

Socialization and Hate: Can Higher Education Make a Difference?

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ABSTRACT

What happens to students when their “Cycle of Socialization” clashes with their academic discipline and higher education? This qualitative participant observational study is grounded in the Hate Model and its intersection with the Cycle of Socialization as it clashes with social justice in higher education.

How do we become who we are? What shapes our thinking, our values, and our beliefs? How are our “social identities” shaped? What happens to students when their “culture of socialization” teaches them to hate? What happens when individuals who have deeply rooted feelings of hate are exposed to the groups they have been taught to hate, and confronted by others regarding their beliefs?

Two female students boldly proclaimed their hatred of “certain types of people.” Hate, one young woman reported, was “learned at an early age,” adding that she saw no reason to change. I asked both students to consider what would happen when their beliefs clashed with their chosen academic programs in the social science field and the academic freedom of higher education. This paper addresses their journey and provides answers to these questions.

In this qualitative participant observational study, I monitored two undergraduate female students who shared their experiences of struggle, questioning, and change. Before discussing their journey, I will discuss the Cycle of Socialization and the Hate Model, two concepts upon which this research is based.

I. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

This research is grounded in two theoretical frameworks—the Cycle of

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Socialization (Bell, 1997; Harro, 2000) and the Hate Model (Schafer & Navarro, 2003). Bobbie Harro discusses the Cycle of Socialization by focusing on the “specific set of social identities that we are born into” (p. 15). Her discussion of the Cycle of Socialization addresses how the process occurs, the sources from which it derives, how it affects our lives, and how we as individuals perpetuate the cycle. Early on in life we are taught that we are different in many ways—skin color, gender, ethnicity, religion, political beliefs, sexual orientation. In this way, we are *socialized*, brought into society with preconceived notions that allow us to internalize the narratives, values, symbols, and codes that exist, thus ensuring the continuity of our society over time. Our parents assist us in this process of socialization into the larger world.

We are taught to see and experience the world through the lenses of our first teachers—our parents. According to Harro, the Cycle of Socialization is a recursive process experienced by all individuals; that is, it repeats itself generation after generation. Early messages, stereotyping, myths, and misinformation are reinforced by many other entities—educational and religious institutions, books, movies, other forms of media, governments, family, friends, and so forth. This socialization process continues until someone questions misinformation, takes a stand, and consciously chooses to break the cycle. As all of us continue to grow into young adults and then adults, we continue to express and live the messages we have learned, which have been reinforced by our families, the media, religious organizations, political parties, music, schools, and so forth. According to Lee Anne Bell (1997), the socialization process is “pervasive (coming from all sides and sources), consistent (patterned and predictable), circular (self-supporting), self-perpetuating (intradependent) and often invisible (unconscious and unnamed)” (p. 15).

Hatred (or hate) as defined by *Merriam-Webster* (2010) is “an intense hostility and aversion usually deriving from fear, anger, or sense of injury”; it is an “extreme dislike or antipathy.” It may occur in a variety of contexts, from hatred of inanimate objects or animals, to hatred of oneself or other people, entire groups of people, people in general, existence, or everything.

FBI Special Agents John Schafer and Joe Navarro (2003) describe hate as a complex subject in which there are two basic subdivisions. They refer to the first as rational hate in which the hate is inspired by an unjust act. In the second type, irrational hate, the hatred of a person is based on the person’s race, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or national origin.

A. *Coding Framework*

A coding framework for this research was established and based on the

Cycle of Socialization and the Hate Model. Five coding symbols were derived from the identifying markers for the Cycle of Socialization—it is pervasive (PER), consistent (CON), circular (CIR), self-perpetuating (SP), and often invisible (INV). The Hate Model developed by John Schafer and Joe Navarro (2003) is a seven-stage model that describes how hate groups define themselves and how they target their victims: the haters gather (S1), the hate group defines itself (S2), the hate group disparages the target (S3), the hate group taunts the target (S4), the hate group attacks the target without weapons (S5), the hate group attacks the target with weapons (S7), and the hate group destroys the target (S7).

