

Social Responsibility Revisited: Critical Thinking and Empathy as Necessary Components of Social Change

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Abstract

The field of Recreation and Leisure has a history of advocacy and social reform. In recent history, there have been spirited dialogues, beginning with the 1991 SPRE Teaching Institute, about the role of recreation and leisure educators in facilitating social responsibility, and by extension, social change. The purpose of this paper is two-fold: first, we will explore the topics of critical thinking and empathy; and second, we will discuss activities that can be used to teach critical thinking and empathy into the classroom. Our discussion of critical thinking and empathy will be couched in terms of how the teaching of critical thinking and empathy can lead us to work toward issues of social change in the classroom and in the field.

Keywords: critical thinking, empathy, social change

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Introduction

“A thought which does not result in an action is nothing much, and an action which does not proceed from a thought is nothing at all” (Bernanos, 1955, p. 6).

This quote, although written more than 40 years ago, seems fresh as we continue to articulate and further refine our roles as individuals who educate for social change. Indeed, much has been written in the past 10 years about how teaching for social change manifests itself in our field. Such topics have included: advocacy and ethics (Henderson

& Bedini, 1989), social responsibility (c.f., Dahl, 1992; Goodale, 1992; Young, 1992), empowerment (Freysinger & Bedini, 1994), diversity (c.f., Blazey & James, 1994; Sheldon & Dattilo, 1997; Ward, 1994) and most recently, "service learning" (Ralston & Ellis, 1997). The 1997 Leisure Research Symposium, "Writing for Social Change" also reflected this trend. The underlying assumption of the papers and presentations cited above is that the processes of critical thinking and empathy are implied in discussions of social responsibility, advocacy, diversity, and social change. While the above-referenced authors have implied that critical thinking and empathy are components of social change, little consensus exists on what critical thinking and empathy are and there has been no explicit discussion of these two topics in the recreation and leisure studies literature.

In the 1980s we may have been tempted to abandon our role as educators for social change in favor of focusing on more pragmatic issues that affected our own existence on college campuses, in particular, and the existence of park and recreation agencies in general. Issues of downsizing, shrinking tax-bases and trickle-down economics influenced the viability and existence of professional preparation programs at the same time that they influenced the viability of municipal and private recreation and leisure agencies around the country. Yet, there is plenty of evidence (c.f., Witt and Crompton, 1996; Ralston and Ellis, 1997) to suggest that our profession continues to be socially and politically viable. As educators, we still have a role to play in teaching students to become facilitators, stewards and leaders of social change. In this paper, we take social change to mean a process of both institutional restructuring and individual acts that work to eliminate social oppression and the benefits to dominant groups that result from that social oppression.

Some educators have implicitly suggested that we need to combine critical thinking and empathy in the classroom when we discuss issues of social change (Garcia & Van Soest, 1997). Yet, there might be some resistance to addressing these issues given the climate on college campuses during the past few years in which discussions of "diversity" have sometimes disintegrated into heated debates over political correctness (Bader, 1992; Drucker, 1998; Hoover & Howard, 1995; Stimpson, 1994). According to Garcia & Van Soest (1997), "faculty have reported that class discussions related to social, cultural and racial diversity arouse strong emotions and strained interactions among students—in both courses that focus on diversity issues and courses that integrate them into the overall course content" (p. 120). Students seem irritated that they are "required" to learn about issues of diversity in the classroom and have often launched a backlash against a variety of political movements on campus (Hoover & Howard, 1995). In spite of the very real concern that we will face resistance and perhaps even backlash among students in the classroom, now, perhaps more than ever, we need ways to teach critical thinking and empathy relative to issues of social change.

The underlying premise of this paper is that two pedagogical strategies—critical thinking and empathy—can assist us as we teach about leisure as a potential context for personal empowerment and social change. In this paper we will first provide an over-

view of how we, as educators/scholars/researchers, have examined the topic of leisure and social reform in order to support our assertion that teaching critical thinking and empathy are important strategies to use when teaching for social change. Second, we will examine literature from other disciplines to conceptualize and define critical thinking and empathy. Finally, we will discuss several different strategies and techniques for teaching critical thinking and empathy in the classroom.

Overview

This overview provides a brief discussion of what our field has done with regard to teaching for social change and it provides a rationale for why we should extend our teaching of social change to include critical thinking and empathy. Our field has a history of “helping,” of “service to others,” of advocacy and social reform. The pioneers in this field (e.g., Jane Addams, Luther Gulick, Joseph Lee, Jacob Riis) left a legacy in the form of our collective history and memory of the role that recreation has in the processes of change. The challenge that faces contemporary recreation and leisure educators is the issue of how this collective history and memory will be used both inside and outside of the classroom. The 1991 SPRE Teaching Institute served as a catalyst for a spirited dialogue in *Schole* about the role of recreation and leisure educators in facilitating social responsibility and, by extension, social change. Goodale (1992) asked a provocative question about the pedagogy of social responsibility: “What do we mean by social responsibility and second, if we have behavioral objectives for teaching it, what are they and how do we measure them?” (p. 82).

