

(Re)Imagining Our Foundations: One Social Foundations of Education Program's Attempt to Reclaim, Reestablish, and Redefine Itself

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Introduction

As many have noted, we are seeing the continuing marginalization of Social Foundations of Education (SFE) courses and programs to the point at which some are disappearing completely (Butin, 2007; Carter, 2008; Hess, Rotherham, & Walsh, 2004; Lewis, 2013; Morrison, 2007; Sirotnik, 1990; Swain, 2013; Tutwiler, deMarras, Gabbard, Hyde, Konkol, Li, Medina, Rayle, & Swain, 2013). In addition to the closing of Emory University's Educational Studies department mentioned in the *Journal of Educational Foundations*' call for submissions, one of the authors of this article is a recent graduate and one of the last graduates from a state flagship institution's Ph.D. program in SFE that is now defunct. While the undergraduate component of the department lives on, the opportunity for in-depth graduate study in this SFE program has been all but lost.

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The renewed emphasis on SFE standards published in *Educational Studies* (Tutwiler et al., 2013) was especially timely for us, the SFE faculty at the University of North Georgia (UNG), in light of our university system's recent suggestions that SFE courses be revised to reflect the new tiered certification process for educators, with specific emphasis on accountability. Moreover, the university system's SFE task force suggested that we "make coursework more functionable" and move "some content" to graduate-level courses and professional development workshops (B. Michael, personal communication, February 6, 2014). This movement is in direct opposition to the importance of SFE, as outlined by Dotts (2013):

As an academic discipline grounded in the liberal arts, social foundations programs serve a unique purpose in teacher preparation by giving future educators opportunities to interpret, reflect upon, and normatively critique the social, political, economic, religious, and historical dimensions of public schooling. (p. 163)

These types of "revisions" send the message to future educators that SFE content is somehow "less than." While Swain (2013) contended that "SFE scholars are obviously not doing a good job of connecting our content to practice if pre-service teachers feel that history and philosophy courses are inconsequential" (p. 127), we would argue that the national direction of teacher education preparation toward "reducing the art of teaching to a technical skill intended to meet the demands of modern schooling, including the well-known cliché of 'teaching-to-the-test'" (Dotts, 2013, p. 165) broadly diminishes the perceived importance of the SFE both within the student population and within academia. This focus on functionality and accountability reflects what Swain (2013) pinpointed as the overemphasis on the nuts and bolts of education, including ready-made responses to classroom management and teaching (Butin, 2004; Carter, 2008; Swain, 2013). In a similar vein, Carter (2008) has argued that many pre-service and new teachers "see their coursework as only marginally important to the work of teaching" and thus "relegate social foundations concepts to the heap of learning considered not directly applicable to the classroom" (pp. 223-224). This dismissal of SFE can further separate teachers from the practice of being reflective and analytical of not only themselves and their pedagogies, but of their school, the education system, and the profession of teaching.

At the organizational level, these suggested "revisions" from our university system also send the message to departments, colleagues, administrators, and educational partners that SFE is unimportant. Given current trends in teacher preparation, for example, the very idea of graduate education in the field of education may be a thing of the past as more states discuss merit and tiered pay systems based upon student assessment and performance rather than increased pay for the knowledge and expertise gained through an advanced degree in one's field. This trend, along with the notion that SFE content could simply be inserted into graduate courses in areas other than SFE, means that an even smaller segment of the teacher population would have a solid foundation in educational history, philosophy, culture, and

sociology. While we believe SFE, and its incumbent theories and concepts, should be embedded into all education classes, it also merits its own set of courses. It is an insult, as well, to SFE faculty to suggest that such content could be covered in professional development workshops for current teachers, as suggested by stakeholders in our state. While we acknowledge that continued professional development is important, the SFE cannot be condensed and relegated to a day-long workshop and maintain its integrity. One semester long class, much less one workshop, is insufficient to cover a history of inequities and to explore the philosophies behind current trends and practices (Brown & Kraehe, 2010). And it is certainly not enough to help teachers become “creative agents who are able to advance and strengthen social justice and diversity within our nation” (Swain, 2013, p. 128). We know that becoming a critical, agentive educator is a complex life-long journey, one that deserves intense focus at the undergraduate level (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2010).

