Teaching for Peace in Higher Education: Overcoming the Challenges to Addressing Structure and Methods.

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The Current State of Teaching for Peace in Higher Education

Educators at all levels generally agree that students should be taught *about* peace. This is especially true in the current political climate in the United States. Fewer seem to consider teaching *for* peace in the same light. Yet peace education entails more than just content. It also includes how we craft our learning environments and the teaching methods we use. Peace educators are quick to admit that structure and processes are critical elements of a peace-making pedagogy. According to Lannert (2003), "The *form* of peace education is possibly even more important than its content" (p. 62). Eisler (2000) explains that students are "educated" by three different elements; the content, or the material that is included; the processes, or the methods used to transmit information; and through the ways that schooling is structured.

In addition, two models or frameworks generally guide education in the United States. These are "systems of belief that either nurture and support-or inhibit and undermine-equitable, democratic, nonviolent and caring relations" (Eisler, 2000, p. xiv). The dominator model, described as dominator pedagogy or war-making pedagogy in this paper, reflects the militaristic culture in which we live. It is characterized by authoritarianism and male dominance. It stresses the importance of competition and ranking. The dominator model includes a supporting ideology making these structural arrangements appear to be right and even common sense. Education in the United States is often structured in ways that are dualistic, antagonistic and confrontational, all militaristic values (Reardon, 1988). Further, war thinking is end-, not process-focused. Merryfinch (1981) includes the values of hierarchy, centralization of authority, discipline and obedience when describing militarism. Unfortunately, this dominator or war-making model has long dominated education at all levels and is taken-for-granted by many as simply the way schooling is done.

In contrast, the partnership model, referred to as partnership pedagogy herein, refers to content, processes and structures that are democratic and egalitarian, emphasize gender equity, and, importantly, include a belief system that supports, validates, and even normalizes this model as normal and right. Partnership pedagogy encompasses the notion of positive peace, or the idea that peace is more than the absence of war but also includes human and environmental justice. According to Harris and Morrison (2003), the term peace "implies human beings working together to resolve conflicts, respect standards of justice, satisfy basic needs, and honor human rights" (p. 12).

Advocates assert that it is possible to alter power relations in the classroom by using democratic methods, typically including discussion and small group work of sorts, and realigning the way that courses are structured. Feminist scholars in particular have advocated a pedagogy that disavows the taken-for-granted parts of university life. They refuse the hierarchical elitism and competitive scholarship of traditional university

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education, and disclaim theoretical specialism. They champion classrooms exhibiting a bottom-up, rather than top-down, knowledge exchange where teachers recognize their own situatedness and stress their experience is no more valid than their students (Luke, 1998). Similarly, constructivist educators recognize the importance of using student-directed methods that challenge the teacher-as-only-knower inherent in the dominator model (Brooks & Brooks, 1993). In essence, feminists and constructivists are advocating partnership pedagogy.

Despite professing the importance of peace education, elementary and secondary educators still have a long way to go toward using partnership content, methods, and structures. In post-secondary education the failure to integrate peace-related content is even more striking. Eisler (2000) reminds us "including certain kinds of information in the curriculum-and not including other kinds of information-effectively teaches children what is, and what is not, valuable" (p. 39). No doubt this is true of learners at all levels and of all ages. Consideration of structural and process issues is perhaps even worse, as higher education relies heavily on authoritarian learning environments and methods. Some professors may claim to have addressed structural and methodological concerns in their courses by saying that theirs is a discussion course or is run like a seminar. As Brookfield and Preskill (1999) contend, however, merely paying lip service to "discussion" while really guiding the talk so as to fulfill their own agenda is hardly transformative. As Galtung (1973) warns, every form has its own values and norms. Thus, "discussion is always at risk as long as hierarchies and power differentials overshadow what transpires" (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999, p. 19).

