SOCIAL IDENTITY AND CLASS CLIMATE IN THE INFORMATION LITERACY CLASSROOM
CULTIVATING INTELLECTUAL EMPATHY AND CRITICAL REFLECTION

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POLITICAL POLARIZATION & “POST-TRUTH” RHETORIC

“Post-truth”:
“relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief”
– Oxford Dictionaries
“Republicans and Democrats are more divided along ideological lines – and partisan antipathy is deeper and more extensive – than at any point in the last two decades.”
- Pew Research Center, 2014

“When it comes to getting news about politics and government, liberals and conservatives inhabit different worlds. …

And whether discussing politics online or with friends, they are more likely than others to interact with like-minded individuals.”
– Mitchell et al., 2014
“HOT COGNITION”
(LODGE & TABER, 2005)

Image credit: “Set My World on Fire,” Alex Knechtholz [Creative Commons license: Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0)]

“THE WEB OF BELIEF”
(QUINE, 1951; LINKER, 2014)

Image credit: “Web,” Roberto Latxaga [Creative Commons license: Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0)]
THINK-PAIR-SHARE

Do these concepts resonate with you as a librarian/teacher? With behaviors that you observe in students, friends, or yourself?

CHALLENGES & POSSIBILITIES IN THE CLASSROOM

• In light of these human tendencies and an increase in political polarization, how can we cultivate environments that foster learning and inclusivity?

• How can we encourage critical and reflective dialogue that invites multiple perspectives, without collapsing into absolute relativism or post-truth rhetoric?
SOCIAL IDENTITY & CLASS CLIMATE

SOCIAL IDENTITY

“the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical environments in which our students learn”
(Ambrose et al., 2010, p. 170)
SOCIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT
(HARDIMAN & JACKSON, 1992)

• Naïve stage

• Acceptance (of messages about different groups)

  • Resistance
    • Shame/disintegration (dominant groups)
    • Pride/immersion (minority groups)

  • Redefinition/internalization

CLASS CLIMATE

“the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical environments in which our students learn”

(Ambrose et al., 2010, p. 170)
### CLASS CLIMATE AS A CONTINUUM
(DESURRA & CHURCH, 1994)

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### “FACULTY STUDENT ORIENTATION”
(ASTIN, 1993)

Students’ positive perceptions of faculty as caring about their academic and personal success, including concerns of minority groups:
- Correlated with higher student retention, graduation rates, and self-reporting on critical thinking skills
"FACULTY DIVERSITY ORIENTATION"
(ASTIN, 1993)

Curriculum that affirms diverse perspectives and experiences correlated with higher GPA
• Readings and other course materials that address racial issues
• Diverse examples and metaphors

CLASSROOM CLIMATE: CONTRIBUTING FACTORS
(AMBROSE ET AL., 2010, P. 174)

• Stereotypes
• Tone
• Faculty-student & student-student interactions
• Content
MICRO-INEQUALITIES & STEREOTYPE THREAT

• Summative effect of micro-inequalities can adversely affect learning (Hall, 1982, Pascarella et al., 1997)
• Stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995)
• Tokenism (minority students expected to speak for a minority group)

PEDAGOGICAL TAKEAWAYS FROM AMBROSE ET AL., 2010

• “Make uncertainty safe.”
• “Resist a single right answer.”
• “Incorporate evidence into performance and grading criteria.” (Pushes students beyond just asserting an opinion)
  • “Examine your assumptions about students.”
• “Model inclusive language, behavior, and attitudes.”
  • “Use multiple and diverse examples.”
• “Establish and reinforce ground rules for interaction.”
CLASS CLIMATE & INFORMATION LITERACY

INFORMATION BEHAVIORS, SOCIAL IDENTITY, & CLASS CLIMATE

• Cognitive bias + motivated reasoning
• Information evaluation + critical thinking

Instructional contexts (examples):
credit courses, one-shots, curriculum, digital learning objects
BRAINSTORM: TEACHING STRATEGIES

What teaching strategies do or might we use:
• to foster positive and inclusive class climates?
• to encourage reflective dialogue and learning?
• to increase awareness of cognitive biases and how they may influence information behaviors?

