



"Enter to Learn, Depart to Serve": The Application of the Kufundisha Pedagogical Model at a Historically Black College

Author(s): Monica M. White

Source: *Teaching Sociology*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Oct., 2003), pp. 383-396

Published by: [American Sociological Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3211364>

Accessed: 19/05/2011 13:29

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=asa>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



American Sociological Association is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Teaching Sociology*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

“ENTER TO LEARN, DEPART TO SERVE”: THE APPLICATION OF THE KUFUNDISHA PEDAGOGICAL MODEL AT A HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGE*

This essay discusses my experiences teaching an undergraduate social theory course at a historically black college. Kufundisha is a culturally sensitive teaching model initially designed for teaching Black Studies. As a pedagogical model, Kufundisha pays particular attention to social characteristics of the student population and frames the discussion of the teaching-learning process, especially around educating students to critically analyze their social reality in ways that are empowering and liberatory. The components of the model, specific social theory course assignments, and student reactions are discussed. This model encourages the creation of an emancipatory educational environment that allows students to become active participants in their own learning experience.

MONICA M. WHITE
Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville

PROGRESSIVE SOCIOLOGISTS—those who educate for the purpose of social change—search for ways to connect students to theories and activism. Several “left” pedagogies, such as humanist, critical/radical, and liberatory, have been applied to teaching and learning sociology. Little discussion has been generated on the application of these pedagogies to predominantly Black student populations. The student population at a historically Black college or university provides fertile ground on which to create and develop liberatory or radical pedagogical approaches.

Although these left pedagogies encourage a critical analysis of social structure while enacting radical changes in classroom dynamics, they overlook a race and socioeco-

nomie class analysis of the classroom. Kufundisha, a Black Studies pedagogical model, is one step in this direction (Neville and Cha-Jua 1998). By taking into consideration the social characteristics of the student population, Kufundisha models an egalitarian student/teacher relationship and includes components that address classroom dynamics such as learning environment, teaching philosophy, methods of instruction and evaluation, and selection of texts and readings. While these components alone do not suggest a radical departure from the previously discussed pedagogical styles, it is in the application of this model that Kufundisha demonstrates its effectiveness in teaching students of color.

Current research in the area of African American college students focuses on Affirmative Action (Cade 2002), academic performance and retention (Schwartz 2002), college preparedness (Mercer 2002), athletics (Brown, 1999), self-esteem (Schmader, Major, and Gramzow 2002), the experiences of Black students at predominantly white colleges/universities (Chavous 2002), and studies that test acceptance of racial stereotypes and racial identity (Richeson and Pollydore 2002). Few researchers ad-

*I would like to thank Helen A. Neville, Venessa Brown, M. Bahati Kuumba, and the anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions on earlier versions of this paper. Please address all correspondence to the author at the Department of Sociology, 1213 Peck Hall, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, IL 62026; e-mail: mowhite@siue.edu.

Editor's note: The reviewers were, in alphabetical order, Rutledge Dennis, Peggy Dillworth-Anderson, Michael Hodges, Annie Ruth Leslie, Quincy Stewart, and Sandra Taylor.

dress effective teaching strategies for this student population. To address gaps in the literature, I present an application of Kufundisha as a pedagogical alternative. This model, based on effective teaching and learning strategies for African American students, emphasizes a course structure that genuinely "reflect(s) the diverse lived experiences of people of African descent" (Neville and Cha-Jua 1998:455).

More specifically, in this article I emphasize the importance of race in the structure and development of a course in social theory taught at Bethune-Cookman College, a historically Black college. By first providing pertinent background information on the institution and its student population, I demonstrate how the application of this pedagogical tool provides valuable insight on the relevance of student identity on radical teaching pedagogies in ways that encourage social change. To help situate Kufundisha within the sociological literature, I first outline relevant pedagogical models. I then describe the institution and student demographics before outlining the core tenets of Kufundisha. I end by applying the Kufundisha principles to teaching social theory.

PROGRESSIVE SOCIOLOGICAL PEDAGOGIES

The pedagogy of the oppressed, as a humanist and libertarian pedagogy, has two distinct stages. In the first, the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation. In the second stage, in which the reality of oppression has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all men [sic] in the process of permanent liberation. (Friere 1970:40)

Within the area of sociology there have been a number of teaching movements and trends. This section discusses three progressive pedagogical models: humanist, critical/radical, and liberatory. Although not mutually exclusive, each model is contingent upon an egalitarian classroom, one that

liberates both students and educators through the re-creation of classroom dynamics. These teaching techniques involve the discovery and application of pedagogies that are liberatory and that challenge the status quo. In doing so, they also stimulate critical thinking and inculcate social responsibility for students enrolled in sociology. In these models, scholars/educators create and implement humanist and radical/critical approaches to change the classroom. Additionally, these educators redirect the ways students think about social structure that will ultimately lead them to work for social change.

Each of these progressive pedagogical models emphasizes the search for ways to empower students, to raise levels of consciousness, and to find ways to combine theory with social action or praxis. These models also confront social relations and provide students with ways to couple learning with activism. Individually, these approaches posit assumptions regarding how students synthesize and integrate information from the classroom and apply it to their social reality.