II. METHODOLOGY

In this qualitative descriptive participant observational case study, I closely observed two female students who self-disclosed that they were active members of local hate groups so that I could understand how the Hate Model and the Cycle of Socialization collided with the ethos of higher education. I wanted to determine whether there were any observable cause-and-effect relationships exhibited by these two students as I introduced them to the concept of the Cycle of Socialization. I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of how hate is learned, how those who hate interact with others whom they were taught to hate, and whether, as adults, they were willing to challenge some of their early social identities. Journaling, direct observations, interviews, and participant observations the methods of data collection used in this study.

A. *Research Questions*

There were several research questions to be answered in this qualitative case study: (a) How was hate learned by these participants? (b) Does teaching about the Cycle of Socialization affect preconceived notions of hate? (c) How would these participants interact with those they were taught to hate? (d) Were these participants willing to challenge learned hate?

1. Participants

Two female students who proudly announced active membership in a local hate group self-selected to participate in this qualitative participant observational study. Each student agreed to participate in the following manner: (a) maintain a personal reflective journal for one academic semester 15 weeks in length, (b) participate in three individual interview sessions throughout the semester, and (c) check in with me should any in-class con-

versation become too uncomfortable. I used observations; kept detailed field notes; debriefed with a research assistant who is not associated with the institution these students attend; and reviewed pertinent documents shared by the two students. These various approaches contributed to the wealth of information gathered in this study. These two students were second-semester sophomores majoring in a social science field.

2. The Setting

This Cycle of Socialization plays out in our classrooms every day, leading to the questions: Do we see it? Are we aware of its existence? As this Cycle of Socialization plays out in our classrooms, students are challenged to either take action—which may involve great changes in their lives—or to do nothing—thereby permitting the cycle to continue.

The journey of two white students, followed through the process of *reflective learning*, allowed me to examine how the Cycle of Socialization creates discord, not only in the classroom, but also within the students' personal lives. Reflective learning, as defined by Evelyn M. Boyd and Ann W. Fales (1983), is a process whereby a person internally examines and explores an issue of concern, an issue that is generally triggered by some experience. This process creates and clarifies meaning in terms of self, and it results in a changed conceptual perspective. A great contributor to the Cycle of Socialization is the location in which an individual is born and reared. Therefore, a description of this location is appropriate at this point.

a. Location. The campus these students attend is located in a small county in a mid-Atlantic state. The rural nature of the county and the surrounding areas makes the region amenable to the obscurity many hate groups seek. I believe these groups have had a great influence on the socialization of many students. This belief was substantiated by statistics prepared by the Southern Poverty Law Center (Southern Poverty Law Center [SPLC], 2008).

b. Campus demographics. The campus, located close to the geographic center of the county, is within driving distance of a major mid-Atlantic city. There are nearly 150,000 county residents living in approximately 800 square miles in an area designated as part of the Appalachian Region of the country (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Of the individuals living in the county, 95% self-identified as White; 4% self-identified as Black; others self-identified as Native American or as being of Asian, Hispanic, or Latino descent. As of 2000, 76% percent of the county residents were high school graduates; this compares to an 82.5% nationwide average. At the time of this study, only 11% of the county's residents held a bachelor's or higher degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

The campus is a miniature replica of the larger countywide community; according to the registrar at Penn State, 93% of the students reside in the county (Germaine Fotta, personal communication, October 8, 2008). There is a similarity of appearance among the students, particularly in their attire. The majority of these students report that they will never leave the local area, while a very small minority “can’t wait” to move to a large urban area. Demographically, this university is a commuter campus with an enrollment of 1,106. Of this total enrollment, 456 (41%) are male, and 650 (59%) are female. The student body is predominantly White (85%). The average age of the students at this undergraduate institution is 24.8 (Germaine Fotta, personal communication, October 8, 2008).

c. The course. The two students in this case study were enrolled in a diversity-related family development class. Thirty-five students were enrolled in the class. Of that number, four females were non-traditional African-American students. Three of the students were male and under the age of 25 (traditional). Of the remaining female students, two were non-traditional White women; the remaining 26 female students, including the participants in this study, were traditional-aged students. Diversity, social justice, and family relationships were the primary concepts addressed in this class. The class met twice a week for 15 weeks; each class was 75 minutes in length. One of the objectives of the course was to enhance critical thinking skills, particularly as they applied to diverse family situations.

