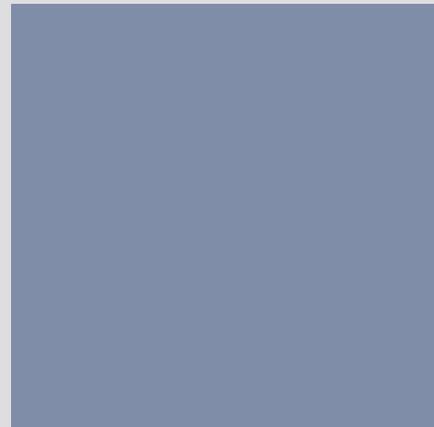
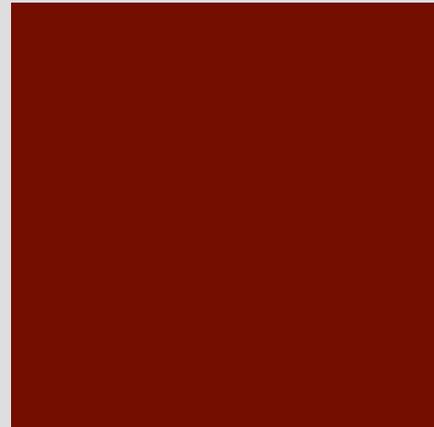




*Staying in the
Conversation: Students'
Online Diversity
Discussions*

Center for Teaching
Excellence and Learning
Washburn University

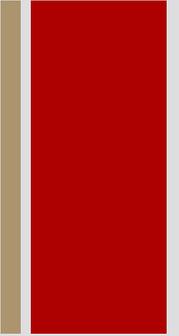


Sandra Winn Tutwiler
February 13, 2018



Presentation Goals

- Organization of online race-related discussions;
- Analysis of students' responses to race-related online discussion;
- Guided follow-up reflective essay (rubric for scoring);
- Reflections of how to improve learning opportunities related to diversity.



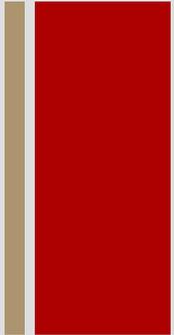
+ Online Diversity-Related Discussions

Influences on Participation and Sustained Interaction

- ◆ Structure of the online discussion
- ◆ Group size
- ◆ Group cohesion
- ◆ Strictly enforced deadlines
- ◆ Link between assessment and the discussion activity



Influences on Participation and Sustained Interaction



Group Size
5-6 Members

Diversity Discussion:
Fourth discussion (first discussion- group member introductions to facilitate group cohesion)

Deadlines: Discussions take place over a week

Assessment: Students are required to post at least 3 times during the discussion period, in order to submit a graded reflective essay

Prompts are presented in order to guide the discussion and the reflective

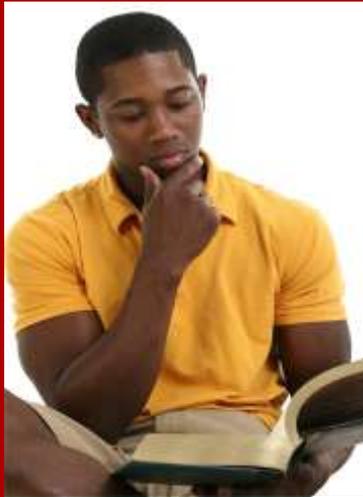


Structure of Course Discussions

Week	Topic	Discussion Initiator
8/28	Philosophy of Life Discussion	
9/4	Education Theory and Teacher Practice	
9/25	Race and Learning Environments	
10/9	Children's Understanding of Race: Influence on Schooling	
11/6	Legal Case Studies	
11/27	School Funding and the Quality of Education	



Race and Learning Environments Discussion



Related
Readings/Preparati
on

- Text Chapter/PowerPoint: Educational History: Revolution to the Twentieth Century
- PowerPoint: Education of Minorities
- Video: *The Struggle of Desegregation in Schools*
- Article: *Racialized Space: Framing Latino and Latina Experience in Public School*



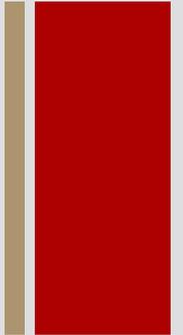
Discussion Prompt

Barajas and Ronnkvist (2007) discussed the importance of the “space” where schooling takes place, along with the processes, policies, and practices that inform the organizational logic of schools. They conclude that schools are often organized as “white space,” which suggests that the policies, practices, and processes are informed by white cultural norms. As a result, students of color, whose values may not reflect the white cultural norm may be disadvantaged in process of pursuing an education. A major goal of school desegregation was to ensure that children and youth were not disadvantaged by school contexts.

