*"For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other. " - Paulo Freire*

Obtaining sociopolitical or critical consciousness is elusive. It is not something to possess, but a process with which to engage. While no one may ever be fully sociopolitically or critically conscious, our growth in this area as students and teachers is paramount to creating freedom, not just replicating and adapting to the oppressive world as it is. This concept has been recognized by freedom-based educational and social-work practitioners and philosophers for years, many who provide insights into its emerging definitions, theories of its development in students, and tools and methods for measuring it. All three of these areas are important areas of knowledge for anyone who wishes to engage in raising sociopolitical or critical consciousness in their students.

The idea of critical consciousness arises with Paulo Freire and his concept of *conscientização*, whose translator relays the meaning as being "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 2018, p. 3). In one of her earlier papers advocating for the idea of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, Gloria Ladson-Billings cites Freire in her usage of the term critical consciousness, which she uses interchangeably with the idea of sociopolitical consciousness. Ladson-Billings writes that critical consciousness is very simply engaging students "with the world and others critically" (1995, p. 162). The ultimate goal of this process was that it "allows[students] to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities" (Ladson-Billings 1995, p. 162). Here we can see the fundamental similarity in the understanding that Freire and Ladson-Billings share about critical or sociopolitical consciousness, it is critical thinking applied to our social, political, and economic world, with the ultimate goal of reversing the observed inequities.

Over time, praxis, and reinvention, the notion of critical or sociopolitical consciousness has evolved. For Ladson-Billings, as she was noticing that others were reinvigorating her Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, she too got in the action and gave her idea of sociopolitical consciousness a makeover. In "Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: aka the remix," Ladson-Billings says sociopolitical consciousness is "the ability to take learning beyond the confines of the classroom using school knowledge and skills to identify, analyze, and solve real world problems" (2014, p. 75). Later in the article, Ladson-Billings acknowledges that while she saw many teachers doing well with the first two pillars of CRP, she rarely saw teachers who pushed "students to consider critical perspectives on policies and practices that may have a direct impact on their lives and communities"(2014, p. 78). Perhaps by using the language of "school knowledge and skills" and the

dichotomous but commonly held notion of the "real world," Ladson-Billings hoped to make the concept of sociopolitical consciousness more accessible to teachers in the hope that they would engage in this process with their students.

Others have risen up to offer ideas of how to facilitate sociopolitical consciousness for teachers and students. Alice Lee, building off of Ladson-Billings CRP 2.0, believes that to deepen sociopolitical consciousness, teachers must allow their students to explore their own cultures and funds of knowledge, and through this, students will come to their own understanding of how they are directly impacted by inequities and stereotypes (2017). Dr. Michelle Pledger would agree with this, and also push one step further back to focus on creating emotional safety in the classroom by having students share one-on-one and in small groups on sensitive topics before discussing as a whole group (personal communication, 2020). Both Pledger and Lee also mention the idea that sociopolitical consciousness, inherent to the idea itself, must always connect the students to the world outside of the classroom. Freire would agree with these individual strategies, as he believed that the creation of knowledge was inherently dialogical, as well as with the continual application and reinvention of critical and sociopolitical consciousness through praxis that these above practitioners are engaged with.

In the implementation of different strategies to increase sociopolitical consciousness, a desire to measure and understand the increase arises. Although this idea of measurement is absent in the writing of Freire and Ladson-Billings, Watts, Diemer, and Voight (2011) propose looking to the field of social psychology, which has explored similar notions to critical consciousness in both Social Dominance Orientation(SDO) and Blame Attribution measures. SDO is a scale designed to measure how strongly a person accepts or rejects the myths which legitimize our societies power structures, whereas Blame Attribution can be used to examine if people blame individual actors or systemic forces for a societal problem.  Although they use slightly different language from Freire and Ladson-Billings, these types of measurements could prove to be a strong starting point in determining where, when, and how students begin to develop critical or sociopolitical consciousness.

Ladson-Billings has expressed angst over the misappropriation of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, even specifically noting the lack of engagement with its sociopolitical consciousness component(2014). This is a call to all teacher practitioners to better understand what this term means, how to engage our students in it, and how to understand if we are successfully doing so. Above all, sociopolitical consciousness is a process. It is continually reshaped and reformed everytime we engage in critical reflection of the inequities of our world and attempt to change them. The more we attempt to engage in this process, the more we will learn about how to do it, especially if we also measure and reflect on the process itself.

