

# Student (Dis)Engagement

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“Anyone?”



- ◎ [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dxPVyieptwA&feature=player\\_detailpage](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dxPVyieptwA&feature=player_detailpage)

# Abstract

*This study investigated the importance of **online reflective journaling** and shared **student evaluation forms** in an effort to foster discussion about student reactions to and feedback about curricular choices, instructional methods, and instructor responsiveness. This particular piece focuses primarily on **student (dis)engagement** with curriculum and instruction in newly developed **diversity courses**.*

# Initial Concerns

- Students - Discomfort, resistance, guilt, defensiveness, denial, anger
- Novice professors – balancing the need to “shake things up” and simultaneously “work the system”

# Participants

- ◎ Fall 2009 – Spring 2011
  - > 3 graduate courses, 2 undergraduate courses
- ◎ Students in newly developed courses centered on diversity issues:
  - > Race
  - > Culture
  - > Language
  - > Class
  - > Gender
  - > GLTBQIA
  - > Whiteness

***n* = 88**

98% White

66% Female

34% Male

# Research Questions

- In what moments do students report they feel most **ENGAGED** with content, curriculum, and/or instruction?
- In what moments do students report they feel most **DISENGAGED** or **DISTANCED** from content, curriculum, and/or instruction?

# Methods

- Self-study of teacher education practices (S-STEP)
  - > Investigation of teaching practice with the aim of **improvement**
  - > **Transparent** practice **shared** with students
  - > **Shared** goals
  - > **Collaborative reflection**
  - > Utilizing **student voices** as data

# Findings

- *Engagement:*
  - *Discussion (47%)*
    - *Large group discussion*
    - *Small group discussion*
- *Dis-engagment:*
  - *Lecture*
  - *Topics considered “taboo”*



# Student Voices

## ● Engagement:

### > Discussion:

- “everyone had a voice”
- “chance to share information in a nonthreatening environment”
- “discussions made the class enjoyable”
- “helped me learn additional techniques to be used in my classes”
- “the constantly changing group dynamics helped me see other perspectives”

# Student Voices

## ◉ Dis-engagement:

### > Lecture/Powerpoint: (7%)

- “repeated info we already knew”
- “review”

### > Taboo topics:

- “frustration with some of the naïve comments of others in the course”
- “did not participate then complained about not learning anything”
- “it still amazes me how many students do not seem to really care about their classes and learning new things”

# Key Finding

- ◎ *Students recognized that much of their discomfort and disengagement **came from within themselves**, noting that they sometimes **prevented their own learning because of their fears and insecurities.***

# Student Voices

- ◎ In Fall 2010 – 50% of students commented that “my own bias” or “truth realized about myself” hindered their learning.
  - > “how far I am from where I want to be, but aware that I can change it”
  - > “becoming aware of and accepting my own views, even when my friends were completely against them”
  - > “I was very surprised how much I learned about myself. These experiences taught me (among other things) that feeling acceptance is far from acting accepting.”

# Student Voices

- ◎ Summer 2010 – A student summed it up very nicely:
  - > “What is important **now**, the feeling that is **most** important for me to remember, is that a powerful feeling of ‘being out of place’ governed my inner self that day, and that the only person who made me feel that way was **me**. Real or not, if you feel ‘out of place’, you’ll react as if you really are. On that day, I conferred minority status upon **myself**” (student reflection, Summer 2010, p. 5; emphasis in original).

# Significance

- ◎ All teachers should engage in **critical reflection**, and perhaps in self-study, beginning with an **examination of themselves**
- ◎ **Students** are an **integral** part of the design and implementation of the course – their feedback has **the power to transform practice** related to curriculum, instruction, assessment, etc.

# Contact Information

- If you have questions or comments, I welcome you to contact me:

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