The work of Paulo Friere revolutionized education by changing our analyses of the social role of education. Friere (1970) argued that the process of "truly" educating students is to help them understand the manifestations of oppression which would enable them to use the sociological imagination as a way to intellectually challenge various social institutions. Particularly influential since the 1970's, much of his work was adopted and applied to various disciplines. Friere's work serves as the foundation of the progressive pedagogical approaches outlined in this paper. Comparatively, humanist, critical/radical, and liberatory pedagogies share significant similarities: (1) each suggests that the role of instructors should become more decentralized and that the role of the students should become more active, (2) each promotes the idea that education should encourage and facilitate activism, and (3) each argues that teaching should equally expose the condi-

tions of the oppressed and challenge the experiences and values of students in ways upon which hegemonic relationships are perpetuated. Below I outline the core tenets of each of the major approaches, highlighting the areas of divergence.

Humanist Sociology and Pedagogy

Humanist sociologists focus on understanding the subjectivity of human perception. More specifically, they 1) emphasize the unique aspects of human beings as subjects and actors to social forces; 2) embrace values of freedom, equality, and self-determination, and encourage the creation of social contexts and institutions that sustain these values; and 3) reject rigid positivism (Goodwin 1987). Joseph Scimecca (1995:1-2) defined humanist sociology as the "study of human freedom and of all the social obstacles that must be overcome in order to insure this freedom." Humanist sociology centralizes human experiences, both collective and individual, as points of convergence in understanding the political, social, and economic structures upon which any society is based. These ideals emphasize the role of subjectivity both in research and in the specific course material (Goodwin 1987).

Weber and Mills are credited as providing the framework for understanding the relationship between teaching and scholarship. Humanist sociology essentializes one's commitment to teaching as noted by Goodwin (1987): "First and foremost, excellence in teaching begins by considering it a craft—perhaps even an art form" (p. 16). These social roles, combined with that of activist, interact with each other and shape our relationship to the material and with students. Pedagogically, this method guides both the instructor and the students to reflect upon their experiences as socially constructed. Some of the more popular methods include journal writing and diaries in which students use sociological concepts to reflect on their lives. These methods include specific social locations in order to further deconstruct the ways in which students' views, experiences

and realities are shaped by cultural norms and social institutions.

Radical/Critical Sociology and Pedagogy

Similar to humanism in its emphasis on social institutions and inspired by Marxism, critical/radical pedagogy emphasizes a class-based analysis of social structure and its implications on the lives of both students and teachers. According to Stephen Sweet (1998), a radical perspective is "an outlook that questions the legitimacy of existing systems of hierarchy as related to issues of race, gender, class, disability, sexual orientation, or other socially constructed divisions between people" (p. 101). This definition has significant implications as a pedagogical philosophy. It suggests that the major objective of a radical pedagogical practice is "...a commitment to act in ways that accord with the radical view of 'why' one teaches...the radical commitment to wed critical reflection with social action is fundamentally a political matter" (Long 1998:112). Thus, the question of why one teaches is as significant as what one teaches. In asking these questions as educators, we provide the application of political ideology to the classroom.

The radical approach is based upon critical thought and analytic skills essential to understanding students' social reality. Students are encouraged to understand social and political institutions as purveyors of class domination and oppression. More specifically, education is explored as a social institution in relation to the perpetuation of the status quo. The process of education should be one where the hegemonic relationship is uncovered and students are challenged to fight against the status quo.

The application of theory into practice or praxis has significant implications in the day-to-day functioning of the classroom setting. "Radical pedagogy introduce(s) a new dimension into the classroom experience: teacher and students are not only involved in producing content and products of teaching, but are actively learning and creating a learning process" (Gaianguet

1998:125). This dimension indicates a change in the typical hierarchical relationship between students and teachers. Students and educators are seen as equally contributing to the teaching and learning process, thereby decentralizing the role of the instructor. In this mutually rewarding experience, students and instructors are able to learn from each other in terms of theory and application. In other words, "students become the teachers" (Gaianguest 1998:124), while the educator, in turn, becomes "learner, guide, facilitator, and resource person."

Liberation Sociology and Pedagogy

An interesting combination of both humanist and critical/radical pedagogies is captured by liberation pedagogy. In a recent book by Joe Feagin and Hernan Vera (2001), liberation sociology reignites the discussion of a sociology that is committed to equality and an end to oppression. Feagin and Vera suggest that the field of sociology return to its roots of radicalism and social change "in the direction of democracy and social justice" (2001:1). The authors define liberation sociology as "a way for individuals and small groups to examine the social conditions in which they live and the social consequences of individual and collective actions" (2001:21). The job of educators adopting this Friereian-influenced method is to promote "conscientization," a sense of awareness "of how oppressed people struggling for liberation can actually free themselves" (Feagin and Vera 2001:21). Liberation sociology refocuses the field and the act of teaching on the elements that bring about real social change for members of oppressed groups.

