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Teaching the diversity course in conservative times

Yvonne V. Wells¹ and Debra Harkins²

Abstract. This paper describes how conservative shifts in American political thinking can obstruct discussions about race, ethnicity and culture in so-called “diversity” and multicultural courses in academic psychology. The authors, both teachers of psychology, examine the serious implications that a shifting political landscape presents for courses on race, ethnicity, gender and culture. Classroom techniques that may counter the reality of conservative action in the Academy are discussed, including some methods for continuing to deepen the meaning that psychology students take from the examination of multicultural topics. For the present authors, diversity and multi-cultural courses, particularly in psychology, must continue to include cultural sensitivity, belief in the essential importance of community research which includes the perspectives of “the other”, and constant, painstaking self-examination on the part of the teacher (Ridley, 2005). However, the very ground on which this assumption has rested for the last thirty or so years is moving and shifting under our very feet. It is hoped that the experiences of the authors teaching “the diversity course” can support others who seek to keep teaching similar courses even as the shadow of conservatism lengthens.

I.

”The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man.” George Bernard Shaw (1856 - 1950)

Shifting conversations in American politics, from liberal to conservative are reshaping the basis for multi-cultural and diversity courses in academic psychology. John Locke, Adam Smith, and Thomas Jefferson are just a few of the political thinkers to offer a liberal way of thinking that entails freedom, the pursuit of happiness, a free market and democracy (Jefferson, Bergh, Lipscome & Lipscome, 1904; Strauss, 1958, Campbell & Skinner, 1981; Buchan, 2006; Brown 2007). Thinkers like John Dewey and Franklin D. Roosevelt gave liberal thinking a distinctly American flavor, emphasizing equal opportunity and favoring political action to regulate citizens and branches of government for the general welfare of those other than the previously privileged (Dewey, 1889; Regan, 1999; Lawson, Graham & Baker, 2007).

Conservative thinking is harder to define since conservative viewpoints are more often expressed in terms of action, political movements, rather than ideologies and abstractions. There is a sense that true conservatives are so involved with conservative action and movement,

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that they have little time for defining conservative ideology (Cone, 1957; Denham & O'Hara, 2007). In this paper, many definitions of conservatism are derived from writings by critical liberal thinkers (Lakoff, 2002; 2004). Other definitions come from philosophers such as Strauss (1988) who are at various times claimed by thinkers from both the liberal left and the conservative right. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to say that conservative thinking, generally, involves facilitating action to protect valued traditions supporting the status-quo, and responding to threats that would damage existing systems (Brookshire, 1997; Strauss, 1988; Lakoff, 2002). In this paper we will explore some of the impacts of more conservative perspectives on pedagogical practices in the field of psychology, especially when teaching diversity courses.

History cautions against construing conservative thinking as the enemy of liberal thinking. (Wolin, 2001) Instead, it is better to contrast liberal political thought with conservative political action. We surmise that liberal thinking favors openness to change, while conservative action concerns the protection of what has been established. Both ways of thought and action are concerned with movement toward something better (Strauss, 1988). Liberal thinkers may have more faith in the process of ongoing exploration of all of the ways to achieve that something, while conservative thinkers may be more likely to take protective action due to a fear of something worse.

Some liberal thinkers in America have historically been moved to engage in vigorous reforms to make existing systems more accessible to everyone. However, today, we find that political action to gain political power has become synonymous with a conservative reality in American political philosophy. The on-going struggle between ideas that reflect liberalism versus conservatism are a historical fact of the search for an American "public philosophy", a search that today, in the Western world, favors conservatism (Ceasar, 2001; Denahm& O'Hara, 2007).

There is a sense that liberalism is running rampant in the popular news media and that liberal discourse is overpowering conservative perspectives. (Alterman, 2003) This persists despite evidence that there is more scholarly research, news programming and popular literature, funded by the conservative right than by liberal thinkers (Lakoff, 2004). Shifts in American politics are reflected in movement among teachers in the Academy toward more conservative ideas. For instance, Zipp and Fenwick (2007) have found that movement toward conservative or at least right-of-center ideology is evident when professors today are surveyed with regards to their political opinions and curriculum choice.

