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“Reframing the Narrative: The pedagogy of teaching Race and Ethnicity through a lens of power and agency” Marci Bounds Littlefield PhD, Associate Professor, Sociology Borough of Manhattan Community College“

The current racial climate in the United States suggests that Race and understanding the impact of racism is challenging. Scholars who teach race in post-secondary education have identified that teaching about Race creates emotions which influence the learning process for all students. For minority students in particular, they may be aware of the system of white domination in American society but may resist the idea that racism is embedded into the structure of American society. (Maybee, 2011). Also, students who live in racial and ethnic enclaves may be less aware of the dominance of European culture in America. In my courses, I find that students of color are resistant to learning the history of conquest and colonization in America because they perceive it to tell a story victimization and defeat rather than one of resistance, challenges and victories. This reality creates a bottleneck because students lack the historical background to analyze racial issues and they have an incorrect view of the contributions of people of color to American society. This paper documents my efforts to transform the pedagogical practices in my Race and Ethnicity course and my efforts to reframe the narrative and teach race and ethnicity through a lens of power and agency.

A. The Pedagogy of Teaching Race: Identifying the Bottleneck

In my Comparative Ethnic Studies/ Race and Ethnicity course, I survey and highlight the historical events which have made a momentous impact on different racial and ethnic groups and their experiences in American society. I trace the patterns of colonization and the impact of Great Britain on colonizing the Americas, Spain colonizing the Southwest and Mexico and the French in colonizing Canada and Louisiana. As I proceed through the course I concentrate on the major time periods and patterns of migration as it relates to the indigenous populations of America. While this is typical of the way in which I teach my Race and Ethnicity Courses in Sociology, what is different is the institutional setting in which I currently offer these courses. The Borough of Manhattan Community College is considered to be a Hispanic Serving Institution. In many ways this institution reflects the diversity of New York City because almost every ethnic and racial group is represented in my classrooms. However, what is different about

this institution is that the populations in my courses are a majority minority population. This means that I am teaching about oppression and colonization to students who daily experience the effects of race and discrimination in their daily lives.

While I am excited about teaching about Race my students are less than excited, and my experience is that students of color are often resistant to learning the history of conquest and colonization in America because they perceive it to tell a story of victimization and defeat. My students often communicate stories of being singled out because of their Race or their immigration status and they clearly recognize the social hierarchy still present and reproduced in a society, which was founded and continues to stand on principals of equality. I began thinking about the way the information is presented in the textbooks and even the way I trace history and after one of my students commented; “I really like and learn so much from your class but I just leave feeling mad and powerless,” I then had to reconsider my teaching, my assignment and my entire presentation because I realized that learning about the history of Race can create an emotional bottleneck for minority students.

As educators I believe it is our role to facilitate learning but in a way that is socially responsible. Even historical facts can be slanted in a way that benefits some while leaving others at a clear disadvantage. For most students the first time they really take a course on Race is in college and depending on how it is taught they may leave with a clear perspective which reinforces the story of minority inferiority which ultimately effects the learning process and educational outcomes. At the same time popular memory and representations of past events often ignores the amazing contributions of people of color to the American story which if reframed in a more inclusive way would support the idea that culture is relevant in the educational process and differences even in a Race class can be used to promote students’ learning.

The decoding the disciplines model provides a critical way of assessing student learning and it begins with identifying the bottleneck, the place where the learning is interrupted (Pace, Middendorf, 2004) In my course, the topic subject of Race is bottleneck for students because of their experiences as minority students who are also learning about Race. The following list provides context for understanding the way in which discipline specific issues related to a Race and Ethnicity course may interrupt the learning process.

Race: Identifying discipline specific bottlenecks

1. Students lack the background in history and sociology to fully understand some of the topics.
2. There are often misconceptions about Race which stems from an overreliance on their own experience This causes them to only rely on personal experiences rather than to use the readings to support their views
3. Students are often unable to recognize how they have been conditioned to see the world
4. Some students of color do not believe racism still exists at some level
5. There are always students who believe that race doesn't matter
6. Minority students may perceive racial history as a story of victimization and defeat

While all of these problems influence the learning process they are all connected and should be treated as a singular 'struggle' because these struggles intersect in important ways. Again this paper documents my efforts to transform my pedagogy decode the discipline of race to help minority engage in the process of critical thinking and learning.