We can relate, as well, to the problem of having faculty view SFE classes as the courses that “anyone can teach,” and, in our department, we often inherit faculty who have never had any SFE experience, either as a student or as an instructor, which is in direct opposition to the proposed tenets and standards of SFE (Tutwiler, et al., 2013). For the past year, over 50 percent of our SFE courses were taught either by faculty outside of the field or adjuncts, the latter of which mirrors a growing trend across the board in higher education (Schmalz & Oh, 2014). Although we request new SFE faculty each year, funding is limited, and as an overlooked field, SFE is never the first, and rarely the second or third, to receive available funds.

All of these issues threaten the livelihood of SFE and add to the burden of SFE scholars in regard to teaching and scholarship. Thus, going back to the Standards for Academic and Professional Instruction in Foundations of Education and examining what needs to be done to create or bolster SFE programs with vitality and strength, we realize that changes have to be made in the way students, faculty, administrators, P-12 teachers, and stakeholders view the SFE, which is a huge task, to say the least. As Swain (2013) challenged,

SFE scholars must take back our practice, our profession, from the naysayers and entrepreneurs interested in dismantling our public schools. As proponents of democracy, we expect students we teach to become leaders. It is high time SFE scholars showed them what leaders look like. (p. 130)

Indeed, we not only have to take it back, but, in order for SFE to be successful, we have to demonstrate for others why they should—and how they can—embrace SFE for the vitality of teacher education programs as a whole.

We are lucky, even amidst all of these changes and issues, to have three lower-level undergraduate courses in our state university system dedicated to topics in or related to Social Foundations of Education. These courses are transferable across public institutions within the system, and while there are recommended texts, basic course objectives, and suggestions from a state task force, the content currently remains under the purview of individual institutions and programs/departments. As

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courses that all future educators at our institution must take, we have the advantage of reaching and teaching a large number of K-12 educators, albeit at an introductory level. While having a sequence of three mandatory pre-program courses is advantageous, it is not without complications. Indeed, Lewis (2013) indicated in a recent article in *Educational Studies* on SFE at Georgia Gwinnet College that one issue stems from the fact that these courses are taken before students are officially admitted into teacher preparation programs, heightening the divide between SFE and teacher education. While we need stronger links between the two, as Lewis (2013) recommended, we also need to redefine our approach with these foundational courses to both remain true to the field of SFE and serve as students' first introduction to education and teacher preparation.

Over the past year, in an effort to bridge this divide, we have revamped our SFE classes to combine theory with community- and service-based projects about which students are excited, impactful projects that bring interpretive, normative, and critical perspectives to the forefront (Tutwiler et al., 2013) in an effort to combat the increasingly formulaic and uni-dimensional progression of teacher education (Swain, 2013). Our goal here is to share some of the projects we have developed for SFE courses bringing together university and community in ways that engage students in high-impact practices, require them to think critically, and provide them the opportunity to actualize the theories about which they are reading in ways that do not reify stereotypes or perpetuate bias (Beilke, 2005; Ellsworth, 1989). These projects also require us, as SFE professors and students working together, to move between university and community in ways that illustrate our interconnectedness and demonstrate for our students the importance of being leaders, advocating for students, and developing a strong sense of efficacy by having SFE theories as a basis (Swain, 2013). We know that there are many engaging and impactful SFE professors who are developing creative and socially just projects and courses nationally and internationally, and our goal is to contribute our narrative to the existing body of knowledge and experience. We hope to provide possibilities and conversation as a sharing mechanism for how to develop such projects with little funding and in the midst of the previously outlined challenges.

As with many other universities, our SFE courses have required observation/field hours that must be completed outside the university classroom. In the past, these hours were a "free for all," with students choosing their own schools, approaching the administration or teachers, and simply observing classroom teachers in action. One impetus behind our decision to change this system actually stemmed from the fact that our local schools were being over-inundated with first- or second-year education majors who wanted to observe, along with in-program, pre-service teacher interns completing their field and clinical experiences. There were other reasons, though, that our method was outdated or behind. We had no solid system for tracking hundreds of SFE students in their hours; we had no way of supervising so many students going to so many different schools all over the state; and we had no real way of measuring, assessing, or equalizing the value and merit of these

observation experiences. In addition, the strictly observational nature of this system was not substantively contributing to the critical and social justice orientation of our courses. We had a number of projects in the works, and thus we decided to streamline our courses so that each was tied to one specific community, school, or service project. These are not service-learning courses, per say, but each project highlights what it means to be in service to the field of education and to one's community. Part of our job, as academics, is service to the institution, to our individual departments/programs, and to our field, and our special projects method is one way of introducing and emphasizing this idea of service to our students. We envision our students as leaders and change agents in their field, and thus, we want them to understand the value of being in service to one's field and one's community. This is one way of encouraging students to "confront and resolve the ecological, social, economic, and political challenges of the 21st century" (Tutwiler et al., 2013, p. 108) through their work as educators.

