class. His epiphany came when he read another student’s ideas about inclusion. He said,

To me, her idea of focusing on best practices or what is best for each student . . . and not forcing the outcome—or making inclusion the goal—made a lot of sense to me. . . . the outcomes of such an approach might very well be some form of increased inclusion.

Another student’s reflections on responsibility began with a quote from Maya Angelou, “We do the best we can with what we know. When we know better, we do better.” In a direct response to the Angelou quote, the student went on to say:

That starts with ourselves and is about knowing better our prejudices, our biases, and the subtle hidden baggage we carry. The next step perhaps, is to help those we love, our children, and our students, to know better—not just to know how to spell, to add, and to read, but to know themselves.

In the summer semester, where the focus was on inclusion as a social justice issue, the students in the educational leadership program were all public school teachers. We did see a shift in their thinking about how their schools treat students with disabilities. They seemed more aware of the issues at the end of the course regarding inclusive practices, and they seemed better able to evaluate such practices after the course content.

Pedagogy Promoting Change

We wanted to know how students felt about each of the pedagogical elements and specifically which of the elements promoted movement toward change. The course evaluation asked this question directly and was the main source of data to answer this question.

Activities (Focus groups and Roundtable)

Comments about focus groups were positive as evidenced by the following examples: “I truly enjoyed the idea of the focus group.” “I would have enjoyed the opportunity to participate in it more.” “I found it quite easy to participate in this forum.” “This was an important exercise for my group because we were struggling as a team. This gave us an opportunity to really work together.” “Good tool—it helped me understand my own feelings better along with those of my teammate.” Student comments on the course evaluations were equally positive for the Roundtable. In fact, two of the educational leadership students who are school counselors are using the Roundtable in their high schools with various groups of students with much success.

Guidelines for Classroom Discussion

The data were consistently positive. Comments such as, “great—group respectful,” “excellent,” “needed,” “appropriate,” were noted on the course evaluations. Referring to the guidelines, a student said, “Much needed. These guidelines helped us stay focused on the subject as opposed to following our own emotions wherever we were led.” Another student felt that “it was nice to have a guideline so discussions were fair to everyone.” One negative comment had to do with the

belief that the guidelines constrained intellectual risks and one student felt they were unnecessary.

GRECSO

More than half of the comments on GRECSO in the final course evaluations from the summer semester were positive. For example, students said that GRECSO “really opened my eyes to such issues on the first day.” Other comments included “...opened the way I look at certain situations;” “liked it, thought about using it in group [counseling];” “magnified issues not thought of;” and “informative, eye-opening.”

In the online reflective journal, one student wrote,

[I] appreciate the thought about GRECSO. After realizing during the first class that I was ‘above the line’ on that exercise, I began to wonder what things I cannot see precisely because of being raised a white male, etc. There must be a world of ideas and feeling I can’t even comprehend and, as a result, I suspect there are a multitude of “institutionalized” issues which continue to benefit me even though I don’t know it. Kinda like being a fish in water.

In the same student’s offline reflective journal, he indicated that GRECSO ideas were a powerful representation of “popular opinion” and had a great influence on him. “Perhaps these [my] questions and perspectives are a result of being raised in the U.S. in and around middle to upper-class families. Basically, this whole idea, GRECSO seems to have taken on a life of its own for me.”

In a different offline reflective journal, the same student wrote:

I think the key to moving ahead is getting a better sense of where each of us is now. The kind of thinking and self-exploration that comes with exercises like the GRECSO chart can help with that. This class has made me realize that we carry with us many subtle biases and expectations that we ourselves don’t even see.

Reflective Journal (Online and Offline)

Students welcomed the chance to write in their offline reflective journals in the pilot study. In the course evaluations, students said that the journal activity “connected my personal experience to the content (social justice).” “[I] loved them, keeps me grounded.” “I loved these and wish I had more time to reflect.” “A very good experience—encouraged me to process on a personal level.” The negative comments from students indicated they did not want their journals to be evaluated for a grade. Even though they had a rubric for their reflective journals, they stated that they felt their responses were personal and their own and “how could they be graded?” Some students would have preferred sharing in person for “authentic assessment/reaction.”

One online assignment involved students posting their reflections on the reading and then posting a response to a classmate’s reflection. Positive comments about this assignment included, “I loved them. I enjoyed reading the reflections of others. Also I enjoyed how others responded to my thoughts.” Another student liked reflection and felt it allowed her “to express my feelings and actually see how this is affecting me now.” “I really enjoyed this exercise...gave me an opportunity to think about the way I think.” Other comments regarding thought processes were, “Really a positive experience, helped me ‘feel’ my thoughts.” “Good to be able to look back at how my thoughts and process has changed over the class time.”

