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Reflections on Teaching: "Gender, Race, & Class"
Author(s): Joy James
Source: *Feminist Teacher*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Spring 1991), pp. 9-15
Published by: University of Illinois Press
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/40535461
Accessed: 02-05-2019 00:07 UTC

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Reflections on Teaching: "Gender, Race, & Class"

By Joy James

The phrase "gender, race, and class" has become a litany in the attempt to transform Eurocentric patriarchal studies into multicultural, nonracist/sexist, nonelitist education. Last year as a visiting scholar at a white, mid-western, "public ivy league" university, I became part of a team-teaching core for a first-year required class, "Gender, Race, & Class: Perspectives on Oppression, Power, and Liberation." "Gender, Race, and Class" was constructed with both a multicultural approach and an interdisciplinary approach (four professors, three African American women and one European American man with degrees in social geography, psychology, political philosophy, and art/architecture). The objective of our course was to teach 100 first-year students to recognize and analyze racism, hetero/sexism, and classism in both themselves and society: i.e., to question the foundations of their thought and culture.

As an African American womanist educator from New York City, my previous academic experience consisted of teaching ethics at a New York City Seminary to African and Latin American working-class, middle-aged church activists. I had taught about structural oppression before but never to a population — European American, upper middle-class — so invested in privilege stemming from others' oppressions. My apprehension about teaching this course to such students also led me to be cautious (if not pessimistic) about my own expectations of the class' receptivity to the material and its willingness and ability to engage in critical analysis. I did not want to participate in the ridicule and contempt directed at white students which I had witnessed months earlier at a women's studies conference panel.[1] Nor did I want to become so alienated by and disgusted with students' racism and sexism that my teaching "shut down."

Team-Teaching

In liberal programs which, in theory, grapple with the issues of domination and distortion in education, there is little active support from faculty/administration for maintaining racial, sexual and class biases. The passive support for or reinforcement of race, class, gender biases is often pervasive. Such passive support is evident in the syllabi of Eurocentric male faculty in which womanist/feminist critiques and analyses are absent or marginalized; it is also evident in Eurocentric feminist faculty syllabi which use the works of women of color as addendums and fail to analyze the racialization of gender and racial identity in all women.

Traditionalist colleagues ignore the validity of "different ways of knowing" altogether.[2] Acceptance of nonhegemonic approaches to knowledge, including the interrelatedness of doing and knowing, was not uniformly shared by all faculty teaching the course. The most reluctant member of the team[3] felt that students should not be required to participate in anti-racist/sexist research activities, because such action might contradict their political beliefs (i.e., their racism and sexism). Faculty unquestioningly accepted the beneficial role of activity outside the classroom in chemistry, physics, or architecture (½ of this class majored in architecture) where students are expected to act in ways that deepen their understanding of theoretical models, but were resistant to applying the same standard within this course. (In private interviews, my students informed me that what they resented was not the request to act outside the classroom [which they did in other classes], but the request to engage in anti-racist or anti-sexist action.) This double standard indicates the racial and sexual politics of the professorial worldview and places action confronting bigotry as outside of the learning process. Patricia Hill Collins describes the ideology of this worldview:

> Several requirements typify positivist methodological approaches. First, research methods generally require a distancing of the researcher as a "subject" with full human subjectivity and objectifying the "object" of study. A second requirement is the absence of emotions from the research process. Third, ethics and values are deemed inappropriate in the research process, either as the reason for scientific inquiry or as part of the research process itself. Finally, adversarial debates, whether written or oral, become the preferred method of ascertaining truth — the arguments that can withstand the greatest assault and survive intact become the strongest truths. (1989, p. 754)

Epistemology and ethics

Rejecting the claim of education as value-neutral, we employed a theory of knowing and "extracurricular" activities to promote interdisciplinary study; critical thinking which challenges racist, sexist, classist and nationalist biases; and, students' active rather than passive role in what we hoped would be a humanistic learning process. In this learning process, in which class, race, and gender biases were stumbling blocks, ethical action — activity in which the objectives are moral and egalitarian consequences — became indispensable.