Pedagogically this model emphasizes the process of learning as liberatory, placing particular emphasis on the ways in which a liberatory curricula is concerned with an exploration of the perpetuation of oppressive structures.

Liberation sociology seeks to expand the range of courses offered to include courses on all

forms of institutionalized exploitation, domination, and marginalization. It seeks to put students in connection with the complex realities of everyday life and the full range of experiences of human beings—including those human beings that have not as yet received adequate social science attention, those who are exploited and oppressed. (Feagin and Vera 2001:262-3)

KUFUNDISHA: AN ALTERNATE LIBERATORY PEDAGOGICAL MODEL

Humanist, radical/critical, and liberation pedagogical models all address classroom climate, the connection between learning and activism, the role shift between the educator and the students, and the major objectives of that education. They differ, however, on the specific strategies and approaches educational environments should employ. For example, humanist pedagogies stress the importance of sociology "for the service of humanity," while radical/critical pedagogies emphasize "criticizing and demystifying existing institutions" (Oppenheimer and Stark 1999:35). Not unlike the radical approach, liberation sociology stresses the creation and development of courses that expose structural oppression created and perpetuated via social institutions.

However, while in these models the overall ideologies are stressed, little attention is given to the mechanics of application—connection between the teaching philosophy, text selection, and the process by which one weaves activism with the major objectives both of the field and the course. The research grounded in these pedagogies fails to provide an explicit discussion of how these processes take place. Little has been written about tailoring the college classroom to a specific population, especially how to connect the method of instruction to the learning styles of students. What is needed is a pedagogical template that can be used to understand not only the ways in which these aspects are connected but also the ways in which progressive sociologists

can couple learning and teaching with activism. We also need an option that allows us to explore race, not only as a construct of sociological analysis in the larger society, but also as significant within the classroom and as part of the learning process.

In an effort to provide a pedagogical approach to respond to the aforementioned conditions, Neville and Cha-Jua (1998) proposed Kufundisha, a pedagogical tool for use in Black Studies departments/programs. This innovative teaching method has important implications for the teaching and learning environment of African-American students. The emphasis is on encouraging educators to understand the social reality of students in ways that are relevant, meaningful, and applicable to the subject matter. What becomes critical in the application of this teaching method is to create an environment where one can not only educate, empower, and encourage students to find their own voices but also listen to the voices that have often been excluded from the theoretical discussion. This model stresses the influence of race, class, gender, and nationality in the structure of the class, in the nature of the assignments, and in the method of evaluation.

As a means to provide the mechanics for a critical pedagogy, Kufundisha includes notions of reflexivity, critical analysis, and teaching for the purpose of liberation, but with a particular emphasis on the cultural realities of the students involved in this learning process. As a teaching tool it both "articulates an educational epistemology and it suggests strategies for classroom praxis," and in doing so contributes to the development of an explicit theoretical approach using education as a tool (Neville and Cha-Jua 1998:453.) The primary advantage of this model is that it does not assume that the realities of all social groups are similar; instead, it seeks to understand separately and collectively the effects of multiple social locations. Women's issues are different from issues of class, which are also different from issues of race and ethnicity, yet these social identities interact in

complex ways. With this in mind, Kufundisha seeks to identify with the students on the basis of their cultural reality and to use this cultural awareness to understand the specific experiences and historical context. Additionally, the basic premise is to understand the similarities of the students, to acknowledge within group differences among students, to deconstruct student social reality on the basis of social similarities, and from there begin to move the students to understanding the ways in which there are dissimilarities such as on the basis of race, class, and perhaps nationality.

For the student population at Bethune Cookman, any of the four broad types of progressive pedagogies would have been useful in the classroom. Kufundisha was preferable because of the racial and ethnic background of both the student population and of the professor. It was also helpful because it included specific classroom components such as learning environment, selection of texts and readings, teaching philosophy, and methods of instruction and evaluation, and addressed the ways in which this technique would be utilized and implemented.

"ENTER TO LEARN, DEPART TO SERVE": THE BETHUNE-COOKMAN EXPERIENCE

The opportunity to teach sociology at a historically Black college was a unique and rewarding experience for me. It was unique in part because it contrasted with my own educational experiences. I attended predominantly white institutions (PWIs) and felt that these institutions had largely appealed to and culturally connected with mainstream American college students. Although I chose to attend PWIs, I realized that the historically Black college experience was rich in terms of race as a social history, tradition, and in making the academic community particularly relevant to the experiences of African-Americans. I also realized the contributions of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) to

higher education, particularly the opportunities afforded to African-Americans. HBCUs have prepared large numbers of students to compete and continue their education at various graduate and professional schools throughout the country. It is no secret that a large majority of African-American physicians, dentists, scientists, and lawyers received their undergraduate education at HBCUs. In word and deed, these institutions are genuinely concerned with the whole student and his/her overall success.

Teaching at an HBCU was rewarding because of ethnoculture shared between the students and I, in addition to the validating climate of the educational institution. Rooted in the African-American experience, student and faculty functions were not only an opportunity to address critical issues within the college but also served as a chance to connect via cultural celebrations. This was in contradiction to my academic career. Throughout my own educational experiences, the numbers of African-American faculty members were abysmal. I had only one Black female professor during my undergraduate education and two Black male professors in graduate school. By contrast, Africans and African-Americans at Bethune-Cookman were well represented among the faculty and administration.