Texts and Readings (Web and Print)

In the course evaluations, students indicated that the texts and readings were “very helpful, especially Capper.” [The text (Capper, Frattura, & Keys, 2000)] “made me aware of many social justice issues.” “[The] handouts were great.” “Web articles were terrific, concise but helpful.” “People First [Language article (Snow, 1998)]—good read.”

Students in the ProSeminar in Critical Skills class felt that the critical thinking text (Paul & Elder, 2002) was interesting and informative although slightly repetitive. One student said, “I have actually recommended it in my work group as well as to friends.” Online presentation material received positive comments from students.

Conclusion

University professors share the responsibility of preparing citizens for participation in a just society. Given this responsibility, course design must promote critical thinking among students who are regularly confronting diversity and complex social changes in the workplace and in the larger community. This paper reports on a study conducted at a small Midwestern comprehensive university. The study attempted to isolate the value of particular pedagogical tools and

strategies in promoting students' critical thinking about social justice issues, problems, and concerns. Two professors from two different departments of the university collaborated on creating and conducting the study initially in one course and continuing the study in four other courses designed with this goal in mind. In this paper we have described student reactions and how the five pedagogical elements contributed to the growth of student thinking, feelings, and desires about issues of social justice.

As anticipated we concluded that overall the five pedagogical tools helped students deepen their thinking and insight into social justice issues in connection to their own communities. In all the courses, we found evidence that students began to question their belief systems regarding the key socially constructed categories we focused on: gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and disability.

We were hoping to identify an array of instructional tools and strategies that could be combined in different ways for the course and context that would broadly contribute to student consciousness and action for social justice. We knew from the research that the educational community favored certain constructivist tools and educational pedagogy to engender reflection and growth for individual students. We knew from experience that some of those tools used in other courses led to deep reflection and growth. Our deliberate study of the bridge between theory and practice confirmed that students also find these to be valuable tools for consciousness raising and connection to personal circumstance and practice.

There are many unanswered questions and areas to explore in the effort to teach for social justice as a natural part of any class. As researchers we are interested in exploring the specifics of various pedagogical tools and developing them completely. Some of the ones we have chosen for this study have a solid base of experience. Reflective journals are quite popular now throughout the educational system. We would like to do more work with them in our classes and refine the process for our students. The Roundtable activity is the pet project of a small group of researchers in social systems design and we would also like to work with these researchers to refine this valuable tool. Focus groups are only just beginning to be used for educational purposes rather than for commercial functions. All the tools deserve more research and leave many questions about their role in social justice unanswered. However, since our study, we have been using and have found these pedagogical tools useful in other classes. Whenever discussion of issues of social justice crop up in our classes, we find GRECSO and the Roundtable useful.

One final area that may be more critical than any is the question of context. In our study, we gathered data in the urban setting, the suburban setting, and the corporate setting. We have ideas about the differences in students' backgrounds and experiences among those settings and how those communities reflect the GRECSO model. These differences have a critical bearing on how successful the tools can be. These factors warrant further study in order to make a contribution to our understanding. We clearly need additional research on tools that help educators walk the talk of social justice.

Epilogue

Marlon Riggs (1993), in his documentary, "Black Is . . . Black Ain't," weaves the metaphor of his community cooking up a Louisiana gumbo to talk about his experience with diversity. His culinary metaphor works for our story also. Unlike a lot of recipes that have one right outcome, the gumbo is something that grows out of what you have in the community kitchen; who brings the ingredients, what ingredients are brought, and who will be doing the eating. Some in the community are more experienced with making gumbo, and they facilitate the process, but everyone contributes to the cooking and the ingredients. The cooks create the basic roux to bind those ingredients together. The roux must be tended carefully for if it gets too hot, it will burn; a perfectly browned base is desired to make a tasty gumbo. In the Riggs documentary, people add fresh herbs and hot peppers along with the other ingredients. The whole thing is stirred until the flavors combine and are cooked to perfection. The gumbo is rich and varied and totally unique to that community. The community feast is over when everyone goes away satisfied that much was given and was eaten.

If our university classrooms are community kitchens and we are the experienced chefs, we must insure that our students have contributed to that social justice gumbo in a pot they have an investment in. As professors, we may be from different departments and disciplines, but we need the same pots and cooking tools to support that interactive learning experience in our courses. We need a selection of effective pedagogical tools and documents that guide rather than dictate the learner's experience. Just like keeping a careful watch on the roux, we must be watchful to see that learning occurs in the social testing and sharing of ideas. New points of view spice up the learning experiences and students make the authentic connection between theory and practice. In our opinion, that is what gives them something substantive to chew on. If human beings are basically interested in learning from each other while realizing that everyone has a unique contribution to bring to the pot, they will have something worthwhile to take away from the classroom to practice in their communities. In a related discussion forum on one course website, a student suggested, "If people were like gumbo, the roux would be the unique qualities of each individual (diversity) and their experiences. Everyone and everything that is contributed (diversity) makes for a good pot of gumbo."

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