We will discuss several of these special projects as related to SFE in an effort to illustrate how we are working from the bottom up to dismantle the ideas held by our colleagues and students that (1) SFE is not practical and not useful to pre-service and in-service educators, and thus (2) SFE is marginal in education programs and is often pushed to the side. Thus, our goals are to demonstrate how our special projects approach is attempting to bridge theory and practice to highlight the importance of SFE to professional preparation for P-12 educators and to illustrate how SFE can "re-assert its presence inside and outside higher education," as noted in the *Journal of Educational Foundations*' call for submissions. As Dotts (2013) reminded us, "A fundamental task of social foundations is to engage scholars, future teachers, and the overall community in what is often referred to by critical theorists as praxis, critical reflection followed by action" (p. 163). These projects are not meant to be a one-size-fits-all approach. After all, "Recipe cards (if they actually existed) would be quick, easy, and comfortable but would only reinforce the simplistic approaches that critical multicultural education problematize" (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2010, p. 99). Rather, these projects suggest possibilities for re-engaging our colleagues and students in becoming agentive, democratic, critical citizens.

Before we discuss these projects, it is important to note our theoretical approach to these SFE courses and the general student demographics. We are not including a methodology section, as each project carries a separate IRB, methodological approach, and set of participant demographics, but it is important to speak to our College of Education demographics and our use of the term "critical multicultural education" in relation to SFE pedagogy. As defined by DiAngelo and Sensoy (2010), critical multiculturalism speaks to "those approaches within education programs that explicitly address relations of inequitable power and how these relations manifest in schools" (p. 97). And, indeed, we see our SFE courses and their accompanying field experiences as vehicles for moving students toward an "ability to ideologically critique schools, schooling, the teaching profession, education, education policies, through the academic lenses that include a complex

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matrix of interpretive, normative, and critical perspectives” (Dotts, 2013, p. 159). This critical approach is especially important given the demographics of teacher education programs and of our program in particular. It is known that the majority of teacher education students is white, female, and middle class (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2010; Nieto & Bode, 2012), and our program is no different. In addition, while we teach education majors at all levels, most of our students plan to teach in elementary schools. With this in mind, we face the same issue DiAngelo and Sensoy (2010) met in working with future elementary educators—“the dilemma of how to provide a basic understanding of groups with whom the majority of students have no authentic relationships” (p. 99). Most of our students are not representative of the surrounding communities in regard to socioeconomic status, native language, and race and ethnicity. In turn, we have the immense responsibility of creating authentic field and classroom experiences that help them recognize their unearned privileges, institutional oppression, and their role in addressing both (McIntosh, 1989; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2009, 2012), and the following projects represent our efforts to create such experiences.

The YES Institute Curriculum Collaboration

The YES Institute (YES) is a non-profit NGO based in Miami, Florida. For the past 17 years, their mission has been “to prevent suicide and ensure the healthy development of all youth through powerful communication and education on gender and orientation” (“Welcome to YES Institute,” n.d.). They seek to do this primarily through the creation and facilitation of dialogue and education on gender and orientation with school, professional, community, and other stakeholders. They work exclusively by invitation and have created partnerships at the local, national, and international levels.

YES has a long history with the College of Education at our institution and approached the dean about collaborating on a special curriculum project in the fall of 2013. Acknowledging the connection between issues of gender, orientation, and equity and the critical lens of the SFE, the dean approached the SFE faculty about heading the curriculum project. YES has in place curricula designed for youth and adults. What they lacked, and what was being requested of them from the Miami-Dade community, was a curriculum geared toward elementary-aged students that would address the issues of gender and orientation, particularly related to the conversation around transgender. YES has seen increasing numbers of children, some as young as four and five, expressing transgender identities. While they have well-developed mechanisms for work with parents, teachers, and community members, they do not have a developmentally appropriate curriculum for young children, which is why they have partnered with us.