In our epistemology, we reject the dichotomy between knowing and doing as a false dichotomy. The theory of knowledge presented to the students, who were asked to approach learning with a critical mind and an activist outlook, was that only when you *act* upon the material studied can you say that you know it, and so become an

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integrated person. Students were asked to apply Paulo Freire's concept of "integrative" vs. "adaptive" to themselves. Freire defines the adaptive person as the conformist determined by socialization, with limited choices and capacity for critical thought; the integrative person transcends imposed limitations and acts in the world in such a way that deterministic socialization is negated.

Human knowing consists of a four part process — experience, reflection, judgement, and action.[4] This is the process by which people (knowingly or unknowingly) learn. Action is indispensable to the learning process: one knows how to ride a bicycle or drive a car not from merely reading books about bicycles or cars, but from riding or driving one as well (more in-depth knowledge is derived from constructing or building one). One knows how to live, learn and teach without patriarchal, white supremacist, or class elitist assumptions by doing activities that confront and diminish racism, sexism, and classism.[5]

This four-part process organized the course. We chose readings to stimulate and challenge students to expand their experiences in race, class, and gender relations. Their reflections in daily/weekly journal entries facilitated expanding their worldviews. Through judging and participation in "active engagements" (implementing projects they designed to demystify and challenge oppressive relationships), they inserted themselves physically into the subject. The course was a wholistic approach to learning, where experience, reflection, judgement of personal and cultural values, and collective and individual action was central to the course's progression.

In their active engagement assignments, students designed their own "direct actions," which included: a video asking students whether they thought racism existed on campus; a posterboard critiquing sexist advertising of women; a letter petition for the university to change the name of its athletics teams from "Redskins"; and organizing around the impending Ku Klux Klan and Nazi Skinheads rally to be staged in the local town.

Language and political thinking

Early in the semester the difficulties in critiquing pervasive and denied practices of institutionalized oppression without a shared, supportive language became apparent. We then introduced the class to the concepts of social philosophers as models for a political language and thinking that demystifies dominant norms. We began searching for a common political language by examining definitions of political terms central in discussions of oppression and liberation (students had already acknowledged the need for a common political language in their group work). The class was given handouts with definitions of "paradigm," "power," "hegemony," and "ideology." Since these definitions were explained as simplified or working definitions, rather than comprehensive and complete, students were encouraged to eventually read works in which these terms are extensively discussed. I found that the following working definitions enhanced students' political vocabulary and ability to debate, critique, and reconstruct political concepts.

We began with T.S. Kuhn's use of the term "paradigm" in order to talk about personal and cultural mindsets. "Paradigms," according to Kuhn (1962), are worldviews, self-contained systems of social meanings that explain and provide guidelines for thinking and acting. Judged by its abilities to explain reality and allow integrated action, a paradigm or worldview "fails" when it can no longer offer adequate explanations or its problem-solving abilities prove inadequate. When the faltering paradigm or worldview is replaced by another more capable explanatory view, a "scientific" (conceptual or intellectual) revolution, a "paradigm shift" occurs. This move from one set of beliefs to another occurs when experiences problematic to the current worldview can no longer be ignored or assimilated. This definition is also consistent with Freire's notion of epochs of change or epochral crises based on social upheavals; the need for new social meanings and worldviews is revealed through crises which engender critical and creative thought.

The concept of a paradigm as a worldview and as social construction was linked to Antonio Gramsci's notion of "hegemony."[6] Hegemony was defined as domination through institutions and therefore control over social meanings in the state and society. Since it is institutional and systemic, hegemonic control is pervasive and usually is not attributed to a controlling group but the "nature" of society. Eurocentric male-centered control over the construction and dissemination of information (education) means that whoever controls text, media, and language has hegemony. Since hegemonies shape the collective worldview and perceptions of freedom, they legitimize or delegitimize hierarchies, systems and relationships of domination. Hegemonies are vehicles through which domination is made to appear "normal" and valued. They are buttressed by compatible ideologies, which we defined as a system of beliefs. These definitions can function in the liberating role of theory. Theory promotes questioning, exploration, and problem solving, i.e., "revolutionizing," radically expanding worldviews. Ideology can also function as dogma, a closed, reified set of beliefs. We eventually labeled ideologies legitimating oppression as "closed" (rather than open), static (rather than dynamic), and authoritarian (rather than egalitarian).