It is possible that liberal perspectives in the Academy and in the field of psychology may contribute to a conservative need for immediate action on issues having to do with the "other" or the "differently" cultured, because these perspectives are viewed as being too vague and involving processes that take too long to come to fruition. The liberal tendency to view the human being as essentially good may foster the constructing and re-constructing of reality and a long term process of change observed by the present authors to be all that is positive and also all that is negative about our way of thinking. Conservative thinkers we encounter as we struggle to keep a diversity curriculum alive react to our interests in case study, narrative research, and long-term community involvement, as outmoded and moving too slowly to help those in immediate psychological need. The present authors believe that economic crises, fear of future attacks on American soil, and the reality of our national involvement in the Middle East influences American political thinking and pedagogy in psychology toward speed and efficiency. Funding in the field of psychology reflects these times of crisis. Grants and fellowships in psychology today are more likely to be directed toward specific medically oriented treatment for a narrow range of identifiable mental "illnesses" (American Psychological Association [APA] Government Relations Update, 2008). Human understanding and the longer process of respecting the perspective of the "other" is now construed as part of a "cultural war" within the

field of psychology. Those looking for efficient and universal approaches to diagnosing and treating mental illness now seem to us to be in conflict with those who value community involvement, work for social justice and multicultural understanding (Slife, 2007). Increased work in diversity studies now fades to the background as a central theme for teachers of future psychologists. Short-term therapies, cognitive-behavioral treatments and empirically validated perspectives are more likely to be valued because they focus on efficiency required by more conservative thinkers in more conservative times.

The present authors note that for a brief more liberal period, diversity and multiculturalism were embraced in some areas of psychology. In some counseling, community, social and clinical programs diversity provided a subtle backdrop to curriculum development. In more liberal times, specific courses in “diversity” were not even necessary in psychology departments that infused the idea of multicultural respect into every recruitment plan, course, and extra-curricular activity. In contrast, we now note a rising conservative view of human beings as having positive potential, but needing shaping, and discipline in a more effective and obvious direction. Differences that threaten the status-quo are now more likely to be punished and adjusted, rather than celebrated and studied. (Lakoff, 2002) describes the present more conservative shift in society as one in which a more paternal, or “Strict Father”, rather than a nurturing understanding of the world is popular. The Strict Father view polarizes thinking and action into good versus evil. Paternalist views of the “other” involve leadership and direction so that members of diverse or different groups become aligned with a correct, dominant view of truth (Lakoff, 2002).

We do not have far to go to bring this political reasoning to bear on our experiences in the classroom where topics of culture, race, ethnicity, multiculturalism and gender are central. Liberal versus conservative thinking, conversations, and action impact the thinking of psychology teachers and students about those described as members of the dominant group and those who are not. The present authors use the terms, diverse, multicultural, “other”, the underrepresented, minority group members and the culturally different, interchangeably. This reflects our experience of a post-modern shift in the culturally Black and White America that once defined conversations in the field of psychology concerning the inclusion of and the care for the minority. Today, we know more about diverse groups and how they are represented or underrepresented in the field of psychology. African-Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Latino-Hispanic, international people, people with disabilities, members of gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and trans-gendered [GLBT] communities, and diverse social classes are among the many groups that can be considered as minorities, “other” or the underrepresented in psychology. A few comments about the many different terms used to describe diversity in the present paper may provide the reader with some anchors.

Cross-cultural psychologists describe dominant Western cultures as individualistic, independent, less likely to experience problems with access in the global economy, and less likely to be described as “minority”. Non-Western cultures, in contrast, are described as collective, interdependent, and more likely to be described as minority, though such cultural groups may actually constitute a global majority of people (Lonner, 1980; Hofstede & Bond, 1984; Trandis, 1990; Greenfield & Cocking, 1994; Shweder, 1990; Shiraev & Levy 2004). The authors sense that conservative thinking supports the idea that non-Western or minority cultures need to be adjustment so that they fit more completely with dominant, Western cultures (Greenfield & Cocking, 1998; Harrison & Huntington, 2002; Shweder, 1990). We do not contend that adjusting other cultures is a strictly conservative endeavor. Instead, we propose that the bombing of the world trade center, subsequent wars and ensuing recession, in the context of a post-modern reality (Harkins & Wells, in this issue) where a member of a non-dominant minority could attain the highest office in the country have triggered conservative action against the much slower liberal process of deconstructing and constructing multicultural

realities. Based on a theme of immediate necessity to change and regain what conservatives view as lost in a liberal period, positive strengths of diverse groups and respect for rights of non-dominant cultures is set aside.

The teaching of future clinicians and researchers in the field of psychology has become constrained and limited in terms of the course materials deemed acceptable, the value placed on diversity courses by certain departments of psychology, the likely reaction of undergraduate and graduate students who attend diversity courses and the methods that can be used to present material in psychology classes. From readings and conversations thus far, the present authors have summarized several basic themes that appear and reappear to us as professors teaching diversity courses. Both conservative and liberal thinkers are concerned with protecting society from tyranny, promoting moral behavior, articulating who deserves assistance in achieving access to mental health and psychological well-being, understanding the cultures of those who are different from the dominant Western main-stream (Dewey, 1916; Strauss, 1958, Lakoff, 2002; 2004, Denham & O'Hara, 2007). However, recent, alarming and highly politicized issues in American society, however, have led to a rejection of the process of studying diversity and human justice as a way of achieving better mental health and psychological well-being for non-Western cultures.

II.

Yesterday's Freedom Fighters, Today's Tyrannical Elements

The present authors trace the demise of the idea of valuing and celebrating diversity and multiculturalism in the Academy, first, to the bombing of the World Trade Center and later to the ensuing wars in the Middle East. These events have come to influence thinking about diversity in academic psychology because they energize American media to symbolically redefine the "enemy". The "other" as oppressed and in need of support is no longer the only definition available to American people when they wonder about people who are different from themselves. Weisel (2006) describes shifting definitions in the village of Sighet that first led to the deportation of foreign Jews, then, later to the deportation of even Jews in positions of power in his classic *Night*. This parallels the redefinition of "undocumented workers" in America as "illegal aliens", post-911. As definitions of entire groups of diverse people in and outside of America have shifted, so has thinking about how they should be regarded or understood (Lakoff, 2004; Maddox, 2004).

Conservative thinking, post-911 has shifted toward greater concerns about controlling tyrannical elements among diverse, underrepresented people, in and outside of America (Maddox, 2004). This restricts the body of literature that a teacher can comfortably use in a diversity course. In addition to both actual and perceived course material, particular pedagogical methods and course designs may also be restricted. For instance, radical feminist Mary Daly, was forced into retirement in the late 1990's after a decade of teaching "all female" college courses about women's issues. At the height of the feminist movement these courses might have been viewed as providing "space" in a male dominated college environment for women to gather their own ideas on gender with the goal of making them more articulate proponents of the multicultural perspectives (James, Farmer & Davis, 1993).

A pedagogical method intended to facilitate freedom of exchange among members of a diverse, underrepresented group in a liberal political climate may come to be viewed with suspicion in more conservative times. The underrepresented "minority" is viewed in the light of definitions from the political mainstream, such as "tyrannical elements". Recently, the conservative way of thinking does not even allow for an all male, course design intended to allow males to explore their own issues relevant to their high attrition from college campuses (Schmidt, 2008). Allowing men "space" to grapple with their own issues as they prepare for college study can be

seen as allowing men to separate from a coed setting for negative reasons that might include prejudice against women (Schmidt, 2008).