- What is your understanding of the meaning of schools as “white space?”
- It appears that some students of color may have backgrounds and experiences that conflict with the organizational logic of certain schools. How does this situation impact the underlying goals of desegregated schools?
- Is it possible for schools where a majority of students are students of color to operate as “white space?”
- Support your comments based on your schooling experience and/or your understanding of what is presented in the article.



Student Responses

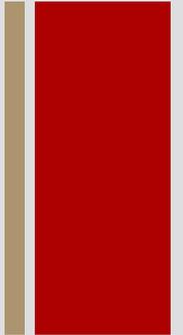


Pillock, Deckman, Mira, and Shalaby's (2010) state there are three necessary tensions in teaching teachers about race:

- ◆ **Tension #1:** issue of concrete applications of theoretical ideas about race;
- ◆ **Tension #2:** questions of the potential for everyday activity to dismantle inequality structures;
- ◆ **Tension #3:** the need for professional and personal development.



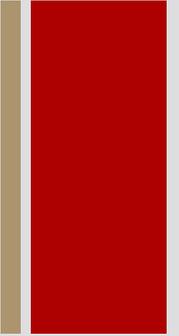
Sample Responses



Tension #1 focuses on issues of concrete applications of theoretical ideas about race. Students' responses indicate their understanding of the meaning of structural racism (concept of white space) by relating it to personal experiences (concrete application of ideas about race).

Sample Response:

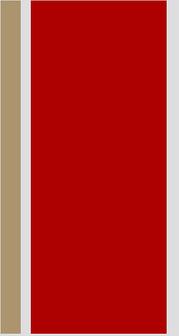
- ◆ Personally for me, my understanding of white space comes from my high school and from those who seemed to stand out. Because I came from a relatively small high school (500 students) that had less than ten students of color, I was very unaware or oblivious to the white space in my high school. It wasn't until I became very good friends with one of the students of color, that I began to recognize and see just how racist my school actually was.



Tension #2- some students seek potential for dismantling inequitable structures through teacher practice.

Sample Responses

- ◆ Coming from a white perspective, I want to increase my consciousness of when I see that practice and do everything I can to encourage the promotion of all cultural ideas.
- ◆ I think the only way to make "white space" a non-issue is to educate teachers on the diversity of their students and how to integrate diversity education into their classroom.



Tension #3-students often see a need for ongoing personal and professional development beyond the immediate encounter with race-related ideas.

- I couldn't believe that teachers would treat them so differently and make racial assumptions based on just their last name. It really made me think about myself as a future teacher, and I hope I would never make a mistake like that.

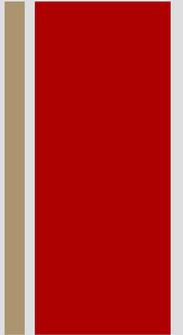


Recognizing Resistance to Diversity Discourse: In-Class Discussion

Some students do not willingly and openly engage in race-related discussion.

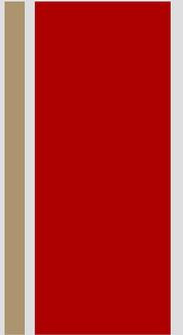
During Face-to-Face Discussions, students may:

- ◆ withdraw from the discussion;
- ◆ question the authority of the content or material presented;
- ◆ engage in verbal or physical harassment/assault.





Recognizing Resistance to Diversity Discourse: On-Line Discussions

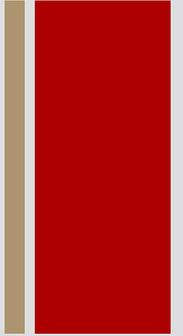


Students resist participating in online race-related discussions by responding to group member posts by agreeing, but not adding their own thoughts/beliefs:

- ◆ I liked how you said, "... I agree with that statement 100%.
- ◆ I enjoyed reading your post, and it was very upsetting to hear about your high school.
- ◆ I completely agree with ... I love that you said ...