Young (1992), in his response to Goodale (1992), argued that among the many components of social responsibility, one of the most critical is “having faculty who are themselves striving to be socially responsible” (p. 94). Stewart and Vogt (1992), in their response, noted that critical thinking was important in that “social responsibility requires not that we agree on which solution is best, but that we recognize and solve the problem” (p. 107). Further, they commented that “as educators, we should model critical thinking about policy choices and their implications, rather than falling into the idiot’s practice of empty advocacy” (p. 107). Despite their pleas for critical thinking, Stewart and Vogt did not explicitly discuss the process of how to “teach” critical thinking. Building upon Stewart and Vogt’s plea for critical thinking, and Dahl’s 1992 framework of commitment, care, and knowledge, we suggest that students/educators can contribute to the process of social change by learning/teaching critical thinking and empathy.

Critical Thinking and Empathy

Definitions of critical thinking can be found across a variety of disciplines (e.g., sociology, social work, anthropology, history, etc.), but the discipline that seems most compatible with recreation and leisure is social work. The field of social work and social work education offers several conceptual and theoretical frameworks for examining critical

thinking that can be applied to recreation and leisure. Mumm and Kersting (1997) suggested that social work educators are in the business of teaching students how to think like social workers. Like social work educators, we are also in the business of training empathic students to think critically at the same time that we teach them to plan, implement and evaluate recreation programs. Kurfiss (1989) explained that this process involves teaching about one's discipline (e.g., the definitions, concepts and theories that comprise our field); and teaching students how to think about issues relative to one's discipline (i.e., moving from theory to application to critical analysis of theory and its application).

Theorizing critical thinking

Although there are many definitions of critical thinking across various disciplines, Richard Paul, director of the Center for Critical Thinking and a prolific writer on the subject, asserted that it is difficult to define this term. Paul argued that "since critical thinking can be defined in a number of different ways consistent with each other, we should not put a lot of weight on any one definition" (Paul, 1993, p. 91). Paul does, however, offer a description of critical thinking: critical thinking is thinking about your thinking while you're thinking in order to make your thinking better. Two things are crucial: 1) critical thinking is not just thinking, it is thinking which entails self-improvement and 2) this improvement comes from skill in using standards by which one appropriately assesses thinking. To put it briefly, it is self-improvement (in thinking) through standards (that assess thinking). (p. 91)

Although the process that Paul describes is largely a cognitive one, Brookfield (1987) has argued that critical thinking includes both cognitive and affective components that involve an active process of thinking and understanding based on logic and feeling. Brookfield (1987) asserted that critical thinkers are "actively engaged" with life and that critical thinking is a process, not an outcome, that can be triggered by either positive or negative events. He wrote:

When we think critically we become aware of the diversity of values, behaviors, social structures, and artistic forms in the world. Through realizing this diversity, our commitments to our own values, actions, and social structures are informed by a sense of humility; we gain an awareness that others in the world have the same sense of certainty we do, but about ideas, values, and actions that are completely contrary to our own. (p. 5)

Brookfield's quote reveals that knowledge is socially constructed. Understanding how knowledge is constructed requires that students know how to distinguish fact from opinion and that they understand that knowledge is subject to change based on social, historical, political and economic factors. As teachers, we impart knowledge that is based on both fact and opinion and some of the time we distinguish between the two, but very rarely do we speak about the tentative and "temporal" nature of knowledge. Similarly,

we do not typically suggest that truth is based on mutual agreement—"basically, things are true if we agree they are" (Babbie, 1986, p. 25). So, if the process of critical thinking involves distinguishing fact from opinion and if facts are based on mutually agreed upon ideas rather than absolute truths, then what would be important for students to know about the construction of knowledge?

