Exploring Reflection to Practice: Lessons Learned from a Reading Group on Race

Problem Statement

* Race continues to matter on our campus, and it is important that we reflect daily on how our understandings of race impact our interactions with students and colleagues.
* Our opportunity is to create a supportive space for critical exploration of race among all staff members.

Our Approach

* We view theory as important, accessible and relevant to all staff members.
* Rather than operating under the assumption that theory is "too academic" or not applicable to our everyday lives and practice, our ongoing discussion of race is based on largely theoretical articles.

Themes in Exploration

* Definitions of race and culture
* Racism as structural
* Racialization
* Ideas related to Whiteness
* Critical pedagogy
* English as "raced"

Results

* Since fall of 2015, the ESL program has discussed over 18 articles and a book.
* In addition to more than 12 formal meetings, there have been numerous informal conversations related to themes of the articles.
* A sense of community has been created.
* Practice has been influenced by concepts and ideas learned.

Lessons Learned

* Exploring race is not necessarily about immediate application, but rather about developing awareness and enhancing the lens with which we view the world.
* Race is complex, and the need to explore race theoretically may not seem urgent. Being patient with and open to the process is important.
* When asked about the U.S. and U.S. culture, answers are not immediate and emphasize the complexity of the question.
* It's important to question the marked and unmarked aspects of our profession, pedagogy and identities.
* Being a critical educator involves "a deep and sophisticated analysis, self-awareness, inter-group experience, and on-going education" (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2010).

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What happens during a 90-minute reading group on race?

Listening
Reflecting

Questions
Reactions
Interpretations
Connections

Theoretical article related to race (e-mailed at least 1 week prior to meeting)

Copies of our working reading list are available.
This working list includes texts explored in our reading group on race at the UW-Madison ESL Program since fall of 2015.

**Introductory Readings**


**Additional Readings**