Resistance to Diversity Discourse

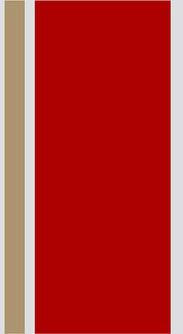


Some students excuse instances of bias

- ◆ I agree with you . . . that a lot of it is unintentional and in many cases people cannot help it but to allow their life experiences to shape their actions even if it is only slightly.
- ◆ While many schools do, possibly unknowingly, promote “white space,” it is often difficult for the teachers, whom majority of which are white, to recognize it.
- ◆ . . . students should still have to adjust to the “white space” some due to needing to learn how to live in the “white space” of the American society and survive.



Resistance to Diversity Discourse



Some student minimize/negate the importance of diversity in their comments.

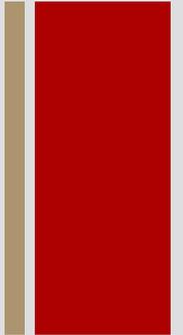
- ◆ Of course schools are going to be more dominantly white. This is America, a country founded by white people with white cultural norms. If someone were to go to Africa or Asia or Europe, the cultural norms would be different. It's just the way things are. If people of color want to complain about "white space" in America, they could easily find someplace else to live where they'd feel more comfortable.

+ Strategies for Dealing With Resistance

- ◆ Frontloading—providing data/information to establish reality of social inequality;
- ◆ Setting ground-rules (requiring 3 posts to submit essay);
- ◆ Creating opportunities for self-generated knowledge (e.g. interviews on racial topics);
- ◆ Privilege inventories/journaling to encourage self-examination (posting as a form of journaling);
- ◆ Socratic method of argumentation—reduce emotionality around discussion of race issues, heightens responsiveness;
- ◆ One-on-one feedback on essays.



Reflective Essays – Questions

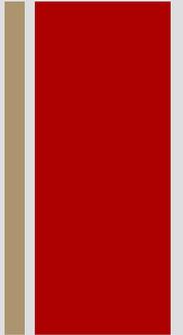


Students respond to following questions once the discussion ends.

- ◆ The notion of schools as white space can be a fairly abstract concept. Make a statement regarding your understanding of schools organized as “white space.”
- ◆ Follow your comments regarding your understanding of schools organized as white space with descriptions of what you may have observed in field/practicum experiences in diverse school settings that support existence (or not) of this notion.
- ◆ What, in your opinion, are the advantages and disadvantages of desegregated schools for all students, regardless of their racial/ethnic background?
- ◆ What might be the impact of the racial climate of the school in where you will teach on your practice?



Grading the Essay - Continuing the Conversation



Using a rubric:

Students must respond to essay prompts.

Students are required summarize views of their group members.

The rubric comment section offers opportunity to:

- Encourage students
- Challenge students to expand thinking
- Provide additional information
- Correct/introduce students to correct use of language when discussing diversity

Reflective Essay Rubric



	Excellent 18-20 points	Good 15-17 points	Satisfactory 12-14 points	Needs Improvement 11 points and below	Score
Response to Guide Questions	The essay fully addresses all questions presented to guide the essay.	The response addresses all questions presented to guide the essay but glosses over important aspects of some questions.	The response addresses some questions presented to guide the essay, but important questions are left unanswered	The response is too general and neglects to address the essay guide questions.	
Understanding of Topic	The response indicates a clear understanding of the topic under discussion, as evidenced by convincing and meaningful incorporation within the essay, of information from related readings/Power Points.	The response indicates a general understanding of the topic under discussion, as evidenced by incorporation within the essay of related information from the readings/Power Points.	The response indicates an understanding of some of the points associated with the topic, however the essay lacks incorporation of salient information from related readings/Power Points.	The response does not include information within the essay from related readings/Power Points and/or there is a lack of understanding of the primary arguments/ideas related to the topic under discussion.	
Reflection	The response indicates evidence of thoughtful consideration of the topic under discussion, as demonstrated by the introspection, insight, and complexity of thought observable in the essay.	The response indicates evidence of respectable consideration of the topic, demonstrated by the many serious and thoughtful comments made regarding the topic under discussion.	The response indicates some evidence of respectable consideration of the topic, demonstrated by some thoughtful comments made regarding the topic under discussion.	The response indicates a lack of serious reflection, evidenced by surface comments made regarding the topic under discussion.	
Consideration of Peers' Perspectives	The response includes respectful and appropriate reactions to peers' perspectives regarding the topic under discussion, along with analytical statements of agreement/disagreement.	The response includes respectful and appropriate reactions to peers' perspectives regarding the topic under discussion, along with statements of agreement/disagreement.	The response includes respectful and appropriate reactions to peers' perspectives regarding the topic under discussion.	No reference is made to to peers' perspectives regarding the topic under discussion.	

