190

3

Pedagogical Frameworks for Social Justice Education

Maurianne Adams

> Many teachers who do not have difficulty . . . embracing new ways of thinking, may still be as resolutely attached to old ways of practicing teaching as their more conservative colleagues. . . . Even those of us who are experimenting with progressive pedagogical practices are afraid to change.
>
> —bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*

Topics that arise in social justice education classrooms such as prejudice, discrimination, and inequality, are affectively loaded for both teachers and students and linked to strongly held beliefs, values, and feelings (Weinstein & Bell, 1982; Schoem, 1993). As we turn our attention in this chapter from subject matter to teaching practice, or from *what* we teach to *how* we teach, we face these five pedagogical dilemmas:

(1) balancing the emotional and cognitive components of the learning process;

(2) acknowledging and supporting the personal (the individual student's experience) while illuminating the systemic (the interactions among social groups);

(3) attending to social relations within the classroom;

(4) utilizing reflection and experience as tools for student-centered learning; and

(5) valuing awareness, personal growth, and change as outcomes of the learning process.

These pedagogical dilemmas have been explored over many years in educational communities as disparate as laboratory and intergroup education, community organizing, women's studies, black studies, and adult literacy education. This chapter reviews some of the pedagogical traditions and epistemologies that have evolved into social justice educational practice. Readers may situate themselves within one or more of these broad teaching and learning traditions and find that key practices in areas with which they are more familiar are reinforced or elaborated within others with which they may be less familiar.

Although the social justice practice described here continues to evolve through

experimentation and reflection, it is also grounded upon a considerable pedagogical literature reaching back at least to the middle of this century. These foundations are traced in greater detail in my book on social justice pedagogy (Adams, forthcoming). Here, I suggest in broad brush strokes, the major debates about pedagogy that have provided key elements for social justice educational practice.

Laboratory and Intergroup Education

Experiments in group process and intergroup communication took place in the 1940s among interracial community leaders and social psychologists engaged in a precursor of social justice education. Kurt Lewin, a German Jewish refugee from Nazism, was studying intergroup prejudice and devising methods for direct action in community settings in 1944. His experiments with training groups ("T-groups") and "action research" (Lippitt, 1949; Benne, 1964; Marrow, 1969) combined the personal with the systemic and used simulations and role plays in a set of procedures called "laboratory training," which examined interracial conflicts and provided opportunities to "get into the shoes of the other" (Lippitt, 1949).

Laboratory training stresses learning about the self in group-based social situations that focus on the following (adapted from Golembiewski & Blumberg, 1977):

- *presentation of the self:* opportunities to disclose attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors for the purposes of feedback and learning;
- *feedback:* information from others that enables participants to understand the impact of what they say or do;
- *climate:* a learning environment that provides trust and nondefensiveness, so that participants can change and correct language and behavior that is inappropriate;
- *cognitive organizers or maps:* models derived from research and theory that help participants to organize and generalize from experiences within the group;
- *experimentation, practice, and application:* opportunities to try out and practice new patterns of thought and behavior, in order to transfer them to back-home situations.

Reflective practices such as "processing," "debriefing," and "feedback" are central to social justice teaching. Processing and feedback help participants understand their impact on each other, contextualize interpersonal and intergroup miscommunication, and bring undercurrents of conflict and criticism out into the open where they can be constructively addressed (Lippitt, 1949). Small group simulations and interaction provide specific, socially situated examples of otherwise elusive abstractions about racism, classism, and other oppressions that can then be interpreted and analyzed ("processed") from multiple perspectives. These ideas have been enriched by the problematizing of participant status and positionality (Bell, 1995; Ellsworth, 1989).

The laboratory tradition also provides methods for generating data on attitudes, stereotypes, and misinformation. These data reflect the affective "inside" of interracial misunderstandings as they emerge in the here-and-now of the classroom. Such data can be presented by participant observers through sensitive and respectful feedback to defuse difficult situations and enhance participant learning. The group dynamics literature provides many useful ideas about staging simulations and con-

ducting process observation and feedback which can be adapted to social justice topics (see Bradford, Gibb, & Benne, 1964; Golembiewski & Blumberg, 1977; Pfeiffer & Jones, 1974; Eitington, 1984). Lewin's insistence (1948) upon the necessary interaction among education, research, action, and explicit transfer from the laboratory situation to daily experience is also evident in social justice education.

Human Relations, Intergroup, and Multicultural Education

Experiments in intergroup and intercultural consciousness raising groups and black-white sensitivity training occurred throughout the 1940s and 50s (Williams, 1947; American Council on Education, 1949; Cook, 1954). These approaches assumed that awareness and knowledge would by themselves reduce prejudice and were used frequently in the 1950s school and military desegregation, the 1960s civil rights movement and anti-racism training pioneered by SCLC and SNCC, and continued with 1970s affirmative action and equal opportunity staff development programs (Hayles, 1978; York, 1994). These efforts aimed to increase intergroup respect and communication competence.