In this particular course, as in the others I teach, I asked the students at the beginning of the semester whether they were willing to participate in a collaborative conversation, one that might at times be uncomfortable for them. The students had the right to say no, at which time I would have suggested that they drop the class. In the class under discussion, not one student declined to participate.

d. Local hate groups. The SPLC (2008) is a civil rights law firm internationally known for its tolerance education programs, legal victories against white supremacist groups, and tracking of hate groups. The SPLC has recently reported activity among many known hate groups in this and surrounding mid-Atlantic states. The campus is within a 90-minute drive of 13 of these groups.

B. *The Journey*

My attempts to expose students to the concept of diversity have proven to be very challenging. I am not alone in this challenge. Kressel (2002) studied global mass hatred and reported that institutions of higher education are routinely envisioned as being environments that are more tolerant and liberal, places where critical thinking is developed and where opinions are

honored. However, Kressel and Blee (2002) have found that this is not universally true. Institutions of higher education neither guarantee an acceptance of arguments for equality and tolerance nor offset the racist attitudes their students experience outside the campus environment. Students are only repeating what they have learned as they progressed from young children to college-aged students.

To that end, I presented “hate” as a topic of discussion. I posed several questions to the class and asked the students to define *hate*. Then, I asked them to reflect on the following question: Is hate innate or is it learned? After much discussion, the class determined that hate is learned. “Who initially teaches us about hate?” I inquired.

During the initial conversation, I observed two female students seated in the last row in the corner of the room. They were laughing with each other; they were loud and boisterous; they *wanted* to be noticed. (Rarely do I have students who act in this manner in my classes.)

I questioned the cause of their laughter. They were quick to respond and clearly identified who taught them to hate. “My parents,” proudly stated Kathy (not her real name). Kathy and Sally (not her real name) then began to play off one another as they made additional statements: “Hate is one of our family values!”, “They [her family members] are very clear about the message they shared with me about niggers, Jews, faggots, dikes, and Christians. Those people have no place in our society.” I observed many other students shaking their heads in agreement and heard a male voice say, “Yeah, she’s right.”

While taking in what I had just heard, I glanced at the four non-traditional African American students sitting in the diagonally opposite corner of the room. These four students were the only ones in the class who could not be identified as “white, non-Hispanic.” One of the four students exclaimed, “No she didn’t!” in disbelief at what had just been said. Another of the four students yelled, “You don’t even know me. You’re judging me by the color of my skin instead of the type of person I am.”

This exchange led to an explosion of comments from a variety of students. One shouted, “I am a Christian and proud of it. I will pray that God forgives you and your sins that you have committed against him and his people.” Another student asked, “Why are you majoring in a social science field if you hate everyone?” One very quiet and withdrawn student muttered, “Everyone hates me because I’m different. I didn’t ask to be this way!” It was only after class that this student disclosed to me that he was questioning his sexual orientation. He said he did not feel safe saying anything in class, fearing retaliation from the two female students whose comments began the original verbal confrontation.

It should be noted that Kathy and Sally were not alone in their think-

ing. While discussing local and national current events, the general response of the class regarding those who were “different” from themselves indicated an intense dislike of those differences. I heard this response from many, if not the majority, of the students. I noted that the four African-American students were not negative in their statements concerning people different from themselves.

I asked Kathy and Sally to stay for a few minutes after class. After a few comments concerning my interest in their previous comments, I asked them to “teach me” about how they had learned to hate. Kathy proudly and loudly stated:

I heard my grandpa tell my dad that niggers are dirty, stinky, and lazy. Our family has been part of the KKK for as long as I can remember. I don't think I should have to be in the same class as those niggers. I have my own hood and robes; I've attended Klan meetings where they planned to attack niggers and faggots. We have to rid ourselves of those people; if not, they'll be taking over our country.