Paul (1992) has provided a framework for examining the construction of knowledge as a part of the critical thinking process. Critical thinking involves the ability to formulate, analyze and assess:

The (1) problem or question at issue, (2) purpose or goal of the thinking, (3) frame of reference or points of view involved, (4) assumptions made, (5) central concepts and ideas involved, (6) principles or theories used, (7) evidence, data or reasons advanced, (8) interpretations and claims made, (9) inferences, reasoning, and lines of formulated thought, and (10) implications and consequences that follow. (p. 11)

Paul's characteristics also reflect the need for students to develop cogent and well-reasoned arguments (Knight, 1992) as well as the need for discipline-based knowledge and knowledge in how to develop and support an argument (Kurfiss, 1989). In addition, good critical thinking involves a process whereby students learn to see a problem, not in terms of an absence of something, but rather, in terms of the complexity of factors operating to cause a problem (Alter & Egan, 1997). Social Work educators Mumm and Kersting (1997) have suggested five interrelated skills that promote critical thinking for social workers that can also be applied to recreation and leisure professionals:

1. The ability to understand [leisure] theories.
2. The ability to divide a theory into its components (assumptions, concepts, propositions, hypotheses, etc.).
3. The ability to assess the practic[al] implications of a theory.
4. The ability to develop and apply criteria for evaluating a theory.
5. The ability to identify common errors in reasoning. (p. 77)

Ultimately, it seems as if critical thinking can prepare professionals to learn how to "reason well" for "autonomous practice—the ability to make accurate judgments and to draw on a range of knowledge, values and skills. Social workers [and by extension, recreation/leisure professionals] must know *why* as well as *what* they are doing" (Jenkins & Sheafor, 1982, p. 8). Yet teaching critical thinking skills to improve practice risks a dangerous emphasis on analytics, possibly to the exclusion of empathy. Goodale (1992) captured the essence of this concern in his rhetorical question: "in the quest for professional stature, sophistication and respectability, did we lose something essential that our predecessors had: an ideology perhaps, or compassion; empathy, perhaps or even altru-

ism?" (p. 83). However, when we are attentive to the fact that critical thinking involves cognitive *and* affective components, we can work to actively "eliminate the cognitive and emotional barriers to student learning that often emerge during classroom discussions and other student interactions" (Garcia and Van Soest, 1997, p. 120).

Theorizing empathy

Like critical thinking, empathy has been defined in a variety of ways across different disciplines. One social work educator defined empathy as a "circular process that can alternatively focus on emotional, cognitive, interpretive or experiential components that correspond to diverse learning styles" (Erera, 1997, p. 246). Another social worker explained that many practitioners and educators have confused empathy and sympathy as synonymous. Raines (1990), however, argued that the difference between the two is "insight." Empathy, he argued, allows us to "sympathize with enough of our client's situation to experience their emotional state without allowing ourselves to be undone by the weight of the burden" (p. 59).

Nursing educators Wheeler and Barrett (1994) defined empathy "as the capacity to understand another's feelings as if they were our own, while remaining fully aware of our own identity" (p. 230). Communications scholars discuss empathy in terms of "perspective-taking"—"the capacity to assume and maintain another's point of view" (Hale & Delia, 1976, p. 195). All professionals who provide direct service should develop and refine their empathic skills and leisure service providers, especially, can benefit from learning to be more empathic. Such skills can enhance and deepen interactions between direct service providers and participants and these skills can also assist us in understanding individuals who, because of various markers of identity (e.g., race, gender, class, etc.), differ from ourselves.

The term "empathy," as it is used in the social sciences today, is a 20th century creation. The origin of the term "empathy," is a translation of Freud's *Einfühlung*: literally "in-feeling," "feeling into" (Code, 1995; Raines, 1990). According to Code, empathy is a flexible process that requires maintaining a balance between knowing when to speak at the same time that one knows when to refrain from speaking:

Empathy, at its best resists closure, invites conversation . . . [and] is a self-reflexive skill. When it is well developed and well practiced, it incorporates a capacity to assess its own aptness: a capacity that enables its practitioners to judge the kind and degree of empathy a situation, a person or a group of people requires. It enables them to hold back at places where their habitual empathetic practices may be inappropriate, excessive or inadequate. Empathy at its best calls for a finely tuned sensitivity both in its cognitive moments (working out how much one can/should know) and in its active ones. And neither moment is self-contained: they are mutually constructive and inhibiting (p. 126).

While Code provided an eloquent discussion of what empathy can be, at the same time, she warns of its potential problems. Too little empathy can be ineffective, yet too much empathy can be interpreted as patronizing behavior. In short, Code suggests that a balance is needed and since empathy is not inherently good, one must be aware of its potential to assist, as well as detract, from an individual's ability to speak and/or act for her/himself.

The mechanics of empathy

Empathy is a process that allows individuals to distinguish right from wrong, sense violations of justice, and appreciate others' ideas and perspectives. Empathy follows a trajectory similar to that of cognitive and moral development (Davis, 1983; Hatcher, Hatcher, Berlin, Okla, & Richards, 1990; Hatcher, Nadeau, Walsh, Reynolds, Galea, & Marz, 1994; Hoffman, 1977). The development of empathy includes feelings of discomfort, the ability to reason and feel from another's perspective and the ability to feel compassion for another person. Shermis (1992) noted that "before students can think reflectively, they must experience some degree of confusion, puzzlement, bewilderment or disorientation. These, obviously, are sticky and bothersome emotions. . ." (p. 30). Such emotions contribute to critical thinking and the development of empathy.