Sociological analyses of race relations at the systemic level added the understanding of power differentials (Hayles, 1978). Multicultural education in some instances, for example, combined a systems perspective with focus on personal change (Sleeter & Grant, 1994; Nieto, 1996; Suzuki, 1984; Schniedewind & Davidson, 1983). These were informed by an emerging social science literature of race relations that described specific intervention strategies (Argyris, 1970, 1975), analyzed resistance to change (Coch & French, 1948; Mill, 1974), focused upon the dominance and privileges of the white majority (Terry, 1975; Wellman, 1977; Hardiman, 1982, 1994; Segrest, 1994), and generated research concerning conditions under which intergroup contact might reduce or exacerbate racial tensions and prejudice (Amir, 1969, 1976; Sherif, 1961, 1967). Experience-based personal awareness and social action strategies recur as techniques of choice in anti-racism and anti-sexism workshops and course syllabi (Cross et al., 1982; Wolverton, 1983; Rozema, 1988; Frankenberg, 1990; Freedman, 1994; Katz, 1978; Sargent, 1974, 1977; Sherover-Marcuse, 1981; Schoem et al., 1993).

Multicultural theorists such as Suzuki (1984), Banks (1991), Banks and Banks (1995), Nieto (1996), Grant (1992), and Sleeter and Grant (1994) also focus on transformative pedagogical practices. Suzuki, for example, proposes principles that integrate an experiential, personal focus and collaborative and democratic classroom processes, with attention to social identity, sociocultural and historical context, and community-based experiments for change (Suzuki, 1984).

Nieto stresses decision-making and social action skills and invokes Freire's call for a critical pedagogy that "is based on the experiences and viewpoints of students rather than on an imposed culture" (1996, 321). Sleeter and Grant call for education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist to empower young people to make social changes (1994). These writers make important distinctions between human relations approaches that do not focus on social power and oppression, and those that integrate personal awareness with a social justice orientation.

Cross-cultural and International Training

Cross-cultural training programs, more internationally oriented than domestic "intergroup education" efforts (Noronha, 1992), were begun in the 1950s for student programs abroad (Batchelder & Warner, 1977), the Peace Corps (Chaffee, 1978; York, 1994) and overseas work by United States citizens (Downs, 1978; York, 1994). Because of the importance that international education attached to adapting to and

acting within unfamiliar and often ambiguous social situations, cross-cultural training favored experience-based learning, feedback, application, and transfer.

> Education in the classroom teaches one to deal with emotionally loaded questions of value and attitude by analyzing and talking about them in an atmosphere of emotional detachment. Such a scholarly, scientific attitude is appropriate to the task of understanding; but by sidestepping direct, feeling-level involvement with issues and persons, one fails to develop the "emotional muscle" needed to handle effectively a high degree of emotional impact and stress (Harrison & Hopkins, 1967, 440).

Intercultural pedagogy enables students to effectively handle feelings elicited by emotionally laden real-world situations and events (Condon, 1986) and models the value of cultural reciprocity among multiple learning styles (Adams, 1992; Anderson & Adams, 1992; see also chapters 5 and 15).

Experiential Education

A core premise of experiential education is that "all learning is experiential" and that most formal, traditional classrooms focus too much on the product at the expense of the process (Joplin, 1995). The primary impetus behind experiential education can be found in the legacy of John Dewey (Hunt, 1995; Boud et al., 1993; Griffin & Mulligan, 1992; Kolb, 1984), with some debt as well to Lewin and Piaget (Chickering, 1977; Kolb, 1984) and to Habermas and Freire (Criticos, 1993; Saddington, 1992; Brookfield, 1993). Dewey understood "reflective experience" to mean the process by which the personal and social meanings of experience interact and become one (Hunt, 1995).

Except for the work of Kolb (1984), much of the writing on experiential education, and pedagogy generally, has remained "undertheorized" (Lusted, 1986) and devoted primarily to practical and pragmatic concerns. Experiential pedagogies usually start from a structured experience and focus the learner's reflections upon that experience. "Experience alone is insufficient to be called experiential education, and it is the reflection process which turns experience into experiential education (Joplin, 1995, 15). Joplin's "action-reflection" cycle grounds experiential education in reflective analysis of a "challenging action," which is preceded by a "focus" and followed by a "debrief" (Joplin, 1995).