In constructing a common political language, students disagreed most on "power." Assigned writers did not clearly distinguish between two contradictory notions of power: power as control or domination (the most common understanding); and power as democratic, non-coercive action. We advocated a definition of power as collective or communal action dedicated to achieving a common good, e.g., democracy. Power here becomes "power to" or empowerment rather than "power over" or domination. "Power over," coercion or domination, is a corruption of democratic power as an ideology and practice; power as domination leads to violence, which in its ultimate form is fascism.[7] With a deeper understanding of political language, students familiarized themselves with the implicit and explicit use of these terms or concepts by womanist or feminist writers. We began the course by studying womanist/feminist writers (e.g., Audre Lorde, Peggy McIntosh, Angela Davis, Maria Mies, bell hooks) in order to analyze ideas for human liberation as well as critiques of oppression.

Bell hooks's definition of feminism, which implicitly critiques self-centered individualism, an ideological pillar in U.S. society, served as a model of a theory of liberation:

Feminism is a commitment to eradicating the

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Construct a model based on readings that focus on (race, sex, class) liberation, oppression and power. Power is the dynamic or energy that flows through the model, it is the necessary requisite for changing the current paradigm (see Jan. 24 class handout) or hegemony.

	Gender	Race	Class	Power
Collins	[redacted] women are seen as well-cared-for-pets	Black women have seen two sides of a world. whites have only seen one of.	effects of class discrimination (illiteracy) keeps lower classes in an inferior status	[redacted] Power is kept on the "inside"
Dill	feminist should change the idea of "sisterhood" to include all women	feminism cannot be defined in personal or individualistic terms	lower class women have bigger barriers to cross	white men control power in this society
Higginbotham	The definition of womanhood was written by upper class white women	The black matriarch theory overshadows the double victimation of Black women	lower class women are often labelled "unwomanly"	Power sets our definition of roles
Hooks	The Patriarchal system hurts both sides of the Gender Gap	People are socialized to support white supremacy	Class is a caste system since mobility cost money (Higgs)	our ideas of power should be redefined
Jordan	Schools teach who should be powerful + who should be powerless.	Races have different cultures, styles, and languages. All races should respect these differences	Language can be used to make class problems seem irrelevant	state power serves the powerful
Joseph Lewis	The Bourgoui's womens movement is basically turning womens values into men's values	Race differences are restricting the feminist movement	The feminist movement was created for middle class women	Power is restricting
Katz	Education teaches people to carry on a patriarchal system	Education teaches people about whites ingoring other races	Education works on a hierarchy with class	Power controls Education
Lorde	lack of communication sexual hostilitiy	"Other" entrapment the anger of exclusion	the dehumanized inferior-surplus people	[redacted] use Anger as Energy
McIntosh	males are privileged	whites are privileged	rich are privileged	Privileged control the power in this society
Palmer	women are force with Dualistic roles virgin or whore	People must realize Race has create barriers that enstill them with different views	feminist theorist don't deal with class barriers so they don't find them oppressive	Power is a sexual control mechanism
Pence	subtle sexism can be more dangerous than blatant sexism	The key to racism is not how you act it is how you feel	class is often ignored in the feminist movement	Power resists change
Scott	Blacks gender roles are often stereotyped as reversed, as to insult and inferiorize them	Despite their contributions, black womens roles in history are ignored and distorted	Blacks are often protraxed as all being lower class	These ideas keep power away from black women
Smith	Patriachal system starts Racist behavior	Racism is an issue for the womens movement	Poor women suffer the same barriers	Power roles and positions are dividing
"Ethnic Notions"	Stereotypes affect all walks of life	Stereotypes were used to brainwash people against blacks	blacks held in lower class had no power to change stereotypes	Stereotypes can keep people from power
"Girls Apart"	Gender seems to be more aware of by people affected by racism	race can change a persons views of the world	different class standards for different sides of apartheid	Power controls education
Hair Piece	women are forced to change looks to satisfy men	whites tried to whitenize blacks	only those who change can move up in class	Power used wrongly sets bad images to people
Racism & Ethics	Chances are Hispanic men take their powerlessness out on Hispanic women	Hispanics in NYC are controled by poverty	almost 1/2 of minorities in NYC are born in poverty	Power can control with poverty + drug use
"Fences"	The patriarchal system is violent and self destructing [redacted]	Racism is [redacted] seed of sexism and power struggles	class can be used as a form of control	The patriarchal system creates a fight for power