Three central components of developing empathy include: personal distress, perspective-taking and empathic concern (Davis, 1980). "Personal Distress" is the earliest affective component of empathy and accounts for "the individual's own fear, feelings of apprehension and discomfort at witnessing the negative experiences of others" (Davis, 1980, p. 4). The more mature versions, "Perspective Taking" and "Empathic Concern" include both affective and cognitive components (Davis, 1983; Emde, 1989). Individuals who use perspective-taking "reflect an ability or proclivity to shift perspectives-to step 'outside the self' when dealing with other people" (Davis, 1980, p. 9). Being able to step outside of one's self and into the situation of another can allow for the development of empathic concern-the ability to "experience a feeling of warmth, compassion, and concern for others undergoing negative experiences" (Davis, 1980, p. 4).

The role of empathy and critical thinking in recreation and leisure classrooms

According to Stewart and Vogt (1992), we teach students to be socially responsible when we educate for the purpose of understanding human beings. Indeed, perhaps the process of understanding human beings might lead to understanding and experiencing empathy. Yet, when we have our students participate in community volunteer experiences in recreation settings, can we automatically expect them to comprehend various human conditions and to feel empathy, as defined by Code (1995), and a sense of responsibility toward the individuals with whom they work? Moreover, would we not be remiss in our role as agents of social responsibility and social change if we were to assign volunteer hours or community service projects without later engaging our students in a

self-reflexive dialogue about both the affective and cognitive components of their experiences? A study by Hatcher et al. (1994) suggested that it is necessary to teach specific skills if we expect our students to become more empathic. Empathy, like other educational skills, can and should be taught in the classroom (Wheeler & Barrett, 1994).

Activities for teaching critical thinking and empathy

The purpose of this section of the paper is to identify and discuss several activities for how to *explicitly* incorporate critical thinking and empathy into the classroom. Regardless of which definition you embrace, critical thinking is learning how to reason well and empathy is the capacity to understand and identify with another's perspective without losing one's self in the process of perspective taking (Code, 1995; Hale & Delia, 1976; Paul, 1993; Wheeler & Barrett, 1994). We will conclude this section with critical thinking and empathy activities that are also connected with discussions about diversity and issues of social change.

Critical thinking framework

We have adapted some general considerations from Paul (1993) to assist with teaching students how to think about thinking:

1. Clarify the issue/question to be reasoned (e.g., do not confuse and confound issues—stay focused on *one* issue at a time).
2. Include critical writing as well as critical speaking and listening—is everyone clear on what is being asked and how they should assess themselves along the way?
3. Clarify what a student needs beforehand to reason well about this issue or question (i.e., what sort of facts, knowledge must a person have, what understandings, motivations, values or skills must they possess).
4. Get clear about assessment issues. How will you get the students to reason with discipline, how will they be expected to get into the elements of what they are thinking about, how will they be expected to use critical thinking abilities, what critical thinking standards are most important and what traits can be cultivated. (adapted from Paul, 1993, p. 322)

In the same way that we learn strategies for sports or other skilled activities, so, too must we learn skilled “moves” to engage in critical thinking. To take charge of our mind, Paul (1993) asserted that we must develop an interest in all of the components of “reasoned” thought. The components include: 1. clarification of the issue, problem or question; 2. intellectual abilities—identification, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation; 3. modes of reasoning – reading, writing, speaking, listening criti-

cally; 4. traits of mind—fairmindedness, intellectual independence, intellectual curiosity, intellectual empathy; and 5. intellectual standards—accurate, relevant, specific, clear, precise, logical, deep, consistent, significant, adequate, fair (adapted from Paul, 1993).

Critical thinking theorists emphasize the need for educators to be *explicit* about the process of critical thinking. Paul wrote that critical thinking is a “unique kind of purposeful thinking in which the thinker systematically and habitually imposes criteria and intellectual standards upon the thinking” (p. 21). Further, he suggested that it is “deliberate and it supports the development of intellectual traits in the thinker, such as intellectual humility, intellectual integrity, intellectual perseverance, intellectual empathy and intellectual self-discipline, among others” (p. 22). At the root of critical thinking is the ability to formulate and ask good questions. Paul developed a taxonomy of Socratic questions (a method of questioning that reflects Socratic thinking) that can assist with “developing the art of questioning” (Paul, 1993, p. 340).