In discussing the parameters of the project and the curricular needs of our students, the SFE faculty decided that it would be the best fit to incorporate the curriculum project into the course entitled “Exploring Socio-Cultural Diversity.” One of our goals as a SFE faculty is to help students and colleagues recognize the

value of SFE as both a theoretical domain and as a bridge between the theoretical and the practical. While our courses and content are not practitioner oriented, it is up to the instructor to help students bridge the gap and make practical connections (Swain, 2013). We saw this project as an opportunity to combine the practice of developing lesson plans and units with the theoretical exploration of gender and orientation.

The curriculum project was divided into three main components: content foundations, curriculum development, and curriculum assessment. To address the issue of content foundations, the students were required complete readings and reflections addressing gender and orientation (and their intersections with race, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, and ability) and illustrating the need for such a curriculum. Additionally, the students were required to research developmentally appropriate content and teaching strategies for the chosen age group, either K-1, 2-3, or 4-5. They were asked to produce a short research paper highlighting their conclusions, which were assessed by the instructors. In addition, we invited the YES Institute to come to the participating classes and lead a dialogue on gender, orientation, and bullying, as relevant to the project goals. These face-to-face sessions were followed with digital check-ins throughout the semester to ensure that curricula were moving beyond stereotypical notions of and surface-level approaches to gender and identity. At these check-ins, YES also brought in guest speakers including transgender students, their parents, and their teachers to help answer questions and guide our students in their creations.

Along with this foundational work, we provided our students with a primer on curriculum development and instruction to facilitate the project. We organized students into groups of three and required them to work together outside of class time to develop instructional strategies for individual, small group, and whole group situations aligned with the Common Core Standards. The students had workshop time in class in order to share their progress and challenges. For the final stage, after feedback and revision, students presented their completed curriculum plans with the class and held discussions. The future plan for this curriculum is for it to be piloted and refined in the coming months and then made publicly available to educators across the nation.

The purpose of this collaboration was two-fold. First, this project was designed and implemented to provide the YES Institute with a workable, age-appropriate curriculum on gender and orientation for elementary-aged students. This curriculum will be used to further the mission of YES and foster equitable education across the nation. Second, this project was convened as a way to help bridge the increasing gap between SFE and practice-oriented teacher preparation programs. As stated in the introduction, high-stakes standardized assessment is placing increasing pressure on teacher preparation programs to focus on skill-based pedagogy to the detriment of theoretical understandings. This places the SFE at risk of being eliminated from many programs, as it is seen by some to be an unnecessary field in preparing teachers for the modern world (Dotts, 2013). Developing this curriculum for both school and community use not only provides pre-program students with the experience of

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curriculum design and exposure to the Common Core, but it also helps students translate topics central to SFE (gender, orientation, equity, equality, and multicultural education) from the realm of the theoretical and apply them in a tangible way, thus reinforcing the viability of SFE to teacher preparation students.

With this particular project, while some students were initially resistant to the content, our students were also excited about the fact that they were involved in curriculum development. They had the opportunity to make connections with educators and educational organizations in another state and to engage in the creation of instruments that will be used by practicing educators. More than this, though, the project provided the opportunity to learn about a population of students and parents that they otherwise may have missed. For many of our future educators, there is a certain amount of cultural discontinuity when working with students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, and discussions of gender and orientation are often ignored at the elementary level. We do work consciously to provide educational spaces where our LGBT students are supported at all educational levels (if at any), and this sort of cultural discontinuity “prevents the building of relationships between educators and those young people who may not have had ‘mainstream cultural experiences’” (Biegel, 2010, p. 113). Biegel (2010) also indicated, “there is near unanimity among experts in the field regarding the importance of paying close attention to the diverse backgrounds and unique personal perspectives that young people bring to the table” (p. 113). The one-on-one interviews with LGBT students, parents, and teachers; the theoretical SFE basis; our resulting discussions; and their culminating projects allowed our students the opportunity to explore the importance of such relationships and at least begin to deconstruct some of the misconceptions and stereotypes they held about students expressing non-dominant gender identities. The experience also allowed us to gain a better understanding of where our students stood in relation to their understanding of issues faced by students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. We collected pre- and post-surveys and conducted interviews concerning students’ experiences in working with the YES project, and these have helped us discover where we need additional resources and materials for and dialogue with our students in regard to equity and equality.