Using the above form, construct a collective theory of Gender, a collective theory of Race, a collective theory of Class and draw the interconnections or relationships between the three.

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> ideology of domination that permeates western culture on various levels — sex, race, and class ... and a commitment to reorganizing society so that the self-development of people can take precedence over imperialism, economic expansion, and material desires. (pp. 194-5)

African and Native American worldviews, as well as feminist/womanist thought, entail theories of liberation. Students were asked to consider the political and ethical implications of worldviews in which you are accountable to your community, your ancestors, and future generations. Examples given for them to reflect on including African philosopher John Mbiti's *African Religions and Philosophies,* outline a worldview in traditional African religions and philosophy in which the individual, while sacred, cannot exist outside or alienated from the development of the whole community. Similarly we referred to Paula Gunn Allen's *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions,* which describes the North American Indigenous concepts of "seven generations" and "sacred hoop" as guides for ethical action and right relationships with oneself, society and nature.

Images, community and play

Before mid-term, the uniqueness of the course, its threatening content, and the complexities of theory were met by students with resistance. To break the intellectual impasse in students' encounters with womanist/feminist theory, we brought sugar cubes to class and asked students to build cube models of their theories of oppression and liberation. Working in small groups or collectives, students played and created non-linear, multi-layered depiction of the intersections of gender, race, and class in society. ("Play" or creative interaction had already been set to end the course in that students created a wall mural incorporating the themes studied as part of their final grade.) This play allowed the class to veer off from lectures and Q/A or discussion format. Tactile work with peers diffused tension while still focusing on theoretical concerns in oppression and liberation struggles.

First, before constructing their models, students were asked to restudy assigned readings, filling in a grid which listed authors' names under the headings "Gender," "Race," "Class," "Power." Using the grid as a data sheet for memory aid, students summarized the writers' stances on the four categories **G, R, C, P.** This became a learning tool for students overwhelmed not only by content and critique but also volume (weekly readings consisted of 100 pages and as many as four authors). Power was identified as the dynamic or energy that flowed throughout the model and the necessary requisite for change. We asked that students use political terms defined earlier whenever possible in synthesizing feminist/womanist theories of **G**ender, **R**ace, and **C**lass. They did not need to agree with all positions taken by the writers, but students had to identify, document and synthesize these positions.

The second part of this process entailed students constructing models by color-coding the sugar cubes: blue= gender; black=power; red=class; green=race. Black arrows were drawn to denote the flow of power from different cubes. Once **G, R, C** cubes were identified, they were related to each other by **P** cubes. Some students chose to mark cubes with several variables, e.g., a cube half red and half green represented sexual racism. (See Figures 1 through 4.) Identifying relations of power in the model changed with evolving definitions of power. Students in one section chose to represent two types of power and relationships, a negative power for relationships of domination and a positive power for democratic relationships.

Finally, students sketched their models (on their study sheets containing the grid identifying feminist/womanist theorists) and translated the images into language or theory retaining the various dimensions present in their cube models. Asked to examine existing relations of dominance, oppression and emergence of relations of liberation, students created both actuality and potentiality in the model (as in the Aristotelian concept that embedded in an acorn is simultaneously actuality [seed] and potentiality [oak tree]). Most students were able to construct physical models and translate their construction into theoretical (explanatory) language.[8] The request that they place themselves in their work and identify the ways in which their actions supported or challenged the model was addressed by few students. This absence of the "I" in most group reports was conspicuous, and pointed to a reluctance to engage in self-critique and to identify personally with the issues.