To participate effectively in Socratic questioning, Paul has identified several critical components:

Listen carefully to what others say; look for reasons and evidence; discover implications and consequences; seek examples, analogies and objections; seek to distinguish what one knows from what one merely believes; seek to enter empathically into the perspectives or points of view of others; be on the alert for inconsistencies, vagueness and other possible problems in thought; look beneath the surface of things; maintain a healthy sense of skepticism; be willing to helpfully play the role of devil’s advocate (p. 344).

Critical Thinking Activities

Socratic questioning

If we are to train students in how to become reflective about their thinking about thinking, then we need to develop some guiding frameworks such as Socratic questioning. This activity can be used at the beginning of a new quarter or semester when you talk about expectations for student learning. Review this taxonomy of Socratic questions and brainstorm with students about other questions that could be included in these categories. (Table next page)

This activity should be used to establish the “critical thinking” framework for the class. Once you have come to agreement about the questions that will be used to guide class (discussions and written work), make sure that you also link these questions to the assessment and evaluation of students’ critical thinking skills and abilities.

TABLE 1

| Questions of Clarification | Questions about Assumptions | Questions about Reason and Evidence | Questions that address Viewpoints or Perspectives | Questions about Implications and Consequences | Questions about the Question |
|---|--|--|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| What do you mean by "x"? | What are you assuming? | What would be an example? | Can/Did anyone see this another way? | What are you implying by "x"? | How can we find out? |
| What is your main point? Can you give me an example? | What could we assume instead? | How do you know? | What is an alternative? | What effect would that have? | Is this the same issue as "x"? |
| How does "x" relate to "y"? | Why would someone make this assumption? | Why do you think that is true? | What might someone who believed "y" think? | What is an alternative? | Why is this question important? |
| Is your basic point x or y? | Why do you think the assumptions holds here? | Is there reason to doubt the evidence? | What would someone who disagrees say? | If this and this are the case, what else must also be true? | Do we all agree this is the question? |

Adapted from PAUL, 1993, p. 343-344

Construction of knowledge

Our beliefs influence how we interpret the world and how we construct knowledge. Social work educators Gibbs and Gambrill (1996) said that "all professionals have to make decisions. These decisions reflect their underlying beliefs about what can be known and how it can be known" (p. 33). This activity provides an opportunity for students to review their beliefs about knowledge (what it is and how it can be obtained):

This activity was adapted from a social work workbook on teaching critical thinking (Gibbs & Gambrill, 1996). Circle the response that most accurately reflects your view. Write a brief explanation below each statement or on a separate sheet of paper to explain why you circled the response you did. Compare your replies with those of your classmates and ones that will be provided by your instructor.

A = Agree

D = Disagree

N = No opinion

1. Since we can't know anything for sure, we really don't know anything.
2. Since our beliefs influence what we see, we can't gather accurate knowledge about our world.
3. There are things we just can't know.
4. We can't be certain of anything.
5. Human behavior is a mysterious thing.
6. Everything is relative. All ways of knowing are equally true.
7. Scientific reasoning and data are of no value in planning social policy and social action.

8. Science is a way of thinking developed by white, male, Western Europeans. It doesn't apply to other cultures. (pp. 33-38).

Additional questions can be added to the list above and it can provide students with an opportunity to do individual, small, and large group work. Once students have completed the activity, have them break into small groups to compare their answers and then ask a volunteer from each small group to report some of the findings back to the large group.

The purpose of this activity is to get students to examine their beliefs about “knowledge” and this activity can also be a catalyst for discussions about how knowledge gets constructed, who has the authority to “know” and how “facts” get created. This can also be a context for discussing how to distinguish “fact” from “opinion.” The practical application of this activity can lead to a discussion about how students will make decisions on the job. To resolve an issue, will you rely upon participant feedback, staff feedback, elected official feedback in determining the “truth” about a particular issue and/or to make a decision.

Integrative Questions

Another activity that can be used with students in the classroom to strengthen intellectual abilities (e.g., analysis and synthesis) involves teaching students how to develop “integrative questions.” Integrative questions require that students critically analyze and then synthesize two or more readings. We have used integrative questions to lead class discussions and also as the basis for examination questions. In addition, developing integrative questions has also been a part of the student’s grade in our courses. Asking students to write these questions has led them to more clearly understand and critically analyze and synthesize class readings.

We have discovered that the best way to teach students how to write integrative questions is by having them write them and then provide detailed feedback on the question. The process of writing integrative questions involves two basic steps. First, students need to reflect upon at least two-three assigned readings individually (e.g., identify the main points of each of these articles) and then simultaneously (e.g., how are the main points similar and how are they different). Sometimes, students express frustration at not understanding a particular journal article. Their difficulty often reflects the fact that they have only read the article once. Be explicit about the fact that they should read the article/chapter more than once—include this message in your syllabus and reinforce it in the classroom. The process works best if the readings are a combination of articles and/or chapters. It is less effective if the 2-3 readings come from the same book. Second, when we write integrative questions, we have to include some of the main points, and this could also mean including a quote or two, before engaging in critical analysis and synthesis. We have provided a few examples:

1. Given Henry Murray's holistic framework for psychology, how would he view feminist biography? Compare and contrast Murray's view of psychology with Nancy Nies' understanding of feminist biography. What similarities and differences can be found in these two approaches to understanding narrative?

The next two examples were adapted from questions developed by students in a course on "Women, Work & Leisure."

2. In class, we defined hegemony as "the conformity of our given society which reproduces society's beliefs." Smith (1987) suggested that the male voice is heard because it is associated with credibility and authority, while the female voice is not. Smith (1987) also argued that women need to resist hegemony as a way of becoming visible and heard in society. Lorde (1984) urged us to break the silence by resisting conformity and letting our thoughts, ideas and experiences be heard. How has the male voice been credited with authority in the realm of leisure? How has this affected women's leisure experiences? How can women break the silence and resist hegemony through establishing an authoritative voice in their leisure experiences?
3. Denise Riley (1988) spoke of women possessing a "fluctuating identity" where there are no clear and stable boundaries constructing what it means to be a woman. In Hubbard's (1994) article on the social construction of race, class, gender and sexuality, she quotes Simone deBeauvoir as saying that "one is not born a woman, one becomes a woman." Similarly, Fuss (1989) argued that the "female experience is never as unified, as knowable, as universal, and as stable as we presume it to be." Given these ideas concerning the dynamic nature of "womanhood," how would you understand these ideas in relation to the notion that there is an "essential" or "biological" force that makes one a woman, as suggested by Lorde's (1984) discussion of the "erotic"? How do you think theories based in biology and social construction confound our understanding of what it means to be a "woman" and how might this affect women's leisure choices?

The goal of this activity is to teach students how to focus on critical analysis and synthesis. These kinds of questions help students develop and sharpen these two components of critical thinking.

Empathy Activities

Some general considerations to follow in terms of developing empathy involve:

1. learning to listen to ourselves; Do we know how we feel about ourselves and our capacity to care about others;
2. learning to listen to others without interruption and without prejudice;
3. learning to articulate how we feel by using "I" statements; and

4. understanding what our boundaries are and should be relative to our ability to be empathic toward another person. (e.g., have we maintained a balance between providing enough support and/or too much support?)

We will discuss several activities that can be taught to enhance the development of empathic skills.

Visualization

Lasher (1992) described empathy as “a perceptual ability, like vision and touch. The meaning of our perceptions depends upon our awareness . . . The practice of empathy changes our awareness of feelings, our own and the feelings of others.” (p. xiii). How can we really understand another’s perspective if we do not know and understand how we feel and if we are unfamiliar with the art of “imagining” and “perceiving”? In her book, “The art and practice of compassion and empathy,” Lasher offered many reflective readings and techniques for how to become empathic. Many of her techniques involve using visualization techniques. Visualization allows us to imagine ourselves in different kinds of places. If we are open to engaging in this process, then the experiences gained from this activity can be applied to other situations in which we must be empathic. Lasher (1992) offered this example of a visualization.

Imagine yourself in a natural setting, someplace where you feel comfortable and safe. . . it could be the ocean, on a mountaintop, in a small meadow, anyplace . . . Close your eyes and imagine yourself in that setting. Take a few moments to transport yourself to that place. If there is a breeze, let it touch you. If there is sun, let it warm you. . . Allow the feeling of the place inside you. Become aware of the connection between the setting and yourself. Let yourself feel the “rhythm” of the place.

Once the activity has concluded, write down all of the sensations of touch, warmth, floating or rocking, whatever you experienced in your ideal place. Now list on the left-hand side of the page all of the feelings that came to you in that place. If you felt peaceful, alive, comfortable, write down those feelings. If you felt fear or confusion, write those feelings down. Become aware of all of your feelings. What things about the place made you feel safe? What made you feel free or afraid? Next to each feeling, write down anything about the place that created that feeling. (pp. 4-5)

This activity has two components: the actual visualization process is an internal, subjective experience; and writing down how we felt and what we experienced is an objective, external process. Thus, this activity combines both cognitive and affective components which, according to Brookfield (1987) are also necessary for critical thinking.

Visualizations can encompass a variety of settings and if there seems to be some resistance to the activity, get students involved in leading “guided visualizations”—visualizations that are not read alone, but rather, are read aloud to a group. During the debriefing of the activity, be sure to connect the need to “imagine” with understanding what we feel and how we feel relative to developing empathic skills.

Active Listening

According to Nugent and Halvorson (1952), a considerable amount of research has focused on the relationship between empathic listening and client outcomes. "The use of active listening is purported to enhance the practitioner-client relationship, thereby increasing the probability of positive service outcomes" (p. 153). The purpose of this activity is to teach students that listening can be an "active" and "conscious" process.

For this activity, students will need to pair up with someone. Designate someone to be "A" and "B". "A" will tell "B" about her favorite leisure activities or some other topic. While this is going on, "B" will need to sit on her/his hands and refrain from saying a word. After two minutes, switch roles. During the debriefing, discuss what it was like to

- a. *talk* with someone without having them interrupt you; and
- b. *listen* without interrupting someone to ask a question.

Students often say that they listened "better" during the activity because they were not distracted by the next comment or question that they wanted to make. The point of the activity is to understand that listening can be an "active" and "conscious" process and it can strengthen relationships and enhance one's empathic skills.

Role-plays

Wheeler & Barrett (1994), in a comprehensive review of empathy studies in nursing, explained that one of the most effective sources of teaching empathy was role playing. Although a seemingly simple activity, role playing allows students an opportunity to assume different identities within the relatively "safe" and structured environment of the classroom. Role plays can teach students about issues of class, race, gender, sexuality, age, disability, etc.

Activities that guide critical thinking, empathy and social change

We will discuss three activities that combine critical thinking and empathy in ways that can contribute to discussions about leisure and social change.

Mirror Activity

When we look in the mirror, Who do we see? Who do our students see when they look in the mirror? In a recent workshop, we asked people to describe who they saw when they looked in the mirror. As the participants, both women and men, the majority of whom were of European descent, began to answer the question, they answered in much the same way: "I see 'me,'" they said. A few of the women said "I see a woman." None of the males in the class said they saw a 'man'. Yet, when it was Angela's turn to

answer, she said, without hesitation, "I see a black woman". The activity provided us with a great deal of discussion about the ways in which individuals in dominant sectors of society often take their identities for granted. "Me" becomes the standard against which others describe themselves.

The activity also illustrates how power and privilege based on race and gender, is often invisible. The mirror moves people from the realm of abstract, impersonal knowledge toward understanding how their individual experiences and identities contribute to the construction of their knowledge about themselves at an ideological level. This activity is a good illustration of both critical thinking and empathy. In terms of empathy, students have an opportunity to witness their classmates' struggle to define themselves and their (lack) of privilege based on identity. In terms of critical thinking, students have a concrete source from which to draw on—themselves. This activity can also be a catalyst for discussions about how leisure contexts may or may not contribute to the construction of gendered, racialized, sexualized identities.

Questions to guide critical thinking, empathy and social change

In a recent article about a service-learning project initiated by the University of Utah, Ralston and Ellis (1997) said, echoing Brookfield's (1987) definition of critical thinking and Code's definition of empathy (1995) that students who worked at a homeless shelter were challenged at both affective and cognitive levels. To get students to think reflexively about their experience at the shelter, Ralston and Ellis (1997) provided an example of an affective question: "'Did anything happen at the homeless shelter that surprised you?'" (p. 15). Such a question will probably be the basis for some good discussion about the students' experiences at both affective and cognitive levels. Such a question, however, may not get to what Shermis (1992) describes as "sticky and bothersome" emotions, nor might it elicit some "sticky and bothersome" questions.

When examining the service learning project at Utah, in addition to the affective kinds of questions posed by Ralston and Ellis (1997), we developed additional questions: Why are there people who are homeless in our community? Why do we need a homeless shelter? What are the socioeconomic and political forces that create and perpetuate homelessness? Why has the federal government developed such a narrow definition of poverty? Are there ways in which leisure contributes to the fact that there are homeless people in our community? Can leisure assist individuals who are homeless? If so, how?

Hopefully, through the process of critical thinking as defined by Brookfield (1987) and empathy as conceptualized by Code (1995), students might be able to connect a personal experience in a homeless shelter with larger social/political macro issues of how power, leisure and economics function in our society. Perhaps students will leave an experience of working with individuals in a homeless shelter with different "feelings" about individuals who are homeless and they might also now be in a position to pose

questions that reflect critical thinking. For example, "If America is the land of opportunity, why is our economic system based on the presumption that there must be economic inequality?" and "What, if any, role does the professionalization of leisure services play in perpetuating economic inequality?" In addition to learning how to pose questions that reflect critical thinking, students who worked in a homeless shelter might also leave with different "feelings" about individuals who are homeless. Their critical thinking and empathetic skills might also lead them to take action to become allies to individuals who are marginalized in society.

Power Shuffle Activity

This activity has been adapted from the work of social activists Allen Creighton and Paul Kivel (1992). The Power Shuffle teaches us what it feels like to be a member of a group that is considered to be "powerful" and, alternatively, to know what it might feel like to be a member of a group that is not considered to be "powerful" in this society. In this activity, everyone stands on one side of the room while the facilitator asks people, based on some aspect of identity to move across the room from the full group, stop, look at who is with them and across from them. For example, the facilitator might say, "if you or someone who you know is lesbian or gay or if you or someone you know is of working-class background, please step across to the other side of the room." The two groups face each other for a few and the facilitator brings them together again for the next 'shuffle.' After the last 'shuffle,' "the participants walk to the center of the room and, for a few moments, mingle silently, making eye contact and acknowledging each other as people present together in this group" (pp. 14-16). The participants then break into pairs to discuss the activity and then they come together as a large group to discuss what they thought and how they felt about the activity.

This activity illustrates how the construction of different identities situates us in different social/political statuses in society. We have both used this activity in a variety of recreation and leisure classes. The activity has been a good catalyst for discussions about the construction of identity and it also evokes a variety of feelings among participants. Students have told us that they learned that they had much in common with others, despite differences based on gender, race, class, sexuality; and they also spoke of their conflicting feelings of comfort and discomfort during the "Shuffle. When students spoke of their comfort and discomfort, we used this as a basis for discussions about what it feels like to be an insider, as well as an outsider. Such an activity contributes to the development of empathy, as well as critical thinking. How do social institutions, including leisure, operate to maintain a dichotomy of insiders and outsiders?

Becoming an ally:

The final activity involves talking with students about how critical thinking and

empathy are also important in becoming allies with individuals with whom we can work to effect social change. Becoming an ally is “an ongoing strategic process in which we look at our personal and social resources, evaluate the environment we have helped to create and decide what needs to be done” (Kivel, 1996, p. 86). Yet, we do not typically engage in discussions that focus on analyses of power and institutionalized oppression. Kivel (1996) proposed several questions that incorporate critical thinking and empathy with a focus on strategies for successful collaboration and problem solving:

How is the problem being defined? Who is defining the problem? Who is not part of the discussion? Who is being blamed for the problem? What racial or other fears are being appealed to? What is the core issue? What is the historical context for this issue? What is being proposed as a solution? . . . What is one thing you could do to address this problem? (p. 168).

The development of critical thinking skills and empathy may help students understand oppression at an individual level. The next step is to channel that knowledge into action to effect change at an institutional level—a process that is begun when we learn to become an ally. Kivel, in his book, “Unlearning racism: How white people can work for racial justice,” suggested some guidelines for how to become allies across issues of race, gender, sexuality. Several elements of critical thinking, especially those identified by Paul (1993) and Brookfield (1987) apply to the process of thinking about social change and the thinking that is involved in thinking about social change. Kivel wrote that we should:

1. Assume racism [sexism, heterosexism] is everywhere, everyday;
 2. Notice who is the center of attention and who is the center of power
 3. Notice how racism [sexism, heterosexism] is denied, minimized and justified
 4. Understand and learn from the history of whiteness and racism.
 5. Understand the connections between racism, economic issues, sexism and other forms of injustice.
 6. Take a stand against injustice.
 7. Be strategic.
 8. Don't confuse a battle with the war.
 9. Don't call names or be personally abusive.
 10. Support the leadership of people of color [of women, of people who are lesbian and gay].
 11. Don't do it alone.
 12. Talk with your children and other young people about racism [sexism, heterosexism].
- (pp. 103-104).

At a cognitive, intellectual level, students understand the need to work collaboratively with colleagues and with constituents. Strategies for problem-solving and building alliances, like the ones outlined above, might also help them to understand this work at a personal, affective level.

Conclusion

Teaching students to become critical thinkers and to develop and/or strengthen their empathic skills does not directly lead them to engage in work that leads to social change. Yet, the process of thinking critically and of empathizing, coupled with an awareness of how power and oppression operate in this culture, might compel us to take action and perhaps ultimately, this might lead to social change.

Do we, as leisure educators, still have a role to play in reforming society? Yes, we believe we do. We still have, as Young (1992) suggested, “. . . visions of social responsibility” (p. 96). Many visionaries (e.g., Dahl, 1992; Freysinger & Bedini, 1994; Goodale, 1992; Henderson & Bedini 1989) have helped to advance this vision. To their visions, we add critical thinking and empathy. These will not be the last words written on the work needed to affect social change, nor should they be. Indeed, we should take solace from and be inspired by the words of Rabbi Tarfon: “It is not upon you to finish the work. Neither are you free to desist from it” (Rabbi Tarfon as cited in Kivel 1996).

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