In more liberal times, the idea that diversity studies in psychology could include cross-disciplinary references might have been welcomed. Different areas of academics, including political science, literary critique, and film studies have been used by the present authors as sources of “data” to include in our psychological analyses of culture. A syllabus from the first author’s course, “Multicultural Issues in Psychology” taught in 1996 at a small New England university, included the non-fiction works *Guest of the Shiek: An Ethnography of an Iraqi Village* by Fernea (1989), and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* by Haley (1991). The authors sense a shift in the meaning that students might take from texts like these which present a more *emic* approach to the understanding of culture. This approach respects the indigenous experiences of people within their own cultural reality and validates the positive existence of diverse cultures. (Berry, 1969). Muslim people, specifically and “other” people, generally, have recently been presented in the media as possible enemies of America. In these more conservative times, psychological themes of empathetic connection with collective cultures and understanding and acceptance of unique approaches some diverse groups take when dealing with racism become more difficult to elicit.

The present authors have found that the more conservative academic climate surrounding the teaching of cultural diversity courses polarizes discourse about those viewed as “minority” or members of “non-dominant communities. Lakoff (2004) notes that conservative thinking might be more polarizing because it tends to rely on a “Strict Father” approach to understanding the world, whereby good is synonymous with, self-discipline, self-control and individual responsibility for one’s own actions while evil is synonymous with weakness of individual character. Where others are weak, the authoritarian strict Father may punish them to bring them in line with correct action. If we follow Lakoff’s (2004) reasoning, “difference” in members of underrepresented groups might suggest a call for control, and adjustment, rather than deeper understanding and inclusion in the process of improved mental health access (Sue & Sue, 2003). Everything about the design of a course, from procedures for grading to outside of classroom, hands-on experiences can become a source of contention where more conservative thinking prevails.

III.

Affirmative Action and Moral Struggles in Psychology

The United States Supreme court ruling that legalized racial inequality should not be a part of the American social landscape (Ogletree, 2004) was important in shaping the background for more multicultural curricula and policies in some corners of the field of psychology. However, post Civil Rights changes in society never included any particular directives for programs to reshape society (Ogletree, 2004), or for diversity courses that the present authors eventually found themselves teaching. After the work of Allport (1954) it appears to us that some psychologists came to take a more active moral position on the responsibility of psychologists, especially in counseling, community and social research fields to conduct the work of their profession with attention to cultural differences beyond mere comparison of “minority cultures” with the mainstream.

Liberal psychologists such as (Allport, 1954; Clark & Clark, 1940; 1940, Cobb & Grier, 1974) supported the Civil Rights movement beginning in the 1950’s with *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* (Oyez Project, 1955). Psychologists like these applied research and clinical work to raise the racial consciousness of minority and majority people, to end segregation and to improve the access of racial minorities in America. Their work included social activism that

eventually opened the way for improving the psychological well-being of a broad range of diverse members of society.

The integration of social institutions, during the Civil Rights era, supported the work of multicultural and feminist psychologists. This era also ushered in the Association of Black Psychology in 1968 (Association of Black Psychology, 1993) and APA Division 45 in the late 1980's (Zarate, 2009). During the more liberal post-Civil Rights era, multicultural counselors, feminist psychologists, researchers and clinicians (Berry, 1969; Lonner, 1980, Lott, 1987; Greenfield & Cocking, 1994; Pedersen, Draguns, Lonner & Trimble, 2002; Shiraev & Levy 2007) began to teach about cultures and incorporate cultural perspectives from other disciplines into their work in psychology (Rosaldo & Lamphere, 1974; Hofstede & Bond, 1984; Trandis, 1994; Harrison & Huntington, 2002; Shweder, 1990).

