Praxis Paper

When we talk about stereotypes and racism, most people in society become uncomfortable and will often state things like “I am not racist” or “I do not think like that”. The problem with these statements is that they allow people to bypass actually talking about problems surrounding these issues. These problems are perpetuated by our culture as:

Deeper elements, which include not only values and belief systems but also “family structures and child-rearing practices, language and non-verbal communication, expectations, gender roles, biases – all the fundamentals of life that affect learning” (Vacca et al. 2014, 62)

As educators, our group realized that these statements and shortcuts are formed during our youth. Subjects like Sociology and Anthropology hope to combat the perceptions that are formed. The problems that educators face within these classes often surround how to tackle such grandiose and controversial topics. To help our fellow educators, we have developed a pedagogical tool, in the form of a video, which will present these topics in such a way that both students and educators will be more comfortable discussing.

In our tool we present racial stereotypes from the viewpoint of someone that would be considered a member of the dominant group within Western society. Throughout the video multiple racist stereotypes are expressed and for this reason we recommend that this tool be used in a classroom were students are comfortable with each other, preferably in a higher grade to facilitate this. Along with this it would be advisable to explain to your students that the statements expressed in this video reflect extreme stereotypical situations, and may be hurtful to some people. The purposes of these stereotypes are to demonstrate stereotypical situations, and are not a reflection of any persons’ actual views, or the real life situations of the groups that were marginalized in this video.

As educators it is our responsibility to maintain and create a socially just classroom and society, and by using our tool it will help with this process. We hope with the use of this tool that students will be able to engage different intelligences as Howard Gardner’s cognitive research suggests, as well as to be more socially aware in various situations. With the addition of our tool students will be able to grasp the stereotypes and racism through different lenses and develop further/stronger critical thinking skills.

This tool while dominantly focusing on a dramatized situation acted out by other educators is coupled with examples of current events. By using these examples of current events depicted, students will be confronted with the knowledge that stereotypes and racism still permeate many social situations. This will encourage the students to critically analyze society, and their personal lives in relation to how stereotypes and racism permeate various cultures.

Overall this Multiliteracies Project enables teachers to educate students about these topics in a safe classroom, and will facilitate an intelligent and secure discussion about such a controversial topic, and give students more insight about social problems in society.