21st Century Community Learning Centers

The 21st Century grant is a federally-funded program designed to increase academic and enrichment opportunities for students, particularly in low-income areas (“21st Century,” 2014). As defined by the U.S. Department of Education, “this program supports the creation of community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools” (“21st Century,” 2014). Funds from this grant can be used in a number of ways, including providing salaries to teachers and support staff, snacks for student participants, transportation,

the facilitation of enrichment activities, and the provision of educational opportunities to the parents and guardians of students participating in the program (“21st Century,” 2014).

In the Fall of 2013, our SFE program was approached by a local school system to see if there would be any interest in having pre-education students participate and assist in the 21st Century program at a neighboring middle school and elementary school. We decided that the best fit would be one of our SFE classes entitled “Exploring Teaching and Learning.” One of the challenges of this course is to help students develop and understand the connections between educational psychological theory and practice. By having students participating in the 21st Century program, they have been able to learn about theoretical concepts and then directly translate those ideas into the field and be able to critically evaluate their applicability in relation to a diverse student population. As Dotts (2013) has noted, teacher education programs have become very skilled at creating “methodists” who are technically proficient in the practice of teaching but who are not encouraged to critically consider the nature of teaching and education. Through the 21st Century program, our education majors are able to interact with students who struggle to succeed in the homogenized world of modern schooling where, as Dotts (2013) described, “uniform curricula, centralized organization, standardized assessments, and prepackaged lesson plans are normalized and rationalized as indispensable in our defense against a globally competitive world” (p. 165).

In addition, this partnership offers the opportunity to explore the myth of the culture of poverty (Gorski, 2008) and the stereotypes about poverty that many of our students currently hold. Many of our students enter the classroom with notions that parents with limited and low incomes do not care about their children’s educations. We ask our students, however, to examine the development of such stereotypes, deficit perspectives, the origins of the myth of meritocracy, and the American dream. Once they understand the origins of these ideas, they are better able to develop ways to work with parents and administrators in support of children.

Furthermore, this course offers the exploration of the challenges and successes of out-of-school and enrichment programs, which is part of the course content, and demonstrates the importance of a holistic approach to education (Holloway & Salinitri, 2010). Through the course theory, the field experience, and the ongoing dialogue, we hope that they leave this class better able to critique current approaches to education and after-school programming in terms of where we fail to meet the needs of children living and attending school in impoverished areas. The students’ involvement in the day-to-day successes and obstacles of the program further bridges the theory/practice gap but also provides a sense of why it is important for these future educators to think critically and to “think differently about their world” (Beilke, 2005, p. 4). We want to challenge them to recognize their privileges and the impact of these privileges on their actions and to move past sympathetic, stereotypical, surface-level tactics toward a more empathetic, holistic approach.

Near Peer Service-Learning Program

Near Peer is a federally-funded grant program meant to increase the number of underrepresented students graduating from Georgia high schools and completing postsecondary education. This particular grant addresses these goals by pairing college mentors enrolled in “Exploring Socio-Cultural Diversity” with 9th-grade students labeled by their school as “at-risk.” The high school is more diverse than the college, and according to the 2010-2011 report card, which is the most recent data available, out of 1465 students, 50% was Latino, 23% was White, 21% was Black, 4% was Asian, and 2% identified as multiracial (“2010-2011 Report Card”). Of this student body, 69% qualified for free or reduced lunch, which qualified it as a Title I school (“2010-2011 Report Card”). Of the participating ninth graders over the past three years, 100 percent will be first-generation college students, 100% are from families with limited-incomes, 97% are students of color, and over half are from families who speak a language other than English at home.

In the class, our college students spend the first four weeks receiving mentor training and reading articles about mentoring that focus on understanding and avoiding deficit perspectives and cultural incompatibilities (Holloway & Salinitri, 2010; Lee, Germain, Lawrence, & Marshall, 2010; Nieto & Bode, 2012; Rhodes & Lowe, 2008). They then begin meeting with their mentees on a weekly basis, and they also attend mentoring events scheduled throughout the semester, such as fieldtrips to campus, diversity conferences, and luncheons at the high school. We discuss their progress during the class and pair this with theoretical readings on race, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, gender, orientation, exceptionalities, and multicultural education. They reflect weekly on their mentoring experiences and how these experiences relate to (or don’t relate to) their assigned readings.