The core principles and practices (see Proudman, 1995) of experiential education, however, have been problematized by practitioners who question "the embodied location of experience and the social organization of the process" (Bell, 1995, 9).

> We talk about concrete experience, but I do not know what this means. To me experience "exists" through interpretation. It is produced through the meanings given it. Interpretations of lived experiences are always contextual and specific. Experiences are contingent; Interpretations can change. . . . Perhaps remembering an experience recomposes it so that its meaning changes (Bell, 1995, 10, 15).

Social identity, voice, and positionality are important considerations for social justice pedagogy discussed later in this chapter.

Black Studies and Ethnic Studies

Black and ethnic studies emerged from the civil rights and black consciousness movements (Cole, 1991; Suzuki, 1984) that fused racial pride with social action and insisted that education be made relevant to real-world problems of injustice. These

191

programs incorporate a powerful critique of university educational practices and curricula, questioning "*what* is taught in the liberal arts curricula of America's colleges and universities; *to whom* and *by whom* it is taught; *how* it is taught; and *why* it is taught" (Cole, 1991, 134).

The pedagogies of black studies were informed by Freire's vision of student agency and empowerment within a transformed teaching and learning process (McWhorter, 1969). This emphasis emerges in black feminist pedagogy as well (Butler, 1985). Other pedagogical concerns in black studies are the relationship of the classroom to everyday experience in community and the rootedness of theory in action (Bunch and Powell, 1983; see also James and Farmer, 1993). Black feminist pedagogies have elaborated these concerns for a "methodology that places daily life at the center of history" (Russell, 1983, 272) and in which "the classroom is the first step in (students') own transformation" (Coleman-Burns, 1993, 141). Barbara Omolade (1987), for example, writes about connecting the personal with the political or historical.

> This method works well to empower students, drawing them out, helping them to make sense of what they already know and have experienced. The creation of an intellectual partnership . . . lessens the power imbalance and class differences . . . yet reinforces the knowledge that can be received from the instructor, the readings, and the discussion (Omolade, 1987, 35).

The themes of personal experience in the classroom, socially relevant learning, and taking a critical or oppositional stance to received knowledge, can be seen in Gloria Ladson-Billings' characteristics of "culturally relevant teaching" (1995; see also Foster, 1988), which affirm everyone's *membership in a larger community*, envision teaching as a way to give back to one's community, and utilize a Freirean "mining" rather than "banking" teaching mode (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 478–79). Culturally relevant teachers *maintain equitable and reciprocal teacher-student relations* within which student expertise is highlighted, teachers encourage their entire classes rather than singling out single learners, and students are partly responsible for each others' academic success. Culturally relevant teachers *see knowledge as doing*, discuss their pedagogical choices and strategies with their students, and teach actively against a "*right-answer* approach" (author's italics, 1995, 482).

Feminist Pedagogies

The centrality of pedagogy to the women's movement can be seen in accounts of its originating moments by women activists in SNCC and SDS (Evans, 1979; Howe, 1984b). These consciousness-raising pedagogies, however, were not all that new. Florence Howe traces her own understanding that "all education is political" and her experiments with teaching that "turns upside down" the traditional roles of teacher and learner to her experiences teaching in Mississippi's Freedom Schools (Howe, 1984a). Howe describes the use, in the Mississippi Freedom Schools, of a pedagogy designed to raise the consciousness among black students, a pedagogy that

> begins on the level of the students' everyday lives and those things in their environment that they have either already experienced or can readily perceive, and builds up to a more realistic perception of American society, themselves, the conditions of their oppression, and alternatives offered by the Freedom Movement (Howe, 1984a, 10).

This is the pedagogy that, in the women's movement, came to be known as consciousness-raising.

Consciousness Raising

"The educational endeavor, to feminists, is a consciousness-raising process, explicitly directed to social transformation" (Bricker-Jenkins & Hooyman, 1986). This process starts from the telling of women's individual stories, but moves to discussion of commonalities of experience in areas such as childhood, jobs, motherhood, or sexual relationships. Consciousness raising involves a "process of transformative learning" that awakens personal awareness, leads to critical self-reflection and analysis, discovers group commonality among a "class" of situations, and provides "an ongoing and continuing source of theory and ideas for action" (Sarachild, 1975, 147).

Twenty years later, consciousness raising remains a key feminist strategy (Klein, 1987; Hart, 1991), with its postmodern emphasis on "personal stories (which) gain new readings both by the teller and by the other group members" (Damarin, 1994, 35). For example, Estelle Freedman describes her use of peer-facilitated "small groups" to create safe spaces in which her students discuss their personal reactions to classroom learning and integrate the personal with the academic (1994; see also Ferguson, 1982). A similar site, although differently named, can be recognized in the leaderless and often overlapping "affinity groups" described by Elizabeth Ellsworth as "safer home bases" for support, clarification, common language, and the basis for dialogue among differently situated social groups.