Sally, aged 20 at the time of this conversation, explained:

My pap told me I should stay away from those kind. They're lazy, worthless, and, besides, they stink. White people have to take a stand against those people. White people have to fight for what's right. I was raised in a racially conscious home.

The initial comments shared by Kathy and Sally are what Schafer and Navarro, identified as the first stage (S1) of The Hate Model—the Haters Gather. Regarding the Cycle of Socialization experienced by these two students, their statements indicate that the messages of socialization are consistent (CON) in that the messages did not vary; they were reiterated by various family members. The process is circular (CIR) in that it was passed from family member to family member, old to young and young to old. It is also invisible (INV) in that the messages are part of everyday family conversations. It is pervasive (PER) in that it is part of the fabric of their lives and it is self-perpetuating (SP) because they continue to use the language to embrace the ideology, language, sayings, and music of their cultures.

Kathy remarked, “We hear that niggers are lazy from our parents, the members of our group, the music we listen to, the stuff we read. It's everywhere”; whereas Sally reported, “I hear the same comments here, niggers are dumb; our pastor tells us every day Sunday that faggots, dikes, queers, carpet munchers are wrong and those sinners must die!” (It should be noted that both students attend the same “weekly services” of a non-denominational organization whose leader is self-proclaimed and not ordained in any

religious sense.) We are no different from these two students and others; we are surrounded by messages important individuals convey. These people of influence have a profound impact on a person's self-concept and self-perception. We as a society are inundated with misinformation, prejudicial attitudes, and biased statements through the internet, newspapers, radio, language, cultural practices, and holidays.

These women's comments, both in class and in conversation with me, indicated that they share their thoughts openly in order to encourage others to "come join" their cause. On the cover of Sally's notebook, I observed the number 311. When I inquired about the number, both students laughed. Finally, Sally stated, "We have nothing to say." Upon further investigation I later learned that 311 is a numeric symbol for the Ku Klux Klan. The 11th letter of the alphabet is the letter "K"; thus, 3 times 11 yields "KKK," or Ku Klux Klan. This numeric symbol is sometimes used as a greeting to demonstrate membership in the KKK or simply sympathy with the Klan and its ideology (Anti-Defamation League, 2005a). According to the model of Schaffer and Navarro, these two individual students met the requirement of the second state (S2) of the Hate Model; they, as members of a group, defined themselves.

One of the assignments for this diversity-family development class required that the students keep an individual reflective journal. They were to write about and reflect on any concept, class discussion, or reading assignment that resonated with them. With the permission of these two students, I discussed their journal entries with them. As I read the students' journal entries, I found examples of what Harro (2000) and Bell (1997) call the *first socialization*. At this level, individuals look to those persons who are most important to them—parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles—who, we believe, know "everything," whom we seldom question, who set the foundation of rules, roles, values, and beliefs and put into motion our developing selves. "This is who I am," stated Kathy. "I don't know any other way to think about those people. My mom and dad have never lied to me; why would I not believe them? Why should I believe you?"

However, I noted from reading the young women's journals that the questions raised in class, the confusion expressed by classmates, and the experiences expressed by other acquaintances were beginning to collide with the early messages and stereotypes established by the powerful influences in these two students' lives. While in class, they immediately spoke defensively, protecting their parents, blaming others—the schools, churches, "niggers," "faggots," "Christians"—for their strong feelings of hatred. "If we could eliminate those people, the white race would be stronger and America would truly be the greatest country in the world."

I took note of an interesting situation: When the two students were

together, they appeared to be very bold and confident as they made offensive comments; however, when either student was in a one-to-one situation with me or in class without the other, neither would say anything inappropriate. Schafer and Navarro (2003) reported that either type of hate—rational or irrational—is a sign of personal insecurities. As Schafer and Navarro reported: “Not all insecure people are haters, but all haters are insecure people” (p. 1).

I believe that only through the introduction of the Cycle of Socialization in a non-threatening context can students begin to look at themselves, reflect on the messages they received while growing up, and examine the assumptions they may have about particular target groups. The reflective process includes both the intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects that allow students to grapple with new information while the conflict rages inside. As one journeys through life, social and self identities continue to be formed and messages from significant institution—schools, churches, religions, music, the media, and others—preserve or change the roles, values, and assumptions that have been introduced early in our lives.