Students often enter into the Near Peer program with trepidation and even annoyance because they are not interested in working with high-school students, as the majority of our students are elementary majors. For many, though, it alters their perspective as they begin to see how theory and practice come together. The texts we read in class, which center on how many current educational practices continue to reinforce inequitable educational experiences, become a reality as they enter their field experience with Near Peer. As one mentor noted, “low teacher expectations, school organizations, and tracking do pose a threat. . . . One of the most prominent issues facing [my mentee] is low teacher expectations. . . . [he] has told me his teachers are giving him second grade work that makes him not want to do it.” The majority of mentors wrote about how the teachers failed to expect as much out of their mentees because of the label “at-risk,” and many noted the difficulties faced at the intersections of race, class, gender, and orientation.

What many they learned was that students need to be recognized, and teachers need to make an effort to get to know and appreciate all of their students (Nieto & Bode, 2012). In terms of relationship development, one mentor wrote the following:

To [my mentee] it was important to establish a trusting relationship with his teachers, but his teachers did not want to do that with him. To help build a strong foundation for your students, where they do not feel like they are being judged and they can come to feel safe and learn, is the most important aspect of teaching. ... It is unfortunate to me, that many of those teachers in the system are not capable or even want to help a student, because the school has failed them, as well.

In opposition to many of the teachers they observed, our education majors began to realize the importance of being an educator who brushes no student to the side. As one mentor wrote of her mentee, “when I asked what she wished others knew about her, she said, ‘I wish that they [teachers] understood that I am multicultural. And I am different than everyone else, and I am one of a kind. I am Black, White, and Hispanic.’ I *see* her [the mentee] now where I didn’t before” (my italics). She came to recognize her mentee (in the way that the student wanted to be seen); whereas before the program, the course, and our readings on the importance of students’ cultural identities, she might have remained blind to the importance understanding and affirming our students (Nieto & Bode, 2012). In addition, students began to realize the necessity of translating this student recognition into a critical multicultural curricula. As one mentor indicated, “many teachers may not understand the importance of a curriculum that allows the students to see themselves,” and another agreed when she wrote, “This [project] makes me want to be a critical multicultural educator. This is why it is important to take input, conduct interviews with students, because sometimes students see things adults do not, they *see* it for what it is” (our italics). Each of these students emphasizes seeing and recognizing: they were learning the value, here, of listening to and striving to understand their students and ensuring that their students are reflected in the curriculum. Another agreed when she wrote the following comment in her final paper:

I have learned to value each and every one of my students by understanding and accepting who they can be and strengthening their abilities by reaffirming their confidence in any way I can. ... multicultural literature also helps us move away from the typical Euro-American literature. It allows me to understand that by using multicultural texts I can teach my students not to fall into stereotypical ideas that we have been brought up in.

While they still have a long way to go in recognizing and understanding how privilege and oppression work in our educational system, this project facilitated their understanding of course readings and the sociological, historical, cultural, and political foundations of education. As Holloway and Salinitri (2010) advised, “it is not enough to simply place teacher candidates in diverse school settings. They require a theoretical lens to challenge their own preconceptions” (p. 383). Through this program, we work to provide this theoretical lens, along with room for dialogue and practical application so that students can experience praxis and personal growth. While not the same for all, the end result can be very powerful; as one student reflected, “the experience has changed me forever.”

Migrant Education Program Partnership

Another program that we have integrated into a SFE course is our partnership with the Migrant Education Program (MEP) through the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE). This partnership focuses on one “Exploring Socio-Cultural Diversity” course per semester, involving students in the development of online curricula for teaching English to Out-of-School Youth (OSY), migrant youth between the ages of 16-21 who are not enrolled in public school (“2013 Statewide Comprehensive,” 2013). We became involved in this program when a former graduate of our institution working for the GaDOE contacted our Director of English as a Second Language (ESL). While this GaDOE representative had opportunities to work with other institutions, he wanted to give back to the institution from which he graduated. The Director of ESL then contacted our College of Education, and we decided to utilize one diversity course per semester as an OSY curriculum development course.

