

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: Expanding Social Capital Networks of Knowledge through Critical Pedagogy: A Critical Ethnographic Study with Community College Students

David Keith Truscello, Doctor of Philosophy, 2004

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Brown v. Board established the legal requirement that schools be integrated in the United States, but the case did not serve to dismantle the social segregation along race, class and cultural lines that leads in the first instance to a discourse gap and consequently to a learning gap based on discourse inequities. In this dissertation the author asserts that because people learn within social capital networks, an educational praxis is needed within families and schools that develops critical consciousness about becoming integrated into new learning communities of exemplars. Such a praxis would involve both directly negotiating truths about culture and class in classroom discussions and placing students in learning situations of legitimate peripheral participation in communities beyond their personal reach.

A critical ethnographic research methodology was employed. Data collection involved surveys, and content analysis of student narratives in at least two essays, as well as of transcripts of electronic bulletin boards.

The analysis of the findings was organized in four major categories: student descriptions of their current social capital networks, their statements indicating their degree of consciousness or understanding of theories studied, and their statements about social actions they might take to enhance and expand their social capital networks.

Through critical pedagogy, participants in this study discovered that they are able to reflect on their world, by doing so to achieve critical consciousness about the nature of their situation in the world, and to plan for social action to transform their situation as they see fit by developing their own social capital networks of success.