My reading of the journals of Kathy and Sally made me more aware of the power of the messages we receive and how those messages affect us through stereotypes, privilege, use of language, and deliberate or undeliberate levels of awareness. At one point, Kathy wrote in her journal: “How did he make a better grade than me? He’s a nigger, and niggers aren’t smart. All they’re good for is selling drugs and making babies. Damn, he’s probably on welfare. I don’t understand.” Sally wrote similar epithets in her journal. It was painful to witness the struggles both women experienced.

On the unconscious level, the messages Kathy and Sally received reinforced their thinking. They had been introduced to a musical group, Prussian Blue, and reported “liking the melody and rhythm” but “never listening to the lyrics of the song” they enjoyed. The group Prussian Blue consists of twin sisters, Lamb and Lynx Gaede. While preteens, they gained recognition in white supremacist circles by singing about Nazi heroes and the preservation of the White race. The name Prussian Blue was chosen because it also was the term used to refer to the blue residue left over by the use of Zyklon B, the poison the Nazis employed to kill millions of Jews and others in concentration camps during World War II (Anti-Defamation League, 2005b).

We often hear music, but do we really listen to the lyrics? When I asked Sally about this group, she was unaware of the meaning of Prussian Blue; she had no idea of its connection to the deaths of millions of Jews. I asked her whether she knew about the Holocaust. “NO!” she responded. When I shared with her a thumbnail explanation, her response was, “SO!!

What's the big deal? We should kill more people who cause us problems!!!"

Sally made an entry in her journal about the "wonderful" song written by Abel Meeropol and made famous by Billie Holiday—"Strange Fruit." "I love that song," Sally wrote, "looking at the group of Klansman hanging a nigger in a tree gives me such a rush." During the interview, I asked Sally about her comments in her journal; I inquired about her feelings as she saw an individual hanged. "It's not an individual, it's a nigger; and that's what we do to them," Sally replied. As we continued our discussion, Sally shared that hating "those people" made her feel "really good" as a person. "I am an American," she explained. "This is a white country; there is no room for niggers, faggots, Jews, or Christians." Sally's comments are an example of the third stage (S3) of Schaffer and Navarro's Model of Hate. From their journal entries and our one-on-one conversations, it was clear that both students had internalized the stereotype descriptions taught by their family and their KKK associations. Their self-reported behavior was very prejudicial and oppressive.

Initially, both individuals avoided introspection. As the semester progressed, each individual, in her own way, started to examine her thinking, struggled with new information, and confronted the stereotypes and mistruths she had been taught, while trying to hold on to what she knew. Kathy shared in her journal, "The nigger was elected to be president, now what? What is going to happen to our world? But, he doesn't look dirty or lazy; he's a lawyer [*sic*]. I never knew that they were that educated." When I was with Kathy, she reported her struggle regarding whether to attend a Klan meeting, because she was "not feeling comfortable" at a meeting. Schaffer and Navarro asserted, "Time cools the fire of the hate, thus forcing the hater to look within" (2003, p. 4). Both Kathy and Sally were very resistant and hesitant on every assignment and reflective journal entry; yet they shared pages and pages of their thoughts.

While I identified the first three stages of the Hate Model in the actions of these two students, I also noted through their journal entries that they were struggling, questioning, and confronting the rhetoric they had heard for so many years. Neither student shared, nor did I observe, any activity associated with the last four stages of the Hate Model—the hate group taunts the target (S4), the hate group attacks the target without weapons (S5), the hate group attacks the target with weapons (S7), and the hate group destroys the target (S7).

During the semester following this study, the two students visited my office together. They were very concerned that their journals would fall into the "wrong hands"—other faculty members, members of the Klan, their family members. To allay their fears, I shredded their journals in their pres-

ence. I believe this was the beginning of their realization that what had been learned over the years might be incorrect; they were adamant that their associates—family and Klan—not read the contents of the journals.