Exacerbating the problem is that many, if not most, educators have received little in the way of peace-related instruction themselves. Teacher education programs stress, in large part, the academic and technical skills perceived as necessary to teach, generally to the exclusion of relevant material on peace and peacemaking (Harris & Morrison, 2003). Of course, most professors were never elementary or secondary educators. This fact is likely to heighten the problem, as Harris and Morrison (2003) explain that, "peace education is often marginalized on college campuses" (p. 105). The only place most future educators or professors currently receive any peace and justice related information as undergraduates is in their liberal arts courses. Many never receive any type of peace education, depending on what is offered at their particular college or university and which electives they choose. As graduate students exposure to peace-making perspectives may be even more limited, as coursework becomes increasingly specialized. Further, graduate training in pedagogy is weak if not completely absent at most schools; rather, it is assumed that a firm grasp of content will make a future professor a great educator.

While most of the literature regarding preparation to teach about and for peace involves elementary and secondary educators, clearly future professors could benefit from greater exposure to content, methods, and structures framed by a partnership model. Yet despite the importance of teaching about and for peace, there is very little available in the extant literature regarding doing so in higher education. As I have previously written, we learn what we are taught, and we are most certainly not taught a peace-making perspective in most American public schools or universities (Finley, 2003). Consequently, current professors may be uninterested (since interest generally comes from that which we are exposed to), interested but hesitant because they are unprepared, or both.

If we wish to transform our world into a more peaceful place, including all that the notion of positive peace entails, it seems as though one logical place to start is the classroom. Of course each instructor needs to assess their own course structure and methods in order to make appropriate changes, but a course utilizing partnership structures and methods would likely include at least the following two qualities. First, students would be given a much greater voice, both in co-creating the curriculum as well as in their responsibility to provide and share knowledge. Structurally this could include partial development of course topics by students, student selection of some if not all course texts, as well as student input into how and when they will be assessed. Methodologically, students can be required to bring in articles or information to contribute to discussion, both in small as well as large groups. Students can also share with the class information gleaned from personal experience as well as popular culture. A growing body of literature demonstrates that popular culture has great potential, when integrated appropriately into a course, to allow students a chance to be the "experts" (Buckingham, 1998). Since student contribution to discussion is so critical in a partnership model, it must be a significant part of their grade. Offering an array of assessment styles so that students may select that which they are most comfortable with could help them to realize they were responsible for the material, but that the instructor's goal was to be fair and democratic.

Second, a course's structures and methods must emphasize that education is a continual, collaborative process in order to avoid the competitive, authoritarian and antagonistic qualities of a militaristic or dominator style. A process approach to the course structure, then, can include allowing students to revise quizzes or written material. Students would be given many opportunities to work in groups of varying sizes, not to merely discuss but also to accomplish significant tasks. Group tests are even a possibility, if they are crafted in such a way to avoid free loaders.

Yet completing overhauling a course's structure and how one teaches is not an easy task. Professors interested in making these changes face significant challenges. This paper presents five challenges to using partnership pedagogy at the university level. Several ideas for changing the culture of the collegiate classroom from a dominator model to a partnership or peacemaking model, gleaned from the literature as well as personal experience, are provided in the rebuttal to these challenges.

The Challenges and the Response

Reality is that, even if they want to alter their course structures and methods, professors must still work within the broader university structure, which demands they demonstrate their superior position in the power hierarchy. For instance, professors must still assign grades to students, generally are required to select course texts and create course syllabi and schedules prior to the semester, and choose which elements (and often the methods) of assessment to be used.

Yet professors have experimented with course structures and methods that at least reduce power hierarchies. For instance, Hal Pepinsky assigns grades, as his university requires, but students receive those grades based on the amount and quality of their thought as demonstrated in a course journal. Students can constantly revise and add to their journals. So, while Hal is the eventual arbiter of their grade, it is a process of give-

and-take (Pepinsky & Kearns, 2002). In regard to selecting course texts, I have often used a structure I call the "Book Club," where students can select a text from a list of possibilities. Thus while I do have the power in creating the initial list of possibilities, students share the power by selecting and presenting those of most interest and relevance to them. Not only does this simple task allow students an important voice in their own educational experience, but it also helps them reflect on their own personal connections to course material, a step necessary for personal growth. As suggested above, I have used group tests and have found them to be a great tool to facilitate deep student learning in a non-threatening manner. I simply build in requirements to reduce the chances of free loaders and, to date, have had no problems with that concern.