> Once we acknowledged the existence, necessity, and value of these affinity groups, we began to see our task not as one of building democratic dialogue between free and equal individuals, but of building a coalition among the multiple, shifting, intersecting, and sometimes contradictory groups carrying unequal weights of legitimacy within the culture and the classroom (Ellsworth, 1989, 1994, 317).

Like Ellsworth's affinity groups, we use homogeneous caucus groups to generate themes and issues for discussion, to provoke self-reflection and generate action strategies that can then be discussed by the class as a whole. Homogeneous caucus groups may be leaderless, although structured by guiding questions or a project, or joined by a facilitator who shares the social identity of the group.

Interactive Learning and Teaching

Some of the rationale for the cooperative, interactive, and dialogic teaching modes of social justice education derives from research examining women's silence in traditional classrooms (Sandler & Hall, 1982; Sadker & Sadker, 1992) or from theories of women's development based on relational and emotional dimensions of women's socialization and experience (Maher, 1985; Clinchy, 1993; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldenberger, & Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1982). Here feminist affirmation of student-based, active learning in collaborative small groups, converges with pedagogical traditions of Freirean and experiential practice.

Teachers who practice interactive and collaborative pedagogies engage their students as active co-investigators who learn to take multiple perspectives on their own prior knowledge and beliefs, on each others' viewpoints, and on the course content (see Maher, 1985). In this sense "voice" relates to reciprocity and interaction: "Who speaks? Who listens? And why?" (hooks, 1994, 40). Because "it is one thing for students to know about cooperation, and another for them to experience it," feminist educators structure experiences that hold students accountable for cooperation, help students practice the requisite communication and shared leadership skills, and reward interdependence (Schneidewind, 1985, 1993).

Being "Other" in the Classroom

Analyses of who is "other" in the women's studies classroom direct our attention to differentials in power and status for both students and teachers (hooks, 1984; Washington, 1985; Butler, 1985; De Danaan, 1990). As the dynamics of power, positionality, and authority play out, silences among and between students of the European American, heterosexual, middle-class majority and students marginalized by racial or ethnic, gay, lesbian or bisexual experiences dampen what Spelman calls "the heart of the educational exchange . . . the lively exchange among students" (1985, 241). Interactive feminist classroom pedagogies sometimes result in the not surprising reproduction, within hypothetically democratic classrooms, of dominance and marginalization (Crumpacker & Vander Haegen, 1987).

bell hooks notes that in diverse ethnic communities as distinct from classrooms, women have not been silent: "for black women, our struggle has not been to emerge from silence to speech but to . . . make a speech that compels listeners, one that is heard" (1989, 6). Ellsworth argues that student silence may not be the result of "voicelessness" but of "not talking in their authentic voices." "What they/we say, to whom, in what context . . . is the result of conscious and unconscious assessments of the power relations and safety of the situation" (1989, 1994, 313). Students from both dominant and marginalized groups maintain silence in the classroom out of fear of being patronized or polarizing the class; anger, anxiety, or hostility; ignorance of each others' life experiences; resistance to being forced to speak; lack of skills or practice in intergroup communication or background for understanding their different cultural styles (Spelman, 1985; Da Danaan, 1990; hooks, 1984; Kochman, 1981). Feminist strategies to encourage students to value their own and each others' voice include working toward community based upon "a shared commitment and a common good that binds us" (hooks, 1994, 40) and using the institutionally derived classroom authority of the professor to endorse a process of community building.

The implications of positionality provide an impetus for the social justice educator to acknowledge the partiality and situatedness of different perspectives and truth-claims in the classroom. Maher and Tetreault's ethnography suggest that students and teachers can and do struggle to remain aware that their viewpoints are partial and oppositional, but while they may "challenge and undermine the social structures they inhabit . . . they cannot completely step outside them" (Maher & Tetreault, 1994, 203). "What is perceived as marginal at any given time depends on the position one occupies" (Laurie Fink, quoted in Maher & Tetreault, 1994, 164).

Power, Authority, Voice

Feminists have pointed to two sources of asymmetry in the classroom based on the instructor's institutional power, status and authority, and her race, gender, class, age, or other social status relative to her students.