Although these two students committed to work with me for one 15-week semester, they continued to visit my office (unannounced) after the end of the semester to discuss and to process what they had experienced in class. They admitted that they were beginning to change their way of thinking and acting. Both individuals were one year from graduation and, according to their own reports, had “grown” as a result of the seeds planted in the diversity-related family development class. Sally stated that she was learning that she could change her beliefs. She chose to interact with and view persons different from herself. Kathy said she was having a “hard time” hearing the “N word,” stating that it “nauseated” her to hear it. Nonetheless, she reported that she continued to attend Klan meetings, stating that she had to do so. She added, “I don’t think I will ever get out until I move away.”

III. CONCLUSIONS

Several research questions were posed in this qualitative case study. From reading their journal entries and engaging in one-on-one conversations with the two participants, it became evident that the answer to the first question—How was hate learned by these participants?—was quite simple. They were taught to hate by their parents and their family association in the KKK, and their stereotypes were reinforced by other social institutions, such as education, the media, and internet. Their parents reared them within their own sense of “normal” and “culture.” No one is to blame; we pass on what we have been taught; that’s all we know. This was evidenced by their statements that they “learned at an early age” to hate those who are different. They were taught by family members: “my parents,” “hate is one of our family values,” “I heard my grandpa tell my dad that . . .,” “my pap told me . . .,” “I was raised in a racially conscious home.”

The second research question—Does teaching about the Cycle of Socialization affect preconceived notions of hate?—can be answered in the affirmative. This correlates with the work of Harro (2002) and Bell (1997) in that the core within each of us, through the socialization process, is filled with ignorance, confusion, fear, and insecurity. Hate is learned, and it is only through a daily struggle to look within that we can change. This reflective process includes questioning learned assumptions; confronting our own stereotypes, biases, and prejudices; participating in open and honest dialogues; and demonstrating a willingness to reach beyond our own personal “comfort zone,” thus risking vulnerability. Through this process, we can

become secure individuals who are free to ask questions about people, places, and things that are different from those we have experienced.

Both Sally and Kathy chose to go beyond their personal “comfort zones” to learn about themselves and others. At this point in their lives, they have chosen to look within and to question many of the mistruths. They were able to learn about the Cycle of Socialization. They are still learning about how their beliefs were shaped and molded by their associations and their fear of the unknown.

Sally reported that she is uncomfortable using the words “nigger” or “faggot”—“I have learned how hurtful those words are. I never put a face to a name; the people I was belittling were faceless to me, until now.” Kathy shared that she is struggling with religious differences:

I never believed in God. I was taught there was no God, but how did this earth come to be? I have to be honest: I am still growing, and my growth has caused some major friction within my home. My dad told me if I liked niggers I should move out and live like one of them. Guess what, I moved into my own apartment.

The third research question—How would these participants interact with those they were taught to hate?—can be answered by viewing the attitudes and actions of Kathy and Sally from the beginning of this study through their visits with me during the following semester. Initially, both students would make audible and boisterous comments when anyone made a statement that challenged their thinking and beliefs. They tried to recruit other White students to join their cause. They would laugh or make loud derogatory comments when other students, African-American or White, made statements that challenged their ways of thinking. They were, however, respectful of other White students when they made statements with which they (Kathy and Sally) agreed. Throughout the class, these two students sat in the farthest corner, near a door, with at least several chairs between them and the other students in the class.

I began to notice, however, that small changes occurred as the semester progressed. Kathy and Sally slowly began to talk and interact with other students in the class; perhaps they were beginning to feel that the classroom was a safe environment. Toward the end of the semester, Kathy and Sally became less boisterous and less intrusive when others were speaking.

In the tenth week of the semester, I showed the movie *The Laramie Project*. The movie is based on the 1998 kidnapping and murder of Matthew Shepard, who was severely beaten and left to die while tied to a fence on the outskirts of Laramie, Wyoming. Five weeks after Shepard’s death, Moisés Kaufman and fellow members of the Tectonic Theater Project went

to Laramie and, over the course of the next year, conducted more than 200 interviews with people of the town. From these interviews they wrote the play *The Laramie Project*, a chronicle of the life of the town of Laramie in the year after the murder (Tectonic Theater Project, n.d.). At the point in the movie where Reverend Phelps of the Westboro Baptist Church and his followers were protesting outside the courthouse, and the “angels” surrounded the group, backs turned to the protestors and arms upraised, I noted that Kathy had tears in her eyes. Sally had a strange look on her face, and later she wrote in her journal that she saw herself as one of the protesters and questioned the pain she had caused others.

The final research question—Were these participants willing to challenge learned hate?—also can be answered in the affirmative. After the course, the students continued to visit me to discuss the changes they were seeing in themselves or the questions with which they were still grappling. Sally said, “I’m not the same person today as I was when I walked into your class several months ago.” Kathy expressed the opinion that “if I can change, anyone can change if they are given the opportunity to explore themselves and others.”

The following example answers both the third and fourth research questions. Earlier in this paper, I commented that an African American student responded to the outbursts of Kathy and Sally by stating, “You don’t even know me. You’re judging me by the color of my skin instead of the type of person I am.” A year after the class, Sally reported that she and that student sat over lunch and talked with each other. I have no knowledge of the content of their conversation; however, I believe that it is important to report the change in Sally’s behavior regarding an individual whom she had been taught to hate.

IV. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

First, I want the reader to know that I experienced a great deal of discomfort in this class. If I wanted my students to be reflective, then I too had to undertake that journey. I had to confront my own feelings and “isms” and come to understand why I became so internally enraged when the students used the “N” word; referred to homosexuals by derogatory terms; expressed callous disregard for the loss of life in the Holocaust; had intense conversations on topics ranging from abortion to euthanasia, political differences, immigration, single parenting, and welfare recipients. Although I had to contain my feelings in class, I realized I had to be reflective so that I could be more secure in my own beliefs.

As I witnessed the struggle and discomfort experienced by Kathy and Sally, I realized that it is our responsibility, as leaders in the classroom, to

teach about the concepts of diversity and social justice. It is our duty to challenge our students' ideas about stereotypes and their assumptions about "others." We, as faculty members, must "know" ourselves and the messages we send our students regarding our own beliefs concerning gender, religion, politics, ability, sexual orientation, and the like. It is never easy to examine ourselves. To teach students to be accepting of others, we must first learn to accept others as we wish to be accepted.

Faculty members in higher education have an ethical responsibility to introduce critical thinking in all areas of the curriculum, especially on diversity-related and social justice issues. It is not our job to change people; it is our job to present alternative ways of thinking and seeing the world and helping our students to live and work in a diverse world. I do not think that all faculty members should introduce hot topics in their classrooms. Because of the critical nature of the outcomes of such discussions, only those faculty members who are prepared to respond to the variety of student behaviors and statements should take on the risk and responsibility of doing so.

Even when we, as faculty members, change, we are often reluctant to pass that change on to our students. bell hooks (1994) stated that

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 still afraid of change. (p. 32)

In the 21st century, many faculty members still struggle with, are uncomfortable with, or have not been trained in social justice education. They are unaware that each of us is "born into a specific set of social identities, such as age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, skin color, ability status and language" (Harro, 2000, p. 15), which then are reinforced by powerful influences.

As educators, we must find "teachable moments" in which to plant seeds for our students' reflection, so that they can examine their own beliefs and begin the process of making their own assumptions and decisions about differences. Does any one of us have the power to change the thinking or behavior of another? I do not believe so; however, we can challenge others' thinking. How can anyone say that Kathy is wrong when the information she believes to be true was taught by individuals she loved and respected, individuals who did their best to educate her and share their knowledge with her? Kathy and Sally need to make choices. They can continue the Cycle of Socialization, teaching others what they have been taught, or they

can make changes to learn about others in order to become the social change agents we need in this world.

Many faculty members are not aware of the Cycle of Socialization; yet they encounter many students like Sally and Kathy who regularly sit in their classes. If we truly want to teach critical thinking skills, faculty members at all levels must first learn about themselves and how they were socialized and then incorporate the Cycle of Socialization into their classes, allowing students to question, reflect, and struggle with who they are as individuals, and, more importantly, who they want to become.

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