Comments



Sample Feedback Comments

■ Encouraging students

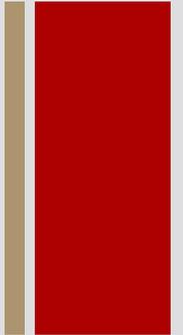
... your comments are very perceptive. I can't imagine that anything good or positive can come about by ignoring issues (around race and racism) that many students see in the news and/or social media every day. I think you are wise to consider how you can provide a forum in the classroom for them to wrestle with these issues. Your essay is very nicely written and interesting to read.

■ Challenging students to expand thinking

... based on your comments, it is not clear to me that you fully understand the concept of “white space”. It seems to me that the power and privilege aspects of the concept are either not understood or not accepted as meaningful (or true?). I appreciate critical analysis of what we read in class. I guess I would need to know what you mean by “black space” for example and how that compares to the concept of “white space”. I don't expect you to find research to support your premise—maybe reference to an observed situation would help to make your point.



Sample Feedback Comments



- Provide additional information

Clear statement of your perspective . . . Something to think about--white space potentially marginalizes natural born US students--as much as immigrants. Culture, when we think about students in schools, impacts more than just holidays. It can influence worldview, approach to learning, communication style, how students make meaning of content, etc. It is these latter issues that are often of concern to teachers in schools with diverse student populations. For them, adhering solely to practices based on white space norms could be limiting.

- Correct/introduce students to correct use of language when discussing diversity

. . . you clearly had a lot to say about this topic! This is good—I appreciate it when a student finds a topic thought provoking. Your essay was very interesting to read. One point—make sure when you use the term “colored” to refer to students of color that the term is preceded by “students of”. Your reference to a “colored school” has a negative historical connotation. Minority-majority schools or schools attended by a majority of students of color would have been more appropriate to say. Overall—very nicely written essay—very thoughtful.



Staying in the Conversation



One section of a course is not enough for students to explore their beliefs and understanding about teaching and diversity.

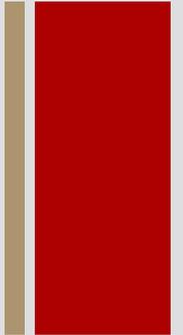
Opportunity #2: Children's Understanding of Race

Opportunity #3: School Funding and the Quality of Education (socioeconomic class).



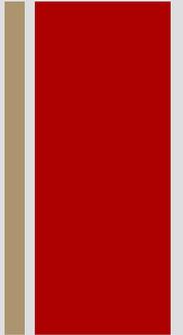
Issues to Consider for Future Classes

- Provide on-going interaction for students' personal and professional development, possibly through social justice networks.
- Preservice teachers tend to be concrete—incorporate concrete and abstract diversity-related content
- Students tend to engage more in depth exploration in journals—may be we can think of online discussion as close to journal writing.
- Students need to acknowledge structural systems of racism and inequality while maintaining a belief that they can be agents for change.





Issues to Consider for Future Classes



- Diversity course work tends to focus on changing minds and hearts—more attention needed to how understanding of diversity can be applied to students’ lives/professions.
- Not including the study of personal racism in the Foundations course is problematic—allows students too much distance from issues of diversity.
- Need a section to focus on working on structural inequities through everyday practice as teachers.



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