Liberal psychologists during the Civil Rights era engaged in what Lakoff (2004) has called "Nurturant Parent" morality. In contrast to strict Father morality, nurturing morality involves protection, nurturance and taking responsibility for others (Lakoff, 2004). Affirmative action initiatives that influence recruitment and hiring in the Academy seem to us to have been more acceptable in liberal political times when responsibility flowed from those in power toward those less privileged.

Conservative attitudes toward Affirmative action influence diversity initiatives by challenging the idea that government, state, or institutions should promote these. Conservative thinking leads to conversations about what is fair or equal treatment under the law, with no special laws or protections for individuals (Cone, 1957). Now, power and access flows away from those who are not defined as a part of the mainstream. The present authors have found that the framing of Affirmative Action initiatives as those which encourage the recruitment of as many "unqualified" as "qualified" and minorities (Lakoff, 2002) impacts the discourse in our diversity courses in a couple of ways.

First, when diverse groups, in general are perceived as undeserving of as "no longer deserving" of any special assistance in getting access to the positive aspects of American life, actual numbers of members of diverse groups entering a university setting where students are predominantly members of the dominant group diminish. The student defined as "other" must present the same standardized test scores as those who represent the "norm" in standardized testing ability. This is tragic, since the reality is that discriminatory practices in education today still shortchange members of diverse groups in many ways ranging from deficient early educational opportunities to stressors that uniquely impact their families and communities. Yet, a more liberal appreciation of the unique contributions that members of such groups bring to the academic environment, including the enhancement of the mainstream student that naturally occurs when he or she must confront and resolve cultural conflict, is lost. Recent attacks on the very idea of Affirmative action discourage the recruitment and funding of members of diverse groups seeking to study and to teach psychology.

Secondly, the very climate that supports the diversity conversation suffers in more conservative times, because diversity is framed more negatively in more conservative times. The idea that members of non-dominant "minority" groups may succeed in academic settings and in the world of work because they receive special preferences under affirmative action initiatives is onerous even to members of diverse groups themselves McWhorter (2000).

Students of color in diversity courses with their white classmates may experience discomfort as they find themselves to be symbolic representations of the diverse groups being studied in the course. Imagine the dilemma of the professor of a course in race and culture who arrives in the class to celebrate both positive and difficult aspects of diversity and finds that the very course description is already viewed by non-minority students as an accusation of them as racist or

oppressive to others. Students of color may also experience discomfort that is not very developmental for them as they are confronted with the facts and figures of minority life in America, which will consist mainly of data about the deficiencies of the diverse, while they are immersed in a popular world where they are bombarded with sensationalist media images that dramatize the difficulties of being “other” in America. In a welcoming liberal environment, where both victimization and positive aspects of diverse cultures are a part of an ongoing discourse about diversity, disequilibrium of this kind is a healthy starting point for discussion. Today, however, faculty members with diverse perspectives run the risk of harassing their students with complexities of race, discrimination, sexism and difference which some students and fellow faculty members believe constitute old topics or issues that should, by now, be resolved.

When popular opinion shifts to the right, the expression of an authentic cultural identity, through teaching and researching about diversity issues, comes into direct conflict with success in predominantly white academic departments. The American Economics Association [AEA] noted that while about 11% of all Ph.D.’s in the country were awarded to minorities, by 2006 only 60 out of 3,149 full time tenure track professors were minorities. The report also shows that by 2006, only 32 of 717 minorities queried were associate professors. (AEA, 2006) In a climate, where the likelihood of entering and progressing through an academic field is so tenuous faculty members with diverse perspectives, might avoid teaching “troublesome” courses about race, ethnicity and culture and instead, choose to teach experimental or evidence based topics that do not represent positive or critical research about diversity. As one tenured African-American faculty member laments, one can feel “on the tenure track, but out of the loop” (Bronner, 2004).