POSITIVE CLASS CLIMATE IN THE IL CLASSROOM: TEACHING STRATEGIES

• Inclusive language and tone (e.g., syllabi, assignments)
  • Classroom ground rules
• Cognitive bias & the “web of belief” (Linker, Quine)
  • Criteria for source evaluation & critical thinking
    • Criteria for critical thinking & dialogue
      • Structured class discussions
    • Opportunities for student feedback
CLASSROOM GROUND RULES

• Be open-minded. Respect that not everyone with share your view.

• Be honest and real with one another while remaining respectful to everyone.

  • Reflect before responding.

• Understand that we all sometimes have inaccurate information. Be open to critically examining information and reassessing it if need.

• Don’t monopolize the conversation. Give everyone a chance to share.

CLASSROOM GROUND RULES (CONTINUED)

• Do not interrupt.

  • Accept and respect that others may have different views.

  • Remember that our goal is to learn through our interactions with one another, not to convince others of our own perspectives.

  • Appreciate that we all have unique experiences and backgrounds that shape our perspectives.

  • Appreciate that we can learn through listening openly to one another and sharing about our viewpoints.
THE “WEB OF BELIEF” & INTELLECTUAL EMPATHY (QUINE, 1957, LINKER, 2014)

POLITICAL POLARIZATION & “POST-TRUTH” RHETORIC

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CLASS DISCUSSION
POLITICAL POLARIZATION & MEDIA HABITS

• What implications might political polarization have for the kinds of information that people are exposed? How might it influence people’s social interactions and social relationships?

• Why might people be more prone to cognitive biases in this climate?

(Support your ideas with information the related readings or other relevant sources.)
INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION: WEB OF BELIEF

Think of a moment when you strongly disagreed with someone.

- How did you feel when your belief was challenged?
  - Did they present compelling evidence/analysis for their perspective?
- Did/would considering their perspective require that you reconsider your own “web of belief”?
- Does your experience confirm or challenge Linker’s description of the “web of belief” in certain ways?

COGNITIVE BIAS

- Intellectual Empathy, Maureen Linker
- “Political Polarization and Media Habits” (Pew Research Center)
- Confirmation & Other Biases, Lesson 3 of Facing Ferguson: News Literacy in the Digital Age (Facing History)
  - “Can You Solve This?” (video)
  - Implicit Association Test
- The Debunking Handbook, (Skeptical Science)
  - The Worldview Backfire Effect
CRITERIA FOR SOURCE EVALUATION:
EXAMPLE: WIKIPEDIA’S GUIDELINES

• **Process** (encouraging accuracy, verifying information, correcting misinformation)
  - Expertise
• **Aim** (publication or author’s purpose)

(Caulfield, *Web Literacy for Student Fact-Checkers*, p. 82-83)

CRITICAL THINKING & “HUNTING ASSUMPTIONS”
(BROOKFIELD, 1995)

• Causal
• Prescriptive
• Paradigmatic
## CRITERIA FOR CRITICAL DISCUSSIONS
(BROOKFIELD, 1995, P. 181)

- A central focus on identifying assumptions
- Examining the accuracy and validity of those assumptions
- Examining the contextual validity of specific assumptions
  - Identifying the evidence for generalizations
- Outlining an inferential chain that leads to shared conclusions
  - Generating varying perspectives on an issue
- Remaining wary of groupthink, refraining from premature consensus

## CONVERSATIONAL PROCESSES FOR CRITICAL THINKING
(BROOKFIELD, 1995, P. 182)

- Structures that ensure all have the opportunity to contribute
  - Time limits
  - Space for reflective silence
- Seeking similarities, differences, and connections among contributions
  - Shared power
- Seeking examples that illustrate the relevance of new ideas/concepts
  - Active listening
STRUCTURED DISCUSSIONS: EXAMPLES FROM BROOKFIELD (1995, P. 183-?)

- Circle of Voices
- Circular Response
  - Chalk Talk
- Structured Silence

BRAINSTORM: TEACHING STRATEGIES

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REFERENCES


https://doi.org/10.1002/1.cl.37219925204.


REFERENCES (CONTINUED)