**Annotated Bibliography**

Freire, P. (2018). The "banking" concept of education." *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Bloomsbury publishing USA.

> In this chapter of this foundational text, Freire discusses two contrasting styles of teacher-student relationships. The first one is the "banking" model where the teacher holds the knowledge and imparts this knowledge into the brains of the students. The second, the "problem posing" model, involves *conscientização* or consciousness raising towards critical consciousness, which the translator describes as "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality."

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory into practice*, *34*(3), 159-165.

> In this seminal paper, Ladson-Billings determines that the basis of excellent teaching is a grounding of teaching within a student's culture and not of grounding the dominant culture onto the student. She outlines that this type of "culturally-relevant pedagogy" is based in academic success, which she defines as "literacy, numeracy, technological, social, and political skills," cultural competence, where students are able to bring their own culture into the classroom, and critical consciousness, which "allows them to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities."

Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: aka the remix. *Harvard Educational Review*, *84*(1), 74-84.

> In this remix of her pedagogical stance nearly 20 years later, Ladson-Billings notes how the conception of her work has been necessarily pushed by those who have argued for culturally responsive, revitalizing and sustaining pedagogy. She mentions that in her own observations of teachers who practice CRP, many "expressed strong beliefs in the academic efficacy of their students" and "searched for cultural examples," but teachers rarely "pushed students to consider critical perspectives." She provides a new definition of sociopolitical consciousness as being "the ability to take learning beyond the confines of the classroom using school knowledge and skills to identify, analyze, and solve real world problems."

Lee, A. (2017). Deepening Sociopolitical Consciousness in Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. *Talking Points, 29* (1), 20-26.

> Inspired by Ladson-Billings own reflections of how CRP has been misappropriated over time, Alice Lee explores how to better realize the third pillar of CRP, sociopolitical consciousness. Lee believes that sociopolitical consciousness arises

out of a deep dive into our students' cultures, and she proposes three methods of doing this: Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, Funds of Knowledge, and connecting the work of the classroom to media and activities that students participate in outside of the classroom.

Pledger, M., Personal communication, September, 23, 2020.

Dr. Michelle Pledger believes that the first step towards generating Sociopolitical Consciousness is to create a space of emotional safety in the classroom.  One way to do this is to have students meet in groups of 2s or 3s to discuss any topic before it is done as a whole group. Dr. Pledger also recommends utilizing students' funds of knowledge, like bringing interviews with family members, photos that students have taken, or culturally relevant  material that students already have knowledge about. Dr. Pledger also stressed connecting the discussion to future action. What will the students do with the knowledge or understanding they form as part of a group?

Pratto, Felicia, Sidanius, Stallworth, and Malle.  (1994). "Social dominance orientation: A personality variable predicting social and political attitudes." *Journal of personality and social psychology* 67.4 (1994): 741.

This Social Dominance Orientation scale was a method mentioned by Watts, Diemer, and Voigt  as a way to potentially measure socio-political consciousness. In this article, the creators of the SDO, Pratto, Felicia, et al.  rely on the proposition that the more an individual adopts the "legitimizing myths" that enable the oppression of specific social groups in society, the more social and economic inequality will be increased. Therefore, their goal is to create a reliable scale that could show whether or not someone has adopted these legitimizing myths of our unequal society.

Watts, R. J., Diemer, M. A., & Voight, A. M. (2011). Critical consciousness: Current status and future directions. In C. A. Flanagan & B. D. Christens (Eds.), Youth civic development: Work at the cutting edge. New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development, 134, 43–57.

Watts, Diemer, and Voight  hope to propose ways to measure critical consciousness to better understand, improve, and increase its practice. They break down Critical Consciousness into 3 categories: critical reflection, political efficacy, and political action. To measure and analyze critical reflection, they propose social psychology measures of attribution, a Social Dominance Orientation scale, qualitative analysis techniques, and self reflection of identity and oppression.

Wright, S. E. (1993). Blaming the victim, blaming the society, or blaming the discipline: Fixing Responsibility for Poverty and Homelessness 1. *Sociological Quarterly*, *34*(1), 1-16.

In this address, Wright gives a brief history of structural vs individual explanations for societal issues. She identifies a tendency in the media, academia, and the general public to favor individual explanations for societal issues as opposed to structural. She calls on her fellow academics to choose readings and guide discussions that help raise awareness of structural explanations over individual explanations for social issues.