For the present authors conservative shifts in the way that Affirmative action is viewed since *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (The Oyez Project, 1978) have led to fewer colleagues with whom to dialogue about the design, content and value of the diversity course. Ridley (2005) discusses the need for an on-going process of self-analysis on the part of those who do the work of psychology. His topics which touch on unintentional racism among counselors who are in positions of power with respect to clients, can also be applied to the topic of teacher and student interactions. Even the teacher and student from a diverse background can benefit from self-examination of behaviors which can signal unintentional racism and damage the important relationship between those in positions power and those seeking knowledge.

The authors do not make light of support, such as the Sunn Minority Achievement award, provided by the American Psychological Association [APA] for psychology programs with exceptional diversity initiatives. However, these must be considered in light of research that has found the number of diverse students in the psychology pipeline relatively unchanged since the 1990’s, despite creative approaches to diversity in many psychology programs (Matron, K. I.; Kohout, J. L., Wicherski, M., Leary, G. E., & Vinokurov, A., 2006). In a conservative political climate, where the absence of diverse students from predominantly white departments becomes the norm, it can dampen the spirit of all faculty members who might otherwise embrace a diversity oriented curriculum and diminishes the give and take of culturally relevant interaction and classroom discourse.

IV.

Will Psychologists of the Future Empower or Manage Diversity?

The present authors have found that some areas of psychology welcome the diversity discourse, even in conservative political times. Albee (2007) speaks for community psychologists when he re-emphasizes the importance of social justice work in the field of community psychology even

as some programs in psychology move to embrace more brain, behavior and medically oriented treatments for psychological disorders. Counseling psychologists such as (Pedersen, et al, 2002; Sue & Sue, 2003) keep multiculturalism and diversity at the for front of their field and Lawson, Graham and Baker (2007) call for the entire field of psychology to deepen the multicultural focus in order to remain relevant in postmodern times and to evolve in a global context.

Still, we find that conservative thinking in the popular political arena responds to fears of warring enemies who may, again, strike us at home and economic stress that requires budget cuts. The resulting movement in society toward tightening of budgets and efficient solutions renews a search for meaning behind rigid categories such as race, ethnicity and difference, that were previously just beginning to be accepted as flexible social constructions.

In more liberal moments, teachers of courses in diversity explore issues of power, privilege and social inequality with their psychology students, while celebrating differences of both student and professor. Currently, more conservative thinking supports a movement toward psychological assessment and evaluation of individuals from different cultural realities where more narrative, community and phenomenological approaches previously allowed for deeper understanding of questions of culture and difference. More conservative ideas about setting standards and validating the qualifications of diverse “others” has seeped into some academic psychology circles, calling for judgments about the efficiency, and relevance of diversity courses. Also, it makes it possible for some teachers and clinicians to avoid the constant deep reflection on their own cultural conflicts that Ridley (2005) discusses. Efficient, evidence based presentations of data about difficulties, deficiencies and pathologies of a particular minority group can act as a shield behind which teacher and student can simply hide to avoid uncomfortable analysis.

In some ways, conservative thinking supports definitions of race, ethnicity and gender, on which teachers of courses diversity and multicultural courses rely. This thinking, however, revisits the most negative aspects of categorical definitions. It foster what Frier (2001) has called a “pedagogy of hopelessness”, where consciousness about the victimization of non-dominant groups is raised to such a level that the clinician, researchers, students and teachers simply feel overwhelmed. Those “in power” may come to feel as disempowered as the so labeled “minority” group.

A diversity course can be taught within a more conservative framework, but this more conservative version of a diversity course suggests to us a focus on psychological problems and syndromes associated with membership in certain cultural and racial groups. It is our concern that a focus on empowering the “other” does not fit within a conservative model of success. “Tighter” conservative times requires the use of resources in a measured, tracked and standardized format that can be bestowed on the student within a strict time frame. The course in diversity when presented in the standardized format becomes a listing of the “problems” experienced by minorities and diverse groups defined in static ways as if they have well defined conditions and pathologies that will respond to universal treatments. As Slife (2007) explains, an approach to psychological treatment that relies only on evidence and standards does not allow for creative, intuitive approaches in therapy is not the best approach. We extend Slife’s (2007) ideas to our belief that evidence and standards may suggest ways to manage diversity, but do not enhance our understanding of diverse people nor inform us as to the best ways to deepen our diversity discourse in the classroom.