As a recent graduate in sociology, I wanted to start my teaching career at an HBCU because I believed that at such institutions I would find progressive political discussions and actions that provided eager young minds with the political and theoretical foundations to critically challenge the social landscape. Bethune-Cookman was where I could have a considerable effect on the young minds of Black students.

My excitement about teaching specifically at Bethune-Cookman stemmed, in large part, from my admiration for its founder, Mary McLeod Bethune. Ms. Bethune fought for excellence in education and she taught that education had "transformative powers" (McCluskey and Smith 1999:67). I understood her message of education as transformative in its ability to change the

individual and liberate the collective. After reading about Bethune's teaching philosophy and her willingness to challenge barriers to education and politics, I realized that I wanted to become a part of her legacy.

Founded in 1904, Bethune-Cookman is a private, liberal arts, Methodist-affiliated four-year college in Daytona Beach, Florida. Student enrollment is approximately 2,700, with gradual increases each year. As it is a residential college, a large majority of students live on-campus (61%) including fresh(wo)men who are required to live on campus. Not only is Bethune-Cookman historically Black, it is currently predominantly African-American (91%) with some international students (7%) and Hispanic students (1%). The majority of the schools students come from are within the state of Florida (65%). Average tuition costs, which include room and board, are \$14,770; a large majority of students (96%) receive financial assistance (FastFacts Bethune Cookman Online Media Room, www2.cookman.edu/Development/media_release/fastfacts.html).

The sociology department is a degree-granting academic area in the Division of Social Sciences, one of seven divisions in the college. Also included in this division are criminal justice, psychology, gerontology, history, and political science. There are approximately 45 majors in sociology. The motto for the division is "Educate locally and act globally." Thus, the Division encourages students to see themselves within the larger context of the rest of the world, to realize that their work affects not only the immediate environment, and to lend their efforts to the larger social context. A considerable number of students tend to go on to graduate school after completion of the Bachelor of Arts degree, with a competing percentage going on to work in public service areas.

My personal teaching philosophy underscores the importance of teaching in a way that is non-sexist, non-racist, and non-homophobic and exposes students to a variety of theoretical explanations, especially

those from a more critical perspective. Consistent with the Kufundisha model, I try to promote an optimal and inclusive learning environment, taking into consideration methodological approaches to issues of race, class, gender, and nationality. Accordingly, my sociological theory course was organized to deconstruct and understand the multiplicity of oppressions and the effects of these social categories on the social experience. Race, class, and gender served as the primary social categories used to understand and explore social reality:

[Students] learn the subtleties of Marxist or critical theory in order to gain understanding of the dialectics of freedom and necessity of the historically specific structures and processes that shape their lives while contradictions unfold, opening new spaces for qualitative changes in their experiences and consciousness... They learn to play the radical role... as a result of complex processes of historical change coupled with individuals' clear thinking and solid theoretical grasp of the totalizing forces that shape their fate. (Gimenez 1998:119)

Similar to Gimenez (1998), the social theory course I offered had implications for the analysis of social reality and in students' ability to apply these theories of liberation to the outside world. For these reasons, the course selected for this analysis is sociological theory. The purpose of this course was to expose students to the classical and contemporary theoretical traditions within the field of sociology. I selected this course to apply and analyze the Kufundisha model for two reasons. First, it was a core course that all upper division sociology majors were required to complete before graduation. Students at this stage were juniors and seniors and had been exposed to the fundamentals of the field. With a solid foundation in sociology theory, considered dense, would be more easily understood. Second, it was a course where the instructor had a considerable amount of latitude in designing the structure and readings of the course.

KUFUNDISHA IN PRACTICE

Kufundisha consists of eight main components, including teaching philosophy, goals and objectives, learning styles, texts and readings, method of instruction, method of evaluation, and learning environment. Below I describe the model, its subsequent components, and its application to the social theory course taught at Bethune-Cookman College. The specific mechanisms have been combined for clarification and similarity. The order of this analysis mirrors the development and structure of the course.

Goals and Objectives

The primary goal of sociology is to understand human social behavior. The overarching objective of a sociological theory course is exposure to the theoretical foundations within the field of sociology. Theory serves as explanations of human social relationships within the larger social structure. More specifically, the course was designed to 1) explore both classical and contemporary theoretical paradigms, 2) use non-traditional theoretical perspectives, 3) encourage students' integration and synthesis of their experiences to the theories discussed, and 4) de-construct students' multiple memberships as a way of understanding race, class, gender, and nationality.

My goals and objectives for this course reflected the field of sociology and the specific course being taught, social theory. Consistent with Kufundisha, my goals and objectives influenced the texts and readings I selected as well as the method of evaluating student learning. This included the different paradigms and theoretical time periods of the field of sociology in addition to the ways in which this course was designed to address, expose, and introduce students to the field. The content of the course encompassed the major theoretical paradigms of the field of sociology (e.g., functionalism, symbolic interaction and conflict) and also left theories (e.g., Afrocentric, class and world systems, and feminist theory).

It was through an integration of European-American and African-American theoretical frameworks that students were able to understand the contributions of African-Americans and other scholars of color to the field of sociological theory. The structure of the class was also designed to allow students to uncover the social theorists within themselves and see their experiences as information to be used as they became social theorists in their own right: to critique, to challenge, and to work toward social change. Thus, the main goal of the course was to contribute to the students' desire to understand and explain their experiences from a larger structural perspective in ways that were sociologically relevant and culturally sensitive within an intellectual context.

In addition to gaining a more critical analysis of sociological theories, I expected students to gain improved written and oral communication skills and improved reading comprehension. With respect to the latter, students were encouraged to analyze the material and develop their thoughts about the subject matter as well as to learn to present these thoughts in an organized manner. This process emphasized their critical challenges to the theories and to the social and political implications of the theoretical explanations.

Texts and Readings

According to Kufundisha, texts and readings should be selected in consideration of the goals and objectives of both the course and the field (Neville and Cha-Jua 1998). The required readings for the course should provide exposure to the field and should be inclusive of various social perspectives. I chose readings which were culturally sensitive, represented the classical and contemporary theoretical perspectives of the field, reflected diverse populations and were gathered from multiple sources. Some were academic while others came from popular readings.

The first section of the course focused on the readings of classical theorists typically found in a course on social theory. From

the classical theoretical perspective, students were exposed to an analysis of the works of August Comte, Emile Durkheim, Herbert Spencer, Georg Hegel, Karl Marx, Max Weber, George Herbert Mead, and C. Wright Mills. Readings for this section of the course were primarily from a textbook entitled "*Sociological Theory: Classical Statements*" (Ashley and Orenstein 1998). This text provided information on the lives of theorists that enabled students to explore the significance of their background on theory development and on their contribution of their perspectives to the field of sociology.

Students were also exposed to African-American theorists. Some of these readings included excerpts from W.E.B Du Bois's *Souls of Black Folk*, Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, C.L.R. James's, "Black Power and Stokely," and Molefi Asante's "Afrocentricity." The importance of these readings was to show the development of social thought from African-American and Caribbean perspectives that explore the implications of race, class, and colonialism. This also showed the development of Black social and political theory.

These readings presented theories of race and class from the perspective of those who experienced them. As this section followed the critical theory introduced in the classical section, students were able to compare and contrast these perspectives and experiences with the classical theorists. For example, although Karl Marx discusses the role of conflict between social classes, many believe that his analysis has excluded the role of race. C.L.R. James's piece was selected as it provides a Marxist analysis of the Black Power Movement.

Black feminist writers often represent a different analysis of gender issues within the Black community. Although the theorists discussed in class were not all social theorists by definition, they contribute to the analysis of gender and contextualize these issues within a larger struggle for racial liberation. Their work proved critical for conversations. These authors discuss the

role of gender within the collective race struggle; furthermore, they present differing views as to the existence and/or importance of understanding a hierarchy of oppressions. The theorists and the selected works included were bell hooks (1994), "Black Women Shaping Feminist Theory"; an article by Patricia Hill-Collins (1989) entitled "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought"; and Pearl Cleage's (1993) "Mad at Miles," which includes a section on the discussion of gender oppression and some suggested conversational rules that should be utilized to initiate this often sensitive conversation.

Teaching Philosophy and Learning Environment

The teaching philosophy is the educator's explicit statement of his or her "fundamental theories or assumptions and pedagogical practices" that guide the classroom dynamics (Neville and Cha-Jua 1998:452). Teaching philosophy guides syllabus construction, selection of texts, method of instruction and the criteria of evaluating student learning. It includes a clear position on the process by which students learn and synthesize information in the classroom setting. Essentially, this philosophy determines an educator's behavior, expectations and relationships with students. From the teaching philosophy emerges the learning environment. Specifically, the learning environment must be "an empowering classroom community" (Neville and Cha-Jua 1998:466). Creating such an atmosphere demands a supportive and sensitive classroom setting that must allow students to grapple with difficult subjects. There were three primary ways in which my teaching philosophy was applied to this course: through discussion and interaction, collaborative learning, and assignments that encouraged students to engage in the material. Within this context, the related learning environment is also addressed.

The "learning facilitation" model of student learning argues that the process of learning "is an active, social and constitu-

tive process" (Neville and Cha-Jua 1998:453). This suggests that when students are encouraged to realize the importance of their participation, the role of the professor is decentralized. Through discussion and interaction students were informed that their contributions to the course, both theoretical and empirical, were extremely valuable and expected. Here students were encouraged to use language that was socially and culturally responsible. Language socially identified as sexist, racist, or classist would be deemed inappropriate. It was important for the class to establish ground rules for communication that the students would both respect and embrace.

Collaborative teaching/learning emphasizes student interaction and involvement with me, the instructor. The students and I worked together to create a productive learning environment, one in which they came prepared to critically discuss the material. We presented and applied the material in ways that had contemporary significance. In terms of evaluation with regard to grades, we also worked together. Although the final decision regarding grades was mine as the instructor, students expressed feeling a strong sense of participation throughout the evaluation process.

The last way that my teaching philosophy was applied to the course was in providing assignments that allowed students to critique and to challenge the readings, the instructor, and each other. In critiquing the works of major theorists, students were encouraged to apply the theories and to inquire about the conditions under which the theories were supported or ineffective in explaining social phenomena. As students disagreed with theorists, they would also often disagree with each other. The learning environment was created to allow students to disagree in a respectful manner on empirical evidence or theoretical positions. By establishing conversational rules, students were told that their ideas were important to the discussion and that their questions and ideas would not be demeaned. Implementing these conversational tools into the classroom

discussion encouraged students to respect each other and disagree in an organized and respectful manner.

The following classroom example demonstrates the conjunction of my teaching philosophy with the learning environment. Students were engaged in an enlightening discussion as they grappled with the role of feminism in the struggle against racial oppression. The reading from Pearl Cleage (1993) elicited one of the liveliest discussions in the course. As an example of a feminist analysis of domestic violence, particularly against African-American women, Cleage analyzes the autobiography of jazz musician Miles Davis. In particular, Cleage analyzes the community response, or lack thereof, to his description of violence against his then-wife, Cicely Tyson. In this piece Cleage suggests "*he is guilty of self-confessed violent crimes against women such that we should break his albums, burn his tapes and scratch up his CDs until he acknowledges and apologizes and agrees to rethink his position on The Woman Question*" (p. 36; italics in original). To emphasize this point, she asks the reader to contemplate the Black community reaction to a mainstream popular musician, Kenny G, if he admitted to acts of violence against Black men. "Would we forgive the perpetrator so quickly and allow him into our private time; our spiritual moments; our sweet surrenders?" (p. 42). Cleage closes this discussion by asking a few questions.

So the question is: How can they hit us and still be our heroes?

And the question is: How can they hit us and still be our leaders?

Our husbands?

Our Lovers? Our Geniuses? Our friends?

And the answer is...they can't.

Can they? (Cleage 1993:43)

In response to this essay, students were

divided along gender lines. Many of the female students asked how the Black community can continue to support athletes and other entertainers more broadly when private lives reveal acts of domestic violence. Other students, both male and female, sought to encourage a separation of public performance versus private lives, suggesting that entertainers had a right to privacy and that our public appreciation for their artistic talents should not be affected by private information. When brought back to the question of the acquiescence of the public to domestic violence, students were not able to come to an agreement as to how to respond. However, while no agreement occurred, students did engage in the learning process. They were able to challenge and critique all sides of the discussion while creating their own solutions to the current crises of racism and sexism within the Black community.

Learning Styles and Method of Instruction

Neville and Cha-Jua (1998) described learning style as the process through which students "process and retain new information" (p. 455). Based on cognitive tendencies, two common learning preferences emerged, one that emphasized independent tasks and one that emphasized collective tasks or engaged social networks. The ways in which the information was disseminated were closely linked to students' performances and their ability to retain information. The method of instruction reflected the various student-learning styles. For Kufundisha, the process of disseminating information must be linked both to students' experiences and their cultural roots.

Many of the course elements and assignments started as individual activities but ended as a collective effort. For those students who excelled in independent tasks, the lectures were discussion by orientation. Individually, students were expected to take notes and participate in the discussion. Each week the class covered a different theorist; in their preparation, students were expected to compose questions regarding each of the theorists. Their questions were then ad-

dressed in the lecture. In the writing assignments, students were expected to identify a specific idea covered by the reading that was particularly significant, to discuss the meaning expressed, and to describe its contemporary theoretical implications.

For students who excelled in collective/collaborative tasks, the course relied upon group interaction that assisted them in their understanding of theoretical perspectives. They were placed into small work groups where they assisted each other with the presentation of ideas and in their writing. Students worked together to understand and explain the various theories, helping each other with their in-class presentations and writing assignments, both of which were graded. After a brief discussion of the theorist and the ideas he or she contributed to the field, each student selected a theorist that he or she would individually and creatively present before the class. This is essentially a collaborative exercise; however, it was with the interaction both within the planned workgroups and with the larger class that this assignment became a social process.

The convergence between learning styles, method of instruction, and cultural roots is exhibited by an example that emphasizes the use of music to encourage the understanding of social and political commentary from very different perspectives. Sources of social theory can be found via numerous non-traditional sources that allow us to explain social conditions (Hill-Collins 1991). In this example, students engaged in a discussion based upon the anti-lynching song popularized by Billie Holiday, "Strange Fruit."

This musical selection presents major implications for the analysis of sociological theory. This approach is consistent with Theresa Martinez's (1998) use of music as a tool in sociology courses to teach issues of race and popular culture. Students listen to and are given the lyrics of the song and asked to respond to the following set of questions: 1) What is the message of this song? 2) How does this apply to social theory? 3) What effect does this song have on

the listener? 4) What is the tone of this song? 5) How does the tone affect the message?

Southern trees bear strange fruit,
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root,
Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze,
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.

Pastoral scene of the gallant south,
The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth,
Scent of magnolias, sweet and fresh,
Then the sudden smell of burning flesh.

Here is fruit for the crows to pluck,
For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck,
For the sun to rot, for the trees to drop,
Here is a strange and bitter cry. (Allen and Meeropol 1938)

It is through discussion that students are able to associate this song to many social theories such as social control, symbolic interaction, and conflict theory. The level of sophistication during this discussion was particularly insightful and spirited.

Method of Evaluation

The method of evaluation includes a determination of the teaching effectiveness and whether or not students understand and integrate the material. Kufundisha posits that the "method of evaluating students' performance and acquisition of new knowledge should reflect the professor's teaching style and the student's learning preferences" (Neville and Cha-Jua, 1998:462). This performance is determined by their assignments, which, it is suggested, should be varied.

An important aspect of this pedagogy is the ability to empower students, giving them an opportunity to provide input in how the course would be structured and how they would be evaluated. Because of the value of their participation in the learning process, students in this social theory course collectively had a choice between exams over theories and weekly writing assignments. Students selected writing assignments that were used to "encourage students to interpret, analyze and integrate complex

theories with their own experiences" (Neville and Cha-Jua 1998:463). Drafts were first submitted to the campus "writing lab." After revisions were made, the assignments were brought to class and evaluated both by other students in the class (for feedback) and the instructor. Student grades were accumulated by completing weekly writing assignments, individual presentation of a particular theorist, participation and classroom involvement, and a graded course portfolio.

According to William Cerbin (1994), the course portfolio can be used as a method of evaluating effective teaching and learning, and for my class it played an important part in each student's accumulated grade. Used to determine the effectiveness of teaching, the portfolio can also be used as a reference tool for the student that demonstrates exactly what they learned. The specific goals of the portfolio are to "a) document and assess more fully the substance and complexity of teaching, b) connect assessment of teaching with assessment of learning and c) to foster better teaching and learning" (Cerbin 1994:95).

The portfolios submitted in my class had many components. Students were encouraged to exercise good organizing skills by the accumulation of documents related to the class. Each portfolio included lecture/discussion notes, photocopies of readings, written notes from the readings, notes from presentations, and the aforementioned weekly writing assignments (both the corrected draft from the writing lab and the graded copy) to demonstrate the student's continued progress. If I were to teach this course again, I would include a section in which students reflected on their material and their learning that occurred throughout the semester.

Student Evaluation

In order to gain as much as possible from the students regarding Kufundisha, an anonymous evaluation was given in addition to the departmental student evaluation. The questions on the departmental evaluation

addressed issues of whether or not the course objectives were distributed and explained and on the instructor's level of preparedness and knowledge of the subject matter. The additional evaluation was to explore what the students found useful and helpful and how taking this course changed their view of theory. The purpose of these evaluations was to get a sense of how the students felt not about the instructor but about the course material.

Overall, the evaluation results were positive. Many students described the class as "comfortable" because of the "laid back" environment, yet they felt challenged to articulate their experiences in theoretical terms. These evaluations can be divided into three categories: 1) nature of the class, 2) nature of the work, and 3) future benefit.

With regard to the nature of the class, students suggested that the word theory was "scary" but that being able to relate it to social conditions and situations made it seem "real." Additionally, their comments suggest that the inclusion of popular culture was helpful in getting them to understand how theory explains social reality, and it helped them from getting "bored." "Using music and movies to understand theory made learning easy, I look forward to attending class."

The majority of the students were grateful for the ability to contribute to the substance and structure of the course. In comparison to other required courses, students enjoyed being involved in the direction of the class: "I really felt that my participation to the discussion was important, especially in deciding how my work would be graded." Another student wrote, "The instructor made me feel like it was important to participate."

With regard to the nature of the work, one student mentioned feeling that the class was very "demanding." The writing assignments became hard to keep up with; the student had to come to class well prepared, otherwise "...you will feel left out of the discussion." Being left out was a major consideration, one student suggests; "everyone

knows when you didn't read." There were some reinforcements for participation as the discussions are "very interesting." Another student commented, "I have never read or written so much. I really learned a lot." The latter point was echoed through many of the evaluation forms.

The third category of student comments addressed the future benefit. Students were overwhelmingly happy "to have something to hold onto after the class." The portfolio included the lecture notes and their writings that gave them something to "fall back on" or to use as a reference at a later date. "My folder will help in grad school", said one student. The portfolio was often referenced throughout the class and students were informed about how this part of the class was to help with their organizational skills.

Not all of the student comments were positive. Some students complained about the amount of work that was expected of them. One commented, "I'm not in grad school yet." Some mentioned that the work was overwhelming—"It was too much work"—yet felt that they were able to interact with the instructor when they had questions about the material or were stuck on a topic for their paper.

Out of the total 13 students in the class, approximately seven are currently enrolled in graduate schools (mostly in sociology programs) and two students are enrolled in law schools. One student stated that she is grateful for the portfolio: "In graduate school, courses are taught as though theory and the theorists are the first thing on everyone's mind and having something to fall back on has been a lifesaver."