We spent the first few weeks of this course learning about the Migrant Education Program and Out-of-School Youth. Our contact at the GaDOE’s MEP attended our class once a week and held office hours on campus once a week in order to introduce our students to the program and answer questions throughout the process. In addition, the Director of ESL visited class regularly to talk with our students about first and second language acquisition. We wrapped the readings for the course around both language acquisition theories and exercises and theory expanding on the economic, political, historical, and social experiences of migrants in the States and particularly in Georgia. Our undergraduates have attended English as a Second Language conferences and local Migrant Education Program community meetings to meet parents, students, migrant advocates and allies, school administrators and counselors, legal advocates, and other community members involved in the MEP. In addition, Out-of-School Youth, MEP community representatives, and English learners at the beginning of their English language journey visited our classroom to speak with students about their educational and language needs and wants.

Throughout the semester, the college students worked in groups to create English language curricula at the beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels around topics of interest chosen by OSY. These are curricula developed specifically for Internet use. As Branz-Spall, Rosenthal, and Wright (2003) indicated of migrant education programs, “Because the challenges of providing quality programs for these students who travel between and among states, school districts, and countries is a daunting one, the MEP has been on the cutting edge in its use of technology” (p. 59). This is true of Georgia’s MEP as well. As stated in the “2013 Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment” (2013), technology has become a key means for meeting the needs of the OSY population:

The usual perception is that migrant participants, in particular, OSY, do not have any access to technology. However, the survey conducted revealed that a large

percentage of migrant OSY (49%) owned either [sic] a smartphone, tablet, or a personal computer. This has huge implications for future service delivery methods for OSY. (p. 41)

Indeed, for many OSY, school is not an option because youth are expected to work and contribute financially to the family. The number one need identified by OSY, however, was English language instruction (“2013 Statewide Comprehensive,” 2013). Our students have to work carefully and closely with all stakeholders to ensure that the curricula are useful and feasible for and applicable to the experiences and daily lives of OSY and that curricula follow best practices for second language acquisition.

For many of our students, dialogue with parents and legal advocates at the local community meeting for the migrant population and discussion with OSY about their experiences were some of the most impactful moments in the course. As one student noted, “It’s a population that I wasn’t even aware of and wouldn’t have known anything about if I hadn’t taken this class. The best part was talking with parents of migrant children and having a better understanding of what they need.” Another student, who was a paraprofessional in an elementary classroom in during the course of the project stated, “this has helped me in the classroom right now in working with my English learners. I feel better prepared because I understand more about language acquisition and I feel like I can put myself in their shoes more than before.” As with some of our other projects, this resulted in increased understanding and, in many cases, a movement toward affirmation of underrepresented students and the beginning of a move away from monoculturalism (Nieto & Bode, 2012). The project allowed us to discuss the intersectionality of linguistic, socioeconomic, and racial oppression historically and currently, but it also required that these college students listen to a population too often silenced and ignored in the States.

The project helped students build self-confidence in working with English learners and promoted understanding of their students from migrant families, but this experience also provided an opportunity for our undergraduates to work with multiple educational institutions. Many undergraduates do not have the opportunity to work with their Department of Education and the programs that fall under this umbrella. Such partnerships open students to other opportunities in the field of education and other avenues in which SFE play a key role including policy and advocacy. Working with such organizations/offices has the potential to help our students “develop a disciplined sense of policy-oriented educational responsibility” (Tutwiler, et al., 2013, p. 112) by merging theory and practice.

Education as a Human Right Project

As a final point, we wanted to mention a project in the works entitled “Education as a Human Right.” This was a project formed from a relationship our College of Education has with the Center for Advancement and Study of International

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Education (CASIE) out of Atlanta, Georgia. We included this project as our last example, because although it is currently in its nascent form, it is an example of moving toward a more global approach to SFE, and it illustrates our vision for SFE as a connecting factor, bringing together multiple levels and forms of education.

This project is multi-layered, but we are developing a series of Education as a Human Rights courses to be taught at the graduate level. Education as a human right is defined as “an international movement to promote awareness about the rights accorded by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and related human rights conventions, and the procedures that exist for the redress of violations of the rights” (Tibbitts, 2008, p. 99). According to Tibbitts (2008), Human Rights Education is becoming more prevalent in P-12 and postsecondary institutions, and we believe that the values of Human Rights Education align with the goals of SFE. Our HER program will be a track that graduate students can choose with a SFE and comparative education focus that will bring together theory, action research, policy, and practice through courses such as “Foundations of Inequity”; “Education as a Human Right”; “Education, Policy, and Politics”; and a final capstone research-based course. In addition, we plan to expand these same course themes, eventually, to our currently existing SFE undergraduate courses, involving students in action research and focusing on global and comparative educational theory.