B. Expert Thinking Modeling;

Educating Minority Students

After accessing the literature on the pedagogy of teaching Race, experts have engaged in a process of examining the ways in which education can be a liberating experience and a source of freedom (Hooks, 1994). Paulo Freire (1970) is credited for thinking about the way in which education is experienced by minorities and he believed that education should be organized in a

way that allows oppressed groups to participate in their own education and this exchange makes this process democratic because marginalized groups are able to exercise agency.

As a result of Freire work educators began to examine and reconstruct the structure of education to include the voices of the oppressed through culture. (Tinto,1997). The premise that culture is central to education has challenged educators and institutions of higher education to find alternative methods to educate students from diverse backgrounds. This theory has contributed to further development and various forms of this has been defined as culturally- compatible (Jordan,1985), culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1990), culturally congruent (Au& Kawakami, 1994) and culturally responsive education (Cazden & Leyett, 1981, Erikson & Mohat, 1982). Thus culturally responsive education defines a framework that connects the teaching philosophy with the learning environment and creates a structure for instructors to offer a culturally compatible environment. (Ford, et al.). This framework requires the teaching philosophy, the learning environment, the curriculum and assessment all be culturally responsive, promote critical thinking, acknowledge the legitimacy of cultural heritage, promote a sense of belonging and promote student engagement. (Kea, Trent, & Davis, 2002).

In response to expert thinking in relationship to understanding the concepts in my course I have developed a number of exercises to help students logically make the connection between race and social structure. The analogy used to help students understand social structure is a spider and his web. The spider is the individual and the web is society. While the spider is his own individual player, the web represents social structure and is always there and defined despite the spider's actions or reactions. Consequently, students are not always aware that the ways in which

we act and react to those around us are part of the web of society. The exercise I will use to help students understand social structure is through a short class exercise described below.

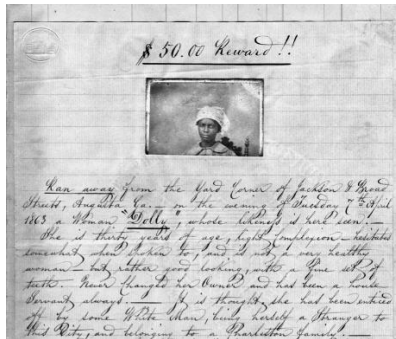
Race Monopoly: This game gives students an opportunity to purchase housing, education and other goods for their basic living expenses. Each person is assigned a 'Player piece'. The player pieces include all races with varying incomes all associated with the U.S. census race, income and education indicators. Players in the game purchase housing, food and other items based on their income and those in minority groups are only able to purchase housing and other goods and services based on their income and education. Those minority groups who are able to purchase housing in better neighborhood are only able to do so based on their education and income. The object of the game is to live and purchase basic necessities given your personal constraints which include race, class, gender, education and income. This exercise helps students make connections between social structure, life chances and race.

The Pedagogy of Teaching the discipline of Race to Minority Students

The principals of Critical Race Theory (CRT), and intersectionality are also important framework for examining social structures and ideologies and the important components of enhancing the learning and promoting a higher level of analytical thinking. To that end four basic components are suggested by the experts to help minority students engage and move past the bottleneck of learning about Race; 1) history, 2) statistical data 3) social science theories 4) critical analysis of the laws and social structure . (Lopez, 2003) . These steps were used to provide a real foundation to promote racial literacy which involves the ways in which individuals learn to negotiate, discuss and interpret racialized processes, and the vocabulary needed to

transform their own thinking and behavior. (Twine, 2010). Understanding the historical context of Race as a biological fallacy but a social reality, the use of statistical data to provide a visual dimension to view the impact of race, and understanding the impact of social norms, social structure and theories are all important steps in outlining a Race class and one that gives students the necessary tools to challenge social ills and confront racial problems. In essence I use an interdisciplinary approach in teaching Race where I incorporate culture, and highlight the way in which multiple identities intersect to create the environment daily experienced by minorities. Although the history of Race in America is a story of oppression, discrimination and overt racism, what is not readily apparent is the way in which minority groups responded to the history of racial oppression. People of Color have made significant contributions to American society and many of their contributions are not recognized and not part of the popular dialogue as it relates to historical realities. I believe if students were given a complete view of the many ways enslaved and oppressed groups changed their circumstances and challenged the racism in American society then my students would feel empowered by history. Therefore, my course design involves reframing the narrative which reconsiders the history of struggle in American society from the perspective of the oppressed and highlights their responses to oppression. This I believe creates an empowering space for minority students to learn about oppression. The following is a sample exercise to help students understand history and how minority groups responded to oppression. These exercises (Below) will help students impact the relationship between race, history and social structure, all of which are important parts of supporting higher level intellectual thinking.

Sample A. History Example. This exercise gives the historical reality of how slaves resisted slavery by running away and the historical context of Civil War America.



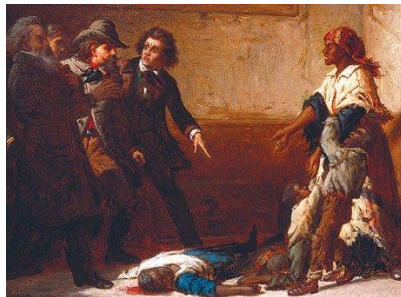
Source A. *Louis Manigault, runaway notice for Dolly, 1863. Southern Historical Collection, Library of the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill*

Slavery and Freedom

Using Primary data to understand slavery and resistance; Please review the image on the following pages and respond to the following question;

1. What does this ad tell us about Dolly?
2. Why does Maigault say that Dolly has never changed owners and she has always been a house slave?
3. What were the difference between house slaves and field slaves?
4. Why Does Louis Manigault believe Dolly has been enticed? Why would he not consider she may have run away of her own free will?

Sample B . History Example. Source B. Margaret Garner (called "Peggy") was an enslaved African-American woman in pre-Civil War America who was notorious – or celebrated – for killing her own daughter rather than allowing the child to be returned to slavery. She and her family had escaped in January 1856 across the frozen Ohio River to Cincinnati, but they were apprehended by U. S. Marshals acting under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850



1. What happened to slaves when they ran away?

2. Why was there an issue with how to punish Margaret Gardner?
3. How were slaves treated in the courts?
4. Why would killing your children be a source of Protest?
- 5.

C. The conceptual shift from teaching Race to mental tasks

The principals I will use address emotional bottleneck and disrupting inaccurate ideas about Race include the following steps as outlined in Middendorf and Shhopkow (2018). These steps are critical to implementing curricula tasks as the semester proceeds includes the following;

1. Identify and address the emotional bottlenecks
2. Disrupt the learning scripts through course design
3. Structure in student accountability

In order to address the mental tasks associated with teaching this course I will use the film “What’s Race Got to Do with It”, by California newsreel which chronicles the experiences of college students at UC Berkeley and they discuss their own awareness of their ideas and stereotypes about race and class. This documentary is useful because the students on the film are diverse and they openly discuss their prejudices, and experiences as it relates to race. Then after the film I will allow students an opportunity to give their feedback and we have a discussion about their own experiences and how they felt about the ideas and topics raised in the film. Before the end of class students will complete a series of questions; *1) Why do we teach a class about Race? Is it meaningful? 2)What is Race and 3) Does Race Still Matter why or why not.* These questions allow me to identify emotional bottleneck and I can begin addressing these issues as the course proceeds.

Readings lectures and class discussions will also help disrupt the learning scripts and dismantles preconceived notions about race and any inaccuracies as it relates to America. I also

incorporate presentations and critical response assignments that build on their awareness of the agency of people of color despite the way in which minority groups have been historically oppressed. My assignments are a huge part of my courses because they give students the opportunity to work as a group when we look at a variety of primary sources throughout the course. The following example is an example of the way people of color protested and is another example of my course revisions.

As we move through the course students have multiple opportunities to understand the history of oppression. I used primary sources to give students a perspective on how to understand Race. I use visual representation to illustrate history and the way minority groups respond to oppression.

Agency, Protest and History Example



Sample C. Eastman Johnson, *A Ride for Liberty -- The Fugitive Slaves*, c. 1862, oil on paper board, 55.8 x 66.4 cm (Brooklyn Museum)

1. What does the Image of the family on the horse say about the institution of slavery?
2. Why would it be both dangerous and courageous to leave the South during the Civil War
3. What are contrabands_____
4. Why were contrabands important in understanding how African Americans took their freedom?

5. Why were pictures important in understanding culture in the Civil
6. How do these sources help us to understand how African Americans resisted and played a n important role in their own freedom?

D. How will Students practice These Skills and Get Feedback?

I will utilize a variety of assignments to build on the readings and class discussions. I utilize low stakes writing assignments to give students the opportunity to understand the historical context and then write about what they have learned. Contemporary institutional and individual racism, which is central to today's conflicts, has its origins in the institution of slavery. We discuss slavery in length and we historically trace the colonialization of North America. The following is an example of an assignment.

During class discussion on slavery, I will play recordings from the *Slave Narrative Federal Project*: and I have students respond to the following questions;

How Does this recording discuss Slavery? How were they treated?

How does the slave narrative discuss stratification? Family?

How does the narrative discuss God given rights?

What is your overall impression of slavery from the recordings?

How did slavery define social structure?

This exercise aids in the discussion and it gives students context for understanding slavery from the viewpoint of the enslaved. The following assessment given a quarter of the way through gives me additional context for feedback and to address any other issues. Students should be able to reasonably address these questions;

1. *How do institutions, practices and beliefs become raced?*
2. *The most important raced institution is the state. Explain*
3. *How did Naturalization Act of 1790 create a racialized description of American citizenship? How did this law reflect the racial hierarchy?*

4. *Why is the Racial order politically significant? Why and how is race socially constructed?*
5. *How have Presidents and scientists played an important role in the development of racist ideas? Explain*
6. *How did the Eugenics movement support the racial hierarchy in American society? Explain.*

E. How will Students get Motivated and Master these tasks?(Challenges in Student motivation and Scaffold assignments and assessments)

The culminating project give students an opportunity to utilize their skills and learning to think about how people of color have transformed their own circumstances. The next exercises demonstrate the assignments associated with reframing the narrative as it relates to how students understand the history of race and colonization in American society and serve to motivate and offer practice and tangible examples. These exercises lead up to the final project.

The way in which people of color utilized various forms form of protest are important and it helps students to understand the many forms in which protest can promote social change. The following list includes the teaching exercises I use to reframe the narrative and give students a research opportunity to consider protest, and social change. I begin my scaffolding the ideas around protest to help students identify what does it mean to protest. During class students respond to these questions as a class discussion and they record their answers on a cube

Scaffolding assignment

CUBING THEMES OF FREEDOM

- 1) *What is the meaning of Freedom?*
- 2) *What does it look like? (on cube)*
- 3) *What does it mean to protest) or REBEL? Is it the same thing*
- 4) *Why would people or groups protest or rebel?*
- 5) *What are possible outcome of rebellions or protests*
 - a. *What does protest look like? Identify ways people fight for their rights.*
 - b. *Can publications be a method of protest? What does it look like?*

- c. *Culture?*
- d. *Culture/ Arts/ Why is this important? How can you protest using writing?*
- e. *Name some ways to use protest using the arts?*

The culminating project give students an opportunity to utilize their skills and learning to think about how people of color have transformed their own circumstances. This project will also help students master the skills they have learned and it is an opportunity for them to get feedback.

Students are allowed to revise this paper.

Culminating Exercise

FINAL PROJECT Methods of Protest and Freedom Presentation and Summary: Presentation (50) points: Please Use visuals and discuss main points. Final Paper (100) points: Please use the information below to write your paper in the following order. This is not a book report. Please respond to the questions below in this order as it relates to your topic.

Although Race has been a struggle for People of Color in American there are many examples of the response of People of Color to the prevailing social conditions. Many Groups have greatly contributed to American Society and made a difference in their circumstances. This project will give you the opportunity to identify and research these amazing contribution and present your findings to the class. Presentation: Provide a visual example and discuss the main points. Each person will have 2-3 minutes to present to the class. Paper Assignment Using the Examples list of important events and methods of protest) please chose an example of the ways people of color have exercised methods of protest to respond to the current social conditions. Then in a 8-10 page pager please answer the following;

- a. Brief discussion of the time period and the prevailing issues of the time. Describe the main controversy.
- b. Identify your example and give background information. Who was involved? Where did the idea originate? How was this a method of Protest and response to the prevailing social conditions?
What were the contributions of people of color to this event or form of change?
- c. Why was this important as an historical and social event? What was it effect? What was the impact and how many people were effect? (Ex; If you choose a journal, How long was the journal published? Who read the journal? If you choose an insurrection or war effort. How long was the war? What was the lasting impact? If you choose a form of Art; How famous was the art? Where was it shown?

- d. How can this be applied to events today? Using your example, you just explained how can this form of protest be applied to today? In other word how is this an important strategy and give a current example of how this example can be used today to alter or change the present social conditions.

F. Revisions.

My advanced course on Race will do the following.

Revised Lesson goals for the course

- Understand the way marginalized communities have changed their own destiny and contributed to the American story.
- Demonstrate the meaning of minority groups for Latino and African Americans in American Society
- Analyze the Historical events which have informed the experiences of Latino and African Americans.
- Identify and analyze the historical circumstances in the fight for racial justices of Latino and African Americans
- Discuss the multiple forms of resistance taken by Latino and African Americans in their fight for racial justice and equality
- Understand , Interpret and identify the meaning of resistance through the mediums of; Publications and Art, Key historical events and important persons and important organizations.

My revised course will completely infuse the perspective of minority groups into the historical and social context of organization and structure of American society. The exercises discussed in this paper document my efforts to revise my course to help students overcome their lack of knowledge about race and enhances their ability to connect social structure the way in which they experience society. These revisions play close attention to the bottlenecks my students experience in my course and the way I will reorganize my course to address these issues, Again this is my way of reframing the narrative to teach Race in a way that takes into account the race of my students.

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APPENDIX :PROTEST EXAMPLES AND EXERCISES

PUBLICATIONS AND ART: Through Publications and Arts People of color made significant contributions; Examples ; David Walker “The Appeal”, Phillis Wheatly ‘Poems”, Patria Newspaper, Crisis Magazine, The Liberator Newspaper and Freedom Journal,

Images; *Jose Clemente Orozco the reform and the fall of the empire*, “*Political Ideal of the Mexican People*’, *Diego Rivera, Lawrence Jacobs, “The Migration Series”*.

Teaching Exercises: *Compare poems written by Phyllis Wheatley, Julia de Burgos, and Reyes Cardenas and locate themes of nationalism and justice. Compare writings of Eugenio Maria de Hostos and David Walker in their demand for justice and Freedom. How are the Art of Jacob Lawrence’s Migration Series, Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco a response to Black American and Mexican independence? How were José Martí’s newspaper, Patria, as well as the newspapers La Revolucion, The Liberator, Freedom’s Journal and Crisis magazine used to change the social and political treatment of Blacks in America and advocate for Cuban and Puerto Rican Independence?*

FREEDOM FIGHTERS:These are some examples of heroes in the fight for justice. Thurgood Marshal, Julio L. Vizcarrondo, Eugenio Maria Hostos, Frances Ellen Walker Harper, Sojourner Truth, Booker T. Washington, Cesar Chavez, Maribel Sisters, WEB Dubois

Teaching Exercises: *Discuss and compare Julio L. Vizcarrondo’s Spanish abolitionist society to the abolition movement against slavery engaged in by Fredrick Douglass and Sojourner Truth in the U.S. Compare W.E.B. Dubois, Booker T. Washington and Cesar Chavez in their role in demanding political rights for Black Americans and Mexican Americans. Compare the legal victories of Thurgood Marshal and Cesar Chavez and the impact they had on segregation, civil rights and labor unions. Compare Booker T. Washington and Cesar Chavez in their plight for the common man; Mexican laborers and Black sharecroppers. Compare the Mirabel Sisters and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper in the way they are known for questioning the political regime in the Dominican Republic and slavery and civil rights in America.*

REBELLION There have been many examples of the way Groups have challenged society through rebellion and protest. Some of these events listed include; the Haitian Revolution, Las Gorras Blanca, Underground Railroad and El Grito De Lores. The persons listed on poster include, Jose Celso, Barsoso, Nat Turner, Denmark Vessey, and John Brown.

Teaching Exercises

Compare Nat Turner’s insurrection to Grito de Lares in the fight for the abolition for African Slavery and Puerto Rican independence from Spain. How did the Haitian Revolution, the Underground Railroad, and Las Gorras Blancas, “the fence cutters,” challenge the system of slavery and Latino injustice for Blacks and Mexicans in New Mexico? Discuss how breaking the law forced social change in the examples of the Underground Railroad and Las Gorras Blancas. How did the Haitian Revolution, the Denmark Vesey insurrection, and John Brown’s Raid on Harpers Ferry change the hierarchical structure of American society?

WAR AND BATTLE

Civil War, Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, U.S. Colored Troops, Spanish American War, Tejanos

Teaching exercises: *How did the outcome of the Civil War and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo result in creating second class citizens for Blacks and Mexican Americans in the Southwest in American society? How did Juan Seguín and the men in the Colored Infantry demand freedom? How did the action of the Colored Infantry and the Tejanos in the Mexican American War provide examples of Blacks and Tejanos fighting for their freedom and becoming leaders in their time?*

ORGANIZATIONS

Black Power, Chicano Movement, Student Non Violent Coordinating Committee, Cuban Independence Movement and the Black Panther Party.

Teaching exercises *Compare the Chicano Civil Rights movement and The Black Power movement in American Society. How did the League of United Latin American Citizens founded in 1929 and the NAACP protect Mexican Americans and Black Americans from discrimination? How would you compare the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee to the Cuban movement for Independence led by José Martí?*