V.

Some Liberal Responses to the Diversity Course in Psychology

The present authors have drawn upon some historically relevant thinking as we continue to struggle to present courses on diversity that empower teacher, student, and diverse “others”

Friere (1990) distinguishes between “banking education” that treats the student’s mind as an empty vessel that must be filled by a teacher, and liberating education that consists of the presentation by the teacher of real issues and problems of relevance to the student. We have both found that outside of class experiences that draw on real life encounters with culture are especially useful. Guided group projects that bring students with their teachers into the community to actual sites such as schools, shelters, cultural conferences, museums and film festivals can facilitate conversations about the infinite possibilities of solutions to real problems. We have found that one benefit of more conservative questions about what students are really getting for their education dollars is that additional outside of classroom activities are sometimes funded, especially for undergraduate students.

True to the post-modern reality, we describe in (Harkins & Wells, this issue) as one in which the teacher is likely to have less exposure to the vast overwhelming ocean of information than his or her students, the diversity that students may bring to a classroom may be subtle, but very useful. The first author allowed students to present ideas for possible group projects that they might take the lead in designing to their classmates in her senior level course *Sociocultural Perspectives on Behavior and Experience*. She found that once cultural experiences were broadly defined so that every student felt that he or she was a cultural expert on some level, there was not enough weeks in the semester for all of the cultural events students wanted to attend.

The first author has used empathy as a theme in a course assignment. A useful method for getting students in the *Freshman Seminar: The Dynamics of Human Conflict* to consider the topic of arranged marriage in a balanced way that respects a collective culture, is to first, ask them to do a little research on their own to find out if there have been historical times when Americans might have sought to arrange marriages for their children. After discussing their findings, the students gradually move from reading a short humorous article about Muslim matrimonial banquets (Macfarquhar, 2006) to finally viewing a serious film about a Muslim woman who advises her husband to take a second wife. It is fascinating to watch students grow in their writings throughout the semester from mainly opinionated disagreement to articulate analysis of a cultural film.

The second author has used a method of getting students in her course, *Freshmen Seminar: Voices in Conflict* to work with negotiating a real conflict by asking them grade each other’s quizzes then negotiate their grades with each other. In this way, students begin to see the subjectivity within the “objective” world of standardized testing and the professor gets the opportunity to “test her own test” (Harkins & Wells, this issue).

Cultural conflicts often emerge when students of the dominant culture are confronted with reactions from students of diverse cultures who open the discussion of differences in the perception of correct answers. These kinds of conflicts represent the kinds of real interactions students will have when they enter a multicultural work world.

Friere (2001) reminds us that teaching that focuses on tasks that are real and relevant to students and teachers that respect the humanity of their students are important ingredients for deeper dialogue and a richer discourse. Collaboration with students and colleagues across disciplines to resolve real differences with respect for others constantly re-creates cultural space in the academic environment. This allows for the on-going practice of techniques for teaching, learning, researching and healing and keeps the discourse on race, ethnicity and cultural diversity “real”.

It is, finally, always important to be aware of the shifting times. Just as attitudes in society shift to the right, they will shift to the left again. Lakoff (2004) notes that conservative “actors’ rarely change their plans, but liberal thinkers are always willing to move to the center. We believe that

a valuable aspect of a liberal thinking is that it is, by definition, open to diverse perspectives. Every perspective, even that of the conservative right, should be a part of the academic discourse in psychology. The present authors find that continued presence, engagement and insistence on keeping conversations about race, ethnicity and culture alive is critical though such insistence may make us at time seem unreasonable. It is un-likely, in a fast paced post-modern world, that constructive, critical discourse on diversity in the Academy will be obstructed forever. The best advice is to keep teaching in the shadow.

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