Following the above challenge, some have argued that we do students a disservice if we fail to prepare them for what they can likely expect in the majority of their courses. For example, if a sociology professor teaching an introductory course uses partnership pedagogy but none of the other professors of sociology do, critics assert that students may be unprepared for such a climate and thus doomed to disappointment and possibly failure.

In response to this criticism, there is no evidence to suggest that students are so rigid that they cannot adapt to various instructors styles. Indeed, this is what they are typically asked to do in what Graff (2003) calls "the volleyball effect." Further, most students come to college well prepared to navigate the diverse stream of courses, as they have likely experienced the same in their high schools. This is not to say that the volleyball effect is a good thing. It would be much better to see a curriculum, educational structure, and methods that are more connected to one another. Such an educational experience, linked both horizontally (where courses taken in a given semester are connected to one another) and vertically (each level of education naturally flows into the next), would most certainly benefit both students and educators. If it is true that students are already asked to adapt to various styles and structures, however, there is no reason to believe that creating a partnership-oriented course poses an additional challenge in this regard.

Further, professors must reconsider their course structure and methods because there is oftentimes a discord between course content and these other elements, something much more problematic than the fact that different professors use different methods or structure their courses differently. Perhaps the most egregious example of this incompatibility can be seen in education courses, where professors have been known to lecture students about the evils of using lecture methods in their future classrooms. Sperber (2000) offers the following example from a freshman psychology course of 300 students: "Today," announced the professor into the microphone, "we will continue our discussion of learning" (p. 84). Other examples abound, however. How does one teach about gender bias, for instance, while using methods that clearly favor males? Is it fair to expect students to contribute to and learn from discussion methods but then be assessed on their ability to select answers from among a list? Education has traditionally indoctrinated students by using methods that stress the importance of a docile workforce (Walker & White, 2003). Yet in the post-modern world, many jobs will require collaborative work from critical thinkers. In sum, "Educators cannot teach about freedom while constantly telling students to be quiet and sit down; in other words, they cannot

teach participation through passivity" (Walker & White, 2003, p. 30). In other words, both the medium and the message matter.

Related to the first two challenges, institutional support for course restructuring of this nature may be limited, at best. Instructors who use partnership pedagogy risk not being taken seriously. If an instructor fails to design a course in advance and provide students with a detailed syllabus, instead relying on students to initiate their own course of study, he or she risks censure not only by students but from colleagues as well. University administration is also often loath to allow such open-ended inquiry for fear of complaint or even lawsuit; students may contend that they were not aware of the instructor's expectations and thus had little chance for success in such a subjective atmosphere.

While certainly some colleagues may denounce partnership pedagogy as "wishy-washy" or non-academic, others may admire the dedication it takes to restructure courses in this manner. As Graff (2003) explains, progressive forms of education do not have to be, and were not envisioned by such scholars as John Dewey as, anti-intellectual. Those schooled in progressive techniques will likely be aware of this. Unfortunately, many professors have little training in the how-to of educating; rather their own study focused on acquiring content knowledge, as noted in the Introduction. Thus it is quite possible that colleagues and administrators will not understand the need for partnership pedagogy or how it works.

Partnership pedagogues can, however, help their colleagues understand their course transformation by simply explaining it. In addition to rebutting any potential criticism, such a dialogue represents a step toward greater communication and possible connections between courses, clearly something that would be in everyone's best interest. Currently, "the individualistic culture of teaching results in isolation among colleagues that resembles commuters waiting briefly in a train station. Each commuter is headed toward the same destination but is standing alone, ensconced in his or her own thoughts, newspapers, and private space" (Intrator, 2002, p. xlvi). Discourse about best practices can only benefit all involved.