> Do we know what powers we do have and want to have? Do we know what powers our students have, and what powers we hope they might come to have? Are we *clear* about the powers, *wanted and unwanted*, that we as teachers have? (Spelman, 1985, 244, author's italics)

Feminists asking how best to use our power and authority present a range of options. Some say that "the teacher's power should be abandoned, but not her skills and knowledge" (Hoffman, 1985, 148), suggesting a distinction between the traditional teacher-student hierarchy and a place where women's expertise can be recognized:

193

> I, at least, wanted the feminist classroom to be a place . . . in which teachers and students alike participated in a learning process, rather than a place in which we presented ourselves as experts who would tell our students facts . . . which they would dutifully record in their notebooks (Mumford, 1985, 89; see Fisher, 1981).

Margo Culley uses her authority as a bridge, explaining that as students accept the instructor's authority ("I mean the authority of her intellect, imagination, passion") they can also begin to "accept the authority of their own like capacities" (Culley, 1985, 215).

Barbara Omolade argues that this "authority with, not authority over" is complicated by the multiple ways in which teacher and students are both alike and not alike. She says "I *am* just like my students" in relation to white male privilege, white female and black male status. "But as an employed intellectual who uses my mind and my skills to instruct others, I have greater status than my sister students in the classroom and in the society" (1987, 34, author's italics). Lisa Delpit adds a further alternative, to teach "the culture of power" (1988) as a way of bringing students from nondominant social groups into an understanding of the classroom codes that reflect the culture of those who have power.

Social justice educators, like these feminist teachers, acknowledge that a nonauthoritarian classroom depends on students' learning how to initiate and maintain democratic structures, and accept greater responsibility for decision-making (Schniedewind, 1987). Social justice education also draws from feminist pedagogy the principle that "power over" must be clarified and made explicit as it bears on classroom norms, behaviors, grading, and evaluation. An instructor's "power with" can model for students who are similarly situated how they, too, might gain similar power—if not institutional power, at least the power of intelligence and knowledge that the institution credentializes (Culley, 1985). This, of course, is not a simple process when we remember that institutional processes of evaluation have "been used in racist and sexist and elitist ways, which serve to diminish students' integrity and humanity" (Omolade, 1987, 36).

Safety and Emotions in the Classroom

Classroom safety is integrally tied to respect and the expression of emotion, especially emotions perceived as negative, such as fear, discomfort, threat, pain, anxiety, hostility, and anger.

> Students must feel secure that their comments will be treated with respect whether or not the faculty member or the class agrees with them. Students must have confidence that faculty members are in control of the discussion and will intervene, if necessary, to prevent personal expressions from provoking personal attacks by some who may find them offensive. At the same time, the faculty members must balance the need for creating a safe space with their obligation to see to it that blatantly false beliefs are subjected to mature and thoughtful criticism. Striking the correct balance is no easy task (Rothenberg, 1985, 124–25).

Feminist teachers recommend establishing explicit classroom norms to ensure respect and confidentiality, to guide the handling of conflict and "triggers" (see chapter 5), and to focus discussion not on the person but on ideas (see also Rothenberg, 1985; Cannon, 1990; Thompson & Disch, 1992; Tatum, 1992).

The feminist themes of process, voice, positionality, safety, power, and authority are related in feminist pedagogy to validating womens' feelings and emotions. The "connected" way of knowing described by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldenberger, and Tarule (1986) combines feeling with thought, and emotion with ideas. Believing that

"the central role for the emotions in feminist education is their function in helping us explore feminist beliefs and values," Fisher uses student experiences as a basis for improvisation, simulation, dialogue, and questioning, in order to integrate emotion with thought (1987). This valuing of emotion and feelings has led social justice educators to appreciate a process orientation as well.

> [We] know that it isn't information alone that educates people. If it were, we would already have a very different world than we do. . . . Our experience is that, when we focus on process in the teaching of oppression, learning occurs at an unusually deep level. Students are engaged at both cognitive and affective levels. . . . The information students gain through the experiences of connection, empathy, and identification is not readily forgotten (Romney, Tatum, & Jones, 1992, 98, 107).

Social Action

How to live out their new awareness of contradictions, reshaped beliefs and values, and shifts in direction or identity are momentous considerations for students. "Action is the natural antidote to both denial and despair" (Romney, Tatum, & Jones, 1992, 107; see Tatum, 1994). Beverly Tatum has said pointedly that raising awareness without also raising awareness of the possibilities for change "is a prescription for despair. I consider it unethical to do one without the other" (1992, 20–21).

Social justice educators make these connections between awareness and action by helping students recognize various spheres of influence in their daily lives; analyze the relative risk factors in challenging discrimination or oppression in intimate relations, friendship networks, and institutional settings; and identify personal or small group actions for change. (Examples are in chapter 12 and the fourth modules of chapters 6–11).

Critical Pedagogies and Liberatory Education: Paulo Freire

The purpose of Freire's pedagogy is to enable the oppressed to understand that oppressive forces are not part of the natural order of things, but rather the result of historical and socially constructed forces that can be changed. The goal of liberatory education is praxis (connecting theory and practice) on the part of the oppressed who thus become actors in their own history. Freire also examines internalized oppression (see chapter 2), by which he means "the duality which has established itself" inside the consciousness of the oppressed:

> They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized. . . . Only as they discover themselves to be "hosts" of the oppressor can they contribute to the midwifery of their liberating pedagogy (Freire, 1970, 32–3).

Liberatory pedagogy not only envisions the recovery of the voices, experiences, and perspectives of marginalized students from their "internalized oppression," but also empowers the teacher to use her classroom authority on behalf of the "truth claims" of these marginalized experiences. One key element in Freire's pedagogy, of tremendous value to social justice educators, is his contrast between banking education and problem-posing or dialogic education (1970).

> A Freirean critical teacher is a problem-poser who asks thought-provoking questions and who encourages students to ask their own questions. Through problem-posing, students learn to question answers rather than merely to answer questions. In this pedagogy, students experience education as something they do, not as something done to them (Shor, 1993, 26).

Because dialogue requires critical thinking, it can also generate critical thinking. In this sense, dialogue is not a "technique, a mere technique, which we can use to get some results" (Shor & Freire, 1987, 13); rather, as a communicative process that reflects social experience in order to understand the social and historical forces at work, it enables participants to develop "critical consciousness" (see Smith et al., 1975). This process enables students to name and discuss "coded situations" to uncover "generative themes": "Problem-posing is a group process that draws on personal experience to create social connectedness and mutual responsibility" (Wallerstein, 1987, 34; see Shor, 1992, 1987; Freire 1970, 1973; and Smith et al., 1976 for accounts of these processes).

The teacher's role in Freirian pedagogy is to provide structure and ask questions until students begin asking questions of themselves and of each other. It is also "to provide necessary information that promotes critical thinking" (Wallerstein, 1987, 41). Chairs arranged in circles rather than in rows facing a teacher's desk, reinforce the imagery of co-learners and co-teachers. Small groups provide spaces for group listening or action brainstorming. The democratic classroom becomes, in effect, a laboratory of democratic social practice.

Social and Cognitive Developmental Models

The shift of focus from a teacher's own lectures or content-coverage to what students are actually learning raises questions for the social justice educator. Who is the learner? What are her/his processes of understanding and meaning-making? What are the effects of classroom contexts or of group and interpersonal dynamics?

Educational theorists and psychologists have long turned to psychosocial and cognitive developmental theory for guidance in understanding issues that engage students across the lifespan and shifts or transitions in meaning-making or consciousness (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Oser et al., 1992). But this body of theory has not paid sufficient attention to social status, positionality, or different life experiences (Bidell & Fischer, 1992; Rogoff, 1984; Rogoff et al., 1984). Two major traditions that address these questions are social identity and cognitive development theory.

Social Identity Development Theories

Erikson acknowledged the formative and socializing role played by the social groups significant to a growing person (1964, 1968), but failed to relativize or problematize the basis of the identity construct within normative Western concepts of self. Thus, Erikson's concept of "negative identity" has been used to deny or devalue the different pathways experienced by members of nondominant identity groups such as women, people of color, poor people, and gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. At the same time, paradoxically, "negative identity" has also paved the way for analyses of internalized subordination (see discussion in chapter 2).

Social identity *development* models, whether focussing upon race, sexual orientation, or gender, derive from but also diverge from their Eriksonian prototype in several important ways. They highlight dimensions of dominant (agent) and subordinate (target) identity development that are adversely affected by the stratifying processes of societal privilege and domination (for Whites, heterosexuals, Christians, or males) on the one hand, and of societal oppression and subordination (for people of color, gays, lesbians or bisexuals, females, or Jews) on the other. They describe developmental processes by which a person's internalized stereotypic and negative beliefs about self can be brought to the surface, analyzed, and

194

transformed into an identity that is not dependent either upon subordination or domination. These models have been created in the historical context of social liberation movements: black identity development models in the civil rights movement (Jackson, 1976; Cross, 1971), "coming out" models in the gay liberation movement (Cass, 1979, 1984) and "feminist identity" models in the women's movement (Block, 1973; Downing & Roush, 1985).

When looked at generically, the social identity development models share several key assumptions: (1) both dominant and targeted group members' identity development is influenced by the pervasiveness of racism or other specific forms of oppression; (2) identity development evolves through sequential shifts or stages of consciousness toward greater complexity, inclusiveness, and differentiation; (3) identity development has as its goal liberation from internalized oppression or internalized domination; (4) individual interactions within groups as well as between groups are affected by differences in levels of consciousness; and (5) stage is a convenient metaphor for describing evolving states of consciousness or world views.

If the limits and distortions of unitary social identity models are acknowledged, these models can serve as guidelines for understanding how others see the world (Icard, 1986; Gonsiorek, 1995). We can appreciate that students evolve ways of thinking about oppression through years of unexamined experiences within family, peers, and community. They develop a "tried and fully tested identity" which "helps the person feel centered, meaningful, and in control, by making life predictable" (Cross, 1995, 60). Not surprisingly this identity may be vigorously defended against discordant information or experiences presented in the social justice classroom.

Our goal as educators is to provide information and experiences that students can incorporate into their own developmental journey, in ways that make sense to them. Even as we feel a responsibility to challenge and contradict all stereotypic beliefs or attitudes, the decision to shed these beliefs or attitudes belongs to the student, not us (Hardiman & Jackson, 1992). Recalling our own ongoing shifts of world view and challenges to the inevitable residue of our own internalized domination or oppression can help us be empathic in this process (see chapters 2 and 14).

Finally, it is important to understand that human beings are never "in" a stage. Stage is a metaphor for growth or change; *lens, world view, perspectives, consciousness level* are equally appropriate metaphors. What "develops" is a person's increasingly informed, differentiated, and inclusive understanding of within group and between group commonalities and differences, and a personalized awareness of how these understandings bear on one's everyday behaviors. Beverly Tatum uses the metaphor of a spiral staircase:

> As a person ascends a spiral staircase, she may stop and look down at a spot below. When she reaches the next level, she may look down and see the same spot, but the vantage point has changed (Tatum, 1992, 12).

Cognitive Development Theory

The values, beliefs, and biases that both students and instructors bring to classes on social justice, the tenacity of stereotypes and entrenched modes of thinking, the unexpectedly emotional attachments to beliefs and thought processes rooted in trusted home, school, and religious communities, are forces that suggest a powerful and multidimensional cognitive developmental agenda (Harro, 1986; Gallos, 1989; Schoem, 1993; Dunn, 1993; Bidell et al., 1994; Adams & Zhou-McGovern, 1994).

Theories of cognitive development among college students and adults (Perry, 1970, 1981; Kitchener, 1982; Belenky et al., 1986; Baxter Magolda, 1992; King & Kitchener, 1994) illuminate the evolution of momentous shifts in thinking from concrete to abstract, simple to complex, external authority to internal agency, and clear-cut certitudes to comfort with doubt, uncertainty, and independent inquiry (King & Kitchener, 1994; Baxter Magolda, 1992; Pascerella & Terenzini, 1991; Mentkowski et al., 1983). These cognitive patterns act as filters through which a person can organize and "make" meaning from experiences, interactions, and ideas.

Studies have shown that students in college gradually develop skills in complex thinking, self-reflection, tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity, and ability to take on multiple and divergent perspectives (Mentkowski et al., 1983; Baxter Magolda, 1992; King & Kitchener, 1994). These cognitive skills constitute intellectual characteristics which may be considered necessary if not sufficient thresholds for social justice and social diversity education. College curricula that deal with social justice and diversity call for many of the qualities described in the developmental literature on critical thinking (Kurfiss, 1988; Knefelkamp, 1974), such as openness to conflicting perspectives from readings or classroom discussions, and the ability to reflect upon one's experiences, prior beliefs, and feelings, from one's own as well as another's perspective.

The process of cognitive development outlined by Perry (1970, 1981) and Belenky, Clinchy, Goldenberger and Tarule (1986) maps movement through qualitatively different views of knowledge from certainty, through uncertainty, toward relativistic or contextual thought. For the social justice educator, students who utilize *dualistic* or *received knowing* are especially challenging in their insistence upon clear answers, unambiguous data, certainty, and external authority firmly located in the teacher. Such students may find it especially difficult to relinquish societally-endorsed beliefs and stereotypes on complex issues of race, gender, class, or sexual orientation when the end point is unclear and the intellectual and emotional journey fraught with uncertainty.

> My students express some disappointment, particularly early in the semester, that I do not provide them with "answers" to the questions of intergroup relations. Students frequently come to my course with a dualistic worldview, looking for just two sides to every issue—a right side and a wrong. They come ready to argue and defend what they view as right and attack and ridicule what is wrong, or they feel guilty if they might be perceived as being in the wrong. . . . It takes a considerable amount of time as well as personal and intellectual work for students to accept the absence of answers and to bring an intellectual perspective that incorporates many competing and complementary views of individual issues (Schoem, 1993, 17).

Dualistic thinking and *received knowing* are indicators of conceptual limits upon students' readiness to listen, respond to, and learn from each other's divergent experiences and viewpoints.