At the end of the semester, more students placed themselves more fully in the wall murals, where each seminar group of 20 students created a wall mural reflecting themes explored. The course culminated in this group activity, in which students drew and painted images and, following a reception for their artwork open to the public, displayed their murals on the ground floor of their residential and classroom buildings. During the semester, students had written reflective and analytical papers, sketched, drawn or constructed images of the social and political relationships they were studying, thus expressing themselves and their worldviews in several media — verbal, written, and visual.

Resistance, ambivalent acceptance, transformation

Student responses to "Gender, Race, and Class: Perspectives on Oppression, Power, and Liberation" went from resistance to ambivalent acceptance to transformation to resistance, and so forth. "Transformation" does not imply that students accepted the social critiques presented; rather many became less dependent on their previous socialization into class, race, gender bias and more willing to think critically. The most difficult critique for them was that on racism. Students resisted critiques and calls for action concerning racism at a much higher level than they resisted calls to critique or demystify sexism or classism.[9] In seminar, students agreed that there was a dominant gender in the U.S. (male), a dominant class (wealthy), but rejected the notion that a dominant or colonizing race (white/European) existed. A small core of students consistently resisted any action to demystify and confront classism, racism, hetero/sexism.

Rutledge M. Dennis states that for the white population, racism breeds irrationality, inhibited intellectual growth, and negated democracy (1981). We hoped that "Gender,

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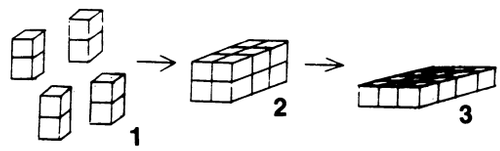
Race and Class" would nurture in our students rational and critical thought, analytical skills, and, community/democratic values. Their resistance came from the emerging contradictions in their socialization. Resistance was a response to stress, in a learning process largely shaped by African American women faculty, with readings and assignments that established ethical anti-racist/sexist action as normative. Anxiety and fear were identified as part of that resistance. Other students found the call to action to be challenging.

Student emotional response to the readings and film/video viewings (particularly the video "Ethnic Notions" which critiques racist images of African Americans in U.S. culture) exhibited anxiety, denial, and hostility. Hostility (reserved for the African American women faculty) ensued in proportion to the severity of the critique. White students, primarily female, also retreated into a form of passivity, silence followed by complaints of being asked to "save the world" or "shoulder the weight of oppression." (This last complaint reminded me of my own first year in college, where I first read Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* and its glorification of unhindered, expanding, self-centered egoism.) A significant number of students poorly grasped the assigned readings, misrepresenting authors' positions or reducing them to superficialities. Students had difficulty reading and retaining information that was critical rather than repetitive of previous schooling. Enrollment in a "special program," a liberal college within a conservative university, added to an additional pressure on those who sought to fit, or conform to, their image of the enlightened, young adult.

As faculty, we pointedly encouraged the students to struggle with their unfamiliarity and dissonance. In the opening lecture we pointed out that few, if any, had ever

Student group response to assignments: Our model three stages of development. In the first stage, all race, class and gender are being dominated by power, but they are spread apart unable to work together. The second stage represents a coming together of the oppressed so they can work together. The third stage shows the oppressed bringing down power to their level and spreading it out among them. My action Response works with this because only by education and personal change can we move from one stage to another. Not only personal change of the oppressed, but especially of the oppressors.



Redefining of power

Figure 1

Student group response to assignment: These 3 issues are not separate but intertwine with each other to form a complex model. The intertwined circles show this with the circles falling apart to show the slight progress made over the years. The power is hidden by all 3 of these issues. The cubes with dots show those ignorant of the issues, but it exists all around them.
Gender: Female oppression, also black male oppression. Feminist movement, sights for equality.
Race: Black oppression. Dehumanizes all. Must take risks to aleviate. "Sisterhood."
Class: Centered around middle class and white male dominant.

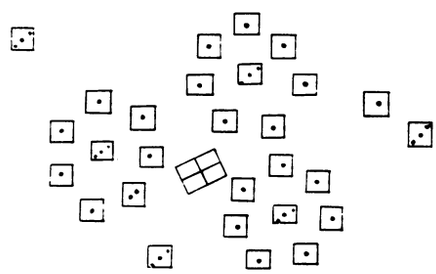


Figure 2

Graphic by Laurel White

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Student group response to assignment: The black cubes are symbols of white upper class male domination (power) over people of other races, classes, and genders. Here, each type of oppression is a separate struggle.
This shows a unification of the struggles.
Here, the oppression is broken, all classes, races, and genders are on the same level with the power source.

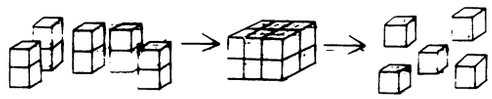

Figure 3

Student group response to assignment:
Each issue is different, but dependent. They all strive for power, but will not succeed alone. Gender, race, and class are not independent. They are a complex puzzle; intertwined circles. All of which strive for power (be it virgin power, or just more power — greed). Gender alone cannot dictate one's position in society. Nor does race. Power is split, but never equally. The white cubes symbolize ignorance. They are not sweet; they are sour. As the circles are not perfect, nor are their relationships between class, race and gender.

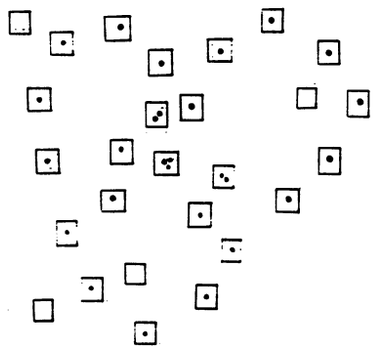

Figure 4

Graphic by Laurel White

been taught by one (let alone three) African American woman. While cautioned not to let their feelings become a retreat from a critique, students were repeatedly asked to explore their feelings and anger against the writers and African American women professors, which they did through discussions, drawings and writing. To read works by people of color and women analyzing racism, classism hetero/sexism and the roles of government in maintaining oppressive structures was understandably extremely disorienting for students schooled in an hegemonic absence of African women's voices and critical thought. Recognizing that relationships are instrumental in the learning process, we began meeting with students individually for private discussions about their attitudes towards the class and their first year at college. Personal interactions with faculty, play and creative space in constructing the wall mural helped students (and faculty) to put aside their defenses. In end of the term course evaluations, most students gave "Gender, Race, and Class: Perspectives on Oppression, Power, and Liberation" high ratings. Student acceptance of multicultural anti-racist/sexist education, although ambivalent, still established the ground for future development.

Conclusion

"Gender, Race, and Class" courses are a tool in constructing enlightened and democratic education. An inherent limitation in such courses is that they are susceptible to becoming themselves a "litany," a catchall for all oppressions. When these courses are so ambitious, so encompassing that they lose focus, they become "crash courses in humanity" and sensitivity training to unlearn racism and sexism. When forced to function as correctives

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for entire programs, they remain isolated, with little reinforcement in or support from upper-division courses. The ghettoization of these courses places a stressful burden on faculty teaching them to provide a permanent intellectual and ethical base for students compelled to take one critical/anti-racist course that is an aberration in their schooling. (The disparate interests and commitments of faculty when they are team-taught further compounds the problem.) However imperfect, these courses or variations of them remain an important part of the critical pedagogy that dismantles the parochialism and chauvinism of university education.

The historic role of schools in "severing consciousness from education, and education from political movements" is continuously challenged by such courses.[10] Clarity about the political nature of teaching means more than changes in style or "inclusivity" or "minority representation" in syllabi. A superficial litany is easy. It is more easily accommodated by and assimilated into the dominant pedagogy than is an integrated analysis. Critical thought (particularly that of womanist theorists) and critical teaching do not append to Eurocentric patriarchal "education." They dismantle it. Teaching critical theory that analyzes the interrelatedness of oppression and liberation is a political and subversive act. Integrating critical theory into one's worldview is likewise political and helps to transform the irrationality and anti-democratic bias that shapes, if not dominates, our encounters with each other.

Notes

1. At that conference two white women panelists ridiculed their students for their racism and sexism, and misreading of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. An African American woman in the audience pointed out that students, like faculty, reflect their socialization and education in a patriarchal, white supremacist culture. With generally poor analytical skills and little accurate historical, sociological or political information on African people, students have no adequate context or consciousness within which to "experience" Black or feminist fiction or narratives. If these students had been prepared by examining social dynamics of race, sex, and class oppression in the U.S. *prior* to reading the novel, they would have a greater opportunity to understand and appreciate the work. Generally most students' analytical skills are underdeveloped. Unskilled in what Friere calls "critical consciousness" they reflect years of education by rote learning and indoctrination in cultural biases.

2. For further discussions of womanist/feminist epistemology and pedagogy, see Mary Field Belenky, et al., *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1986); Linda James Myers, *Understanding an Afrocentric World View* (Ohio State University, 1988); and Patricia Hill Collins, "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought" (*Signs*, Vol. 14 No. 4, 1989). Current texts by white feminist educators, e.g., the work of Michelle Fine, Mary Belenky, Carol Gilligan, critique the patriarchal assumptions, but not the racial (white supremacist) assumptions in education. The research on the effects of white supremacy on whites is relatively undocumented.

3. The classes in which students felt they had the most leeway to rebel were the seminar sections taught by the European male professor. Students in his class, when asked to engage in an activity in response to readings and videos, made statements they would not have expressed to the other faculty based on real or imagined support for their hostility. For example, when asked what community action they would engage in to reflect course content one responded, "Does this mean that we can join the KKK?"

4. Theologian Bernard Lonergan discusses this process in *INSIGHT: An Understanding of Human Knowing* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1970). Lonergan's epistemology is similar to the African (Afrocentric) ethical paradigm in which knowledge exists for the sake of communal good and human liberation which are not oppositional.

5. The claim that social sciences are above politics, i.e., nonpolitical or value neutral has already been extensively critiqued (e.g., see Ira Shor and Paulo Freire, *A Pedagogy for Liberation* (South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin and Garvey, 1987).

6. Social construction is discussed in P.L. Berger and T. Luckmann's *Social Construction of Everyday Reality* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1984); Antonio Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks* (New York International Publishers, 1971, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith).

7. This concept of power is found in the work of Hannah Arendt, particularly *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

8. Out of a class of 100, only 5 failed to do so. One group of students resistant to the course placed their cubes in a shot glass, added water and stirred. After dissolving or destroying their model, they sketched a dot with arrows pointing out towards the periphery of a swirl (spiral) underwhich they wrote their explanatory theory on oppression and liberation. "Power [arrow] expands, and as it does it widens, the gap increases the void between class, gender, and race. . . . [b]y combining our cubes we demonstrate our belief that all forces are interlocking and intertwined . . . ." A retreat into superficial generalizations is one response on the part of students required to depict and critique social/political relationships of oppression and liberation when their identities are intermeshed with these relations.

9. One student described her group's initial response: they labeled the construction of a model as "dumb" and complained of being tired of feminist/womanist theory because "Okay, so black women are oppressed, so what?"

10. This point is made by Michelle Fine in a talk "Ventriloquy and Voices" where she defines ventriloquy as the "white out" of authorship and intellectually dishonest calls for research that is value neutral and that has no politics. She also posited that never using the word "I" in the text is a trick of ventriloquy. "Voices," for Fine, represented the lack of interior analysis and the use of narratives or other voices to take positions the author holds but refuses to personally state.

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