Perhaps part of the problem is that professors themselves resist restructuring their courses because they do not want to appear as irrelevant (Sacks, 1996). Lecturing allows professors to appear as all knowing. As Sperber (2000) notes, "Lecturing has long been the pedagogical workhorse of higher education" (p. 84). It persists, despite research demonstrating that it is not the most effective technique, partly due to tradition and familiarity, partly because alternative methods require not just time and energy but investing in a new way of thinking. In order to adopt partnership pedagogy, professors must "yield some of their supposed omnipotence and omniscience in the classroom and actually listen to students" (Sperber, 2000, p. 85).

Many educators, then, enjoy the power they have in the classroom and are hesitant to give that up by allowing students' more voice and a greater stake in the educational process. Yet educators are really more important than ever, as they are needed to help students make sense of the wealth of information, or information glut, as Postman (1993) calls it.

While students are quite critical of lecture-based, authoritarian methods in the classroom, they are often resistant to change, having become at least accustomed to this style. Likewise, they often do not know what to do with a voice when they are given one.

In other words, when students are asked to co-construct a course design, they may be taken aback. Throughout their schooling process they have learned that students are the "learners" and teachers are the "knowers." Similarly, having been taught for years that facts constitute knowledge, students are often puzzled and unprepared to offer opinions and to debate issues (Graff, 2003). An additional concern is articulated by Brookfield and Preskill (1999): "When teachers declare passionately that they view their students as co-creators of knowledge, students who have been burned by experiences of false and spurious democracy in the past may react with skepticism, hostility, or cynicism. Given the usually submerged power dynamics of higher education classrooms, it would be surprising if this were not their reaction" (p. 32). On the other hand, some students may seize the opportunity to participate in a class and take it too far, dominating conversations and intimidating (and often annoying!) their classmates in the process. Finally, like other professors and administrators, some students may view partnership pedagogy as a sign that the professor has a weak grasp of course content (Sacks, 1996).

Some resistance from students is certainly possible. Yet a large part of the problem is that students are rarely, if ever, asked to consider **why** a class is structured the way it is or the implications of doing so. The professor who explains partnership pedagogy to students and highlights its merits will likely encounter less resistance, as students begin to conceptualize that education is not inevitably top-down and dominator-oriented but is that way by choice. Over time students will come to see that an instructor is not just paying lip service to altering power relations and that their voices are indeed important to everyone. As Brookfield and Preskill (1999) explain, a collaborative educational climate is not intended to "absolve teachers of their responsibility to help students learn" (p. 13). Rather, it represents a redefinition of what teaching means, of who is the knower and the learner. According to Giroux (1987), the teacher in this type of classroom has an even greater responsibility to allow "different student voices to be heard and legitimated" (p. 119).

It is imperative in a partnership classroom that all students feel they have the right to be heard and that teachers watch that they, too, do not dominate the conversation (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999). "Social relations in the dialogical classroom must be structured to resist the injustices and denial of difference characteristic of the world outside the classroom" (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999, p. 19) where militarism is the dominant ideology. Although he was being a cynic about his experience teaching community college students, Sacks (1996) has it right when explaining that a professor is merely one resource. Brookfield and Preskill (1999) recommend making your educational philosophy explicit in the course syllabus. They suggest the following disclaimer: "If you don't feel comfortable with small group discussion and think it's a touchy-feely waste of valuable time, *you should probably drop this course"* (p. 61).

Further, partnership pedagogy, unlike dominator pedagogy, is well positioned to meet the needs of *all* students. While dominator methods and structures often alienate and bore students who learn interpersonally or are inclined to inquire versus absorb, partnership pedagogy allows the student who needs more direction to obtain it through conversations with their professor, while the student who needs less is encouraged to explore. Eisler (2000) maintains, "Partnership process is an integrated teaching style or pedagogy that honors students as whole individuals with diverse learning styles" (p. 14).

Additionally, structuring courses to be more peace-oriented and democratic can go a long ways toward teaching students that structural change is indeed possible. As Walker and White (2003) maintain, "Traditional teaching and learning only serves to perpetuate the status quo and facilitate hegemony in the name of democratic capitalism" (36). Partnership pedagogy is a necessary challenge to schooling for the status quo. According to Brookfield and Preskill (1999), a course structured largely around quality, critical discussion exemplifies the democratic tradition. It also allows students to consider the contradictions and injustices of the larger society (Giroux, 1987).

In addition to seeing that structural change is possible, exposure to peace-making structures, methods, and content can facilitate personal growth and transformation (Lennart, 2003). "Discussion and democracy are inseparable because both have the same root purpose-to nurture and promote human growth" (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999, p. 3). Discussion, for example, has been shown to help students develop empathy because they are asked to attend to other people's viewpoints and needs (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999). While there is no guarantee that students exposed to this type of classroom will adjust their personal lives, as Friedman (1996) cautions, the mere possibility warrants consideration.

Restructuring a university course to align with partnership pedagogy is difficult and time consuming. It is far easier to lecture, assign readings, and assess through multiple-choice formats.

No doubt this is true. Of course completely overhauling how a course is structured and taught is time consuming and requires creativity and dedication, but that hardly makes it less important. Too often, especially at research-focused universities, professors seem to forget that teaching and mentoring students should be their primary goal. Sperber (2000) explains the attitude. As more universities have become concerned with attaining status as research institutions, faculty (who are often assigned to teach only two courses per semester) have come to refer to teaching loads, "as if pedagogy were a burden" (p. 75). Spending time considering the best way to teach is not a burden but merely our jobs. Exacerbating the problem is the increased use of part-time faculty and graduate students, many of who are "gypsies," traveling to multiple universities to eke out a living. These people are rarely given much preparation in the how-to's of teaching, let alone peace-making education (Sperber, 2000).

If we admit that one of the goals of education is to create better citizens, we must prepare students to participate in a democracy. This is something that must be experienced, and the classroom can and should be an ideal location to do so. Students are unlikely to value allowing everyone a voice if they never see or hear a multiplicity of voices. In fact, students who are forced to sit passively in a classroom often feel as though they have no voice, that what they say and do does not matter (Talbert & White, 2003). According to Walker and White (2003), "In order for students to be participating members of society, they need to be participants in the classroom; this is not a goal easily reached in a traditional teacher-centered authoritarian classroom" (30). Brookfield and Preskill (1999) argue similarly in saying that the use of well-crafted discussion in a course can "become laboratories in which students learn democratic habits" (p. 32). Research has shown that students who engage in critical analysis of issues in a democratic classroom gain confidence, and with confidence are more likely to continue to participate in public discussions (Talbert & White, 2003).

Conclusion

As Sacks (1996) explains, we live in a postmodern world, but many if not most of our educational structures and methods are still rooted in modernist thinking that is too often dominator modeled. “It’s time, perhaps, to finally acknowledge that the standard teaching and classroom structures of most colleges and universities reflect modernistic power arrangements between institutional authorities and people-structures of power that have not survived in the larger culture” (Sacks, 1996, p. 174). A key component of postmodernity is questioning; of authority in general and of sources of authority, like educators, specifically. Assuming this to be true, educators who serve as the “sage on the stage” are likely only to meet with student apathy, cynicism, and perhaps hostility. If students already believe that there are multiple truths, why not use this to our advantage in the classroom by structuring in discussion to elicit the various perspectives? Sacks (1996) admonishes the postmodern student as merely wanting to be entertained, and criticizes his peers (as well as himself) for catering to this edutainment. Certainly professors can take this too far in the name of partnership pedagogy, becoming merely Britney Speers or Michael Jackson with a briefcase, but interesting and enlightening courses are not mutually exclusive. Sacks (1996) even admits that, were professors to adjust their course structures to be more consistent with the needs of their postmodern students, they would not feel the pressure to entertain so much, as they would not be the font of all knowledge but merely another player. “Instead of a transmitter of knowledge, the postmodern teacher in higher education is more akin to an expert consultant” (Sacks, 1999, p. 180).

In sum, perhaps Boulding (1988) best makes the case for peace education: “The obstacle knowing lies not in our minds but in the structuring of our institutions, the roles we pattern for each succeeding generation, and the way we use tools” (p. 93). It is time educators at all levels overcome the challenges cited herein and begin to reconsider what students learn from our oft militaristic course structures and teaching methods.

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