CONCLUSION

The importance of the Kufundisha pedagogical model is that it takes into consideration race and class in the development of a course that will ultimately serve to motivate students to believe in and work for social change. Although in this example both the students and instructor were Black or African-American, this does not preclude its

application to students of various other social identities. Students at reservation colleges, those at predominantly Latino institutions, or students at community colleges would respond well to a course that is constructed both to appeal and relate to that which culturally connects them and is devised with them in mind.

For educators who believe that sociology should be liberatory, this model has valuable implications for the ways in which we teach. As we allow students to exercise their voices in the determination of class assignments combined with the ability to interact and challenge both theorists and the theories they create, this method serves as a challenge to authority. Students are given the tools to critically analyze their social reality in order to change it. Much of what we study as sociologists deals with social relationships in the larger society. This article calls for an application of these theories and our findings to the classroom to create a liberatory experience both for students and educators alike.

REFERENCES

- Allen, Lewis and Abel Meeropol. 1938. *Strange Fruit*. Performed by Billie Holiday.
- Ashley, David and David Orenstein. 1998. *Sociological Theory: Classical Statements*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Brown, Christopher. 1999. "African American Male Student-Athletes: Career Maturity Differences at High School Level." *National Association of Student Affairs Professionals Journal* 2:16-24.
- Cade, Alfred. 2002. "Affirmative Action in Higher Education." *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 20.
- Cerbin, William. 1994. "The Course Portfolio as a Tool for Continuous Improvement of Teaching and Learning." *Journal of Excellence in College Teaching* 5:95-105.
- Chavous, Tabbye. "African American College Students in Predominantly White Institutions of Higher Education: Considerations of Race and Gender." *African American Research Perspectives* 8:142-50.
- Cleage, Pearl. 1993. "Mad at Miles." Pp. 36-43 in *Deals with the Devil and Other Reasons to Riot*. New York: One World Press.

- FastFacts Bethune Cookman Online Media Room. Retrieved November 1, 2002 (www2.cookman.edu/Development/media_release/fastfacts.html).
- Feagin, Joe and Hernan Vera. 2001. *Liberation Sociology*. Cambridge, MA: Westview Publishing.
- Friere, Paulo. 1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Herder and Herder.
- Gaianguest, Kathryn. 1998. "Radical Pedagogy is Social Change in Action. Response to 'Practicing Radical Pedagogy: Balancing Ideals with Institutional Constraints'." *Teaching Sociology* 26:112-15.
- Gimenez, Martha. 1998. "The Radical Pedagogy Mystique: A View from the Trenches. Response to 'Practicing Radical Pedagogy: Balancing Ideals with Institutional Constraints'." *Teaching Sociology* 26:116-20.
- Goodwin, Glenn. 1987. "Humanistic Sociology and the Craft of Teaching." *Teaching Sociology* 15:15-20.
- Hill-Collins, Patricia. 1989. "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought." *Signs* 14 (4):745-73.
- _____. 1991. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge.
- hooks, bell. 1994. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge.
- Long, David. 1998. "A Radical Teacher's Dilemma. Response to 'Practicing Radical Pedagogy: Balancing Ideals with Institutional Constraints'." *Teaching Sociology* 26:112-15.
- Martinez, Theresa. 1995. "Where Popular Culture Meets Deviant Behavior: Classroom Experiences with Music." *Teaching Sociology* 23:413-18.
- McCluskey, Audrey and Elaine Smith, eds. 1999. *Mary McLeod Bethune: Building a Better World: Essays and Selected Documents*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Mercer, Tenisha. 2002. "Providing Students the Tools to Excel." *Black Issues in Higher Education* 19:18-21.
- Neville, Helen A. and Sundiata K. Cha-Jua. 1998. "Kufundisha: Toward a Pedagogy for Black Studies." *Journal of Black Studies* 28:447-70.
- Oppenheimer, Martin and Evan Stark. 1999. "Sociology." *Critical Sociology* 25:30-6.
- Richeson, Jennifer and Clemyln-Ann Pollydore. 2002. "Affective Reactions of African American Students to Stereotypical and Counter-stereotypical Images of Blacks in the Media." *Journal of Black Psychology* 28:261-75.
- Schmader, Toni, Brenda Major, and Richard Gramzow. 2002. "How African American College Students Protect Their Self-Esteem." *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 35: 116-19.
- Schwartz, Robert. 2002. "Predicting Academic Performance and Retention Among African American Freshmen Men." *NASPA Journal* 39:354-70.
- Scimecca, Joseph. 1995. *Society and Freedom: An Introduction to Humanist Sociology*. Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall Publishers.
- Sweet, Stephen. 1998. "Practicing Radical Pedagogy: Balancing Ideals with Institutional Constraints." *Teaching Sociology* 26:110-11.
- Monica M. White** is a Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellow in the Afro-American Studies and Research Program at the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign. She is an assistant professor in the department of sociology at Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, and teaches courses in urban sociology, social movements and social psychology. Her research investigates collective identity and social location in social movement theory development, especially with regard to Black radical political organizations during the 1960s-1970s.