The transitional stages of *multiplicity* and *subjective knowing* represent a crucial turning point after which students can more comfortably think complexly and draw upon intuition, feelings, or "common sense" as new sources of internal authority (Kurfiss, 1988). These newly acquired world views bring with them new confidence and skills in handling multiple perspectives, acknowledging and critically examining differences and commonalities between one's own and others' world views, and coordinating the concrete and personal dimensions of experience with abstract and societal constructs or perspectives.

The presence of some dualistic and many early multiplistic thinkers in social justice classes calls for several pedagogical strategies: (1) draw upon the concrete, personal, and experiential as the grounding for abstract knowledge; (2) take ample time to help students process sources of contradiction or conceptual confusion, both at the personal level and at the level of theory; (3) provide explicit course structure and support for the inevitable student-generated dissonance and contradiction; (4) make explicit use of our own authority as teachers to endorse and explain more complex thinking modes. For example, instructors can have students devise open-ended questions for which there are no "correct" answers and use their authority to model respect and appreciation for peer perspectives as a valid source of knowledge about social diversity.

The journey from a dichotomous to a contextual way of thinking also takes a student toward a broader and more inclusive ethical perspective (see Kohlberg and Higgins, 1989), and from an external to an internal locus of authority and responsiblity. It helps account for students' initial resistance to multiple perspectives, explains some of a student's anxiety in the absence of certainties in social justice problem-solving, and sheds light on the cognitive skills needed for abstract thought in an emotionally charged, personalized domain such as social justice education. It provides empirical support for an educational process that affirms the internal locus of judgments and decisions as well as the broadening of authority and knowledge away from the teacher to include self and peers (Knefelkamp, 1974; Adams & Zhou-McGovern, 1994).

Major Elements of Social Justice Education Practice

As social justice educators, we try to plan approaches that are safe and respectful for all participants as we engage them with information and discussions that are likely to elicit emotional as well as intellectual reactions. We try to be aware of the range of their agent and target social identities and their likely responses from various cognitive developmental levels. We believe that we ignore the beliefs and knowledge students bring to our classes at our peril. It is our aim to help them develop credible sources, honest personal reflection, and critical thinking as the basis for a larger and more adequate view of their complex social roles and responsibilities as social agents.

The pedagogies examined in this chapter are rooted in academic traditions that have been nourished from a variety of sources and perspectives. Out of these distinctive traditions has evolved a body of social justice education practice, which includes the following principles:

(1) *Balance the emotional and cognitive components of the learning process*: Teaching that pays attention to personal safety, classroom norms, and guidelines for group behavior.

(2) *Acknowledge and support the personal (the individual student's experience) while illuminating the systemic (the interactions among social groups)*: Teaching that calls attention to the here-and-now of the classroom setting and grounds the systemic or abstract in an accumulation of concrete, real-life examples.

(3) *Attend to social relations within the classroom*: Teaching that helps students name behaviors that emerge in group dynamics, understand group process, and improve interpersonal communications, without blaming or judging each other.

(4) *Utilize reflection and experience as tools for student-centered learning*: Teaching that begins from the student's world view and experience as the starting point for dialogue or problem-posing.

(5) *Value awareness, personal growth, and change as outcomes of the learning process*: Teaching that balances different learning styles and is explicitly organized around goals of social awareness, knowledge, and social action, although proportions of these three goals change in relation to student interest and readiness.

These social justice principles create new roles, challenges, and opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning and participation in learning groups, respect each other, avoid blame or snap judgment, and give themselves and each other room to make mistakes while learning. Students learn to look critically at messages about "the other" coming from the media and other sources of cultural information, practice new behaviors and communication skills, and develop social change scenarios.

The ideas presented here may seem overwhelming to someone socialized and skilled within the traditional lecture-and-discussion mode of higher education. It is encouraging to know that these principles of social justice teaching are virtually the same as principles of effective college teaching for *all* students (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). These teaching principles appear in handbooks for enhancing social diversity in college classrooms and campuses (such as Green, 1989) and also in the new research on college teaching and learning for everyone (Hatfield, 1995; Bruffee, 1993; Meyers & Jones, 1993; Oser et al., 1992). Writing as a teacher who was herself "socialized" in the academic tradition (Adams, 1992), I recommend a gradual, incremental approach to experimenting with these new pedagogies. A first step might be to use the activities illustrated in the curriculum designs of chapters 5–11 for developing student-generated guidelines that create a fair, safe, respectful atmosphere, where students can take risks and both students and teacher are allowed to learn from their mistakes.

> We know that . . . changing *what* we teach, means changing *how* we teach (Culley & Portuges, 1985, 2, authors' italics).