Based upon the ideas behind the graduate track, we also developed a series of six, three-hour workshops to be offered to practicing educators and focused on themes such as critical pedagogy; identity, culture, and power; and creating a culture of inquiry. The importance of this project is that it moves SFE and SFE-related topics to the forefront for undergraduates, graduate students, practicing teachers, and faculty. This potentially places all of these groups in contact with one another and demonstrates the need for all involved of moving SFE from the college classroom to the public school. As noted by Benchick-Osborne (2013), too few studies focus on how SFE is being put into practice in the classroom, and too many practicing teachers fail to actualize SFE in their classrooms. This project is a way in which we can work with both pre-service and in-service educators to highlight the value of SFE, the importance of participatory action research related to SFE, and the value of SFE in the P-12 classroom. In addition, it stresses the value of SFE to our university colleagues and reinforces our connection to outside educational organizations. This model is an example of education as a web with SFE at the center. This idea of connections between all levels is key. As we indicated in the introduction, SFE content cannot be reduced to professional development workshops, but workshops along with graduate and undergraduate classes, impactful projects, and action research can help us redefine what it means to understand and apply the SFE on a more global level.

Discussion

As mentioned previously, the special projects mentioned above are not meant to be a one-size-fits-all approach, but these have been specifically tailored to meet

the needs of our communities and to address issues that we were seeing on our different campuses and within our individual classrooms. They are meant to show, though, (1) the power of collaborations and partnerships with other departments, outside institutions and programs, local schools, and our local communities; (2) the various ways in which theory can be put into practice in a classroom; and (3) multiple approaches for addressing resistance to or lack of perceived value of SFE topics. In terms of partnerships, work with and within the community is an increasingly common element of the mission of many institutions of higher education (Miller & Hafner, 2008; Strier, 2011). Others have written about the connection between SFE and engagement (Renner, Price, Keene, & Little, 2004), but now is the time for SFE to reinsert itself as a means for helping move universities to not only become more engaged but to do so with a socially just and ethical approach. As described by the Carnegie Foundation (2014), these community-university interactions should be defined as follows:

Community engagement describes activities that are undertaken *with* community members. In reciprocal partnerships, there are collaborative community-campus definitions of problems, solutions, and measures of success. Community engagement requires processes in which academics recognize, respect, and value the knowledge, perspectives, and resources of community partners and that are designed to serve a public purpose, building the capacity individuals, groups, and organizations involved to understand and collaboratively address issues of public concern. (“First Time Classification,” 2014, p. 2, our italics)

SFE can play a vital role in helping universities establish relationships with their local communities that are equitable and based upon the voices and needs of the community itself. As indicated in the call for submissions from the *Journal of Educational Foundations*, partnerships and collaborations demonstrate the significance of SFE to those outside of the field, providing examples for how we can “re-assert [our] presence inside and outside higher education.” In addition to university-wide and community value, a strong connection between SFE courses and departments outside of education, local schools, educational organizations, and government institutions illustrates the undeniable importance of SFE to the training and development of a generation of future educators who are advocates and allies for their local community members and who are change agents in their field.

Secondly, in facilitating the development of critical educators, each of these projects is an example of moving theory into practice for students and professors. As Butin (2005a) reminded us, “Theory matters, whether it is operationalized in specific contextual frameworks or through methodological procedures” (p. 197). At their core, these projects are grounded in and guided by theory, but they are also our attempt to engage students in what it means to be agentive, active democratic citizens dedicated to social change and what it means to be an ally for their students. Even if these future educators choose not to actively work toward social change, we view it as our work to ensure that they “refuse complacency” (Butin, 2005a, p. 197) for themselves and for the good of their future students. In moving theory into

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practice with these service-based projects, we want to demonstrate for our future educators the importance of issues beyond high-stakes testing and standards—we want to show them a different type of accountability. There is so much emphasis on teaching to the test that SFE often gets pushed aside, as we noted earlier and as many others have written about extensively. Our goal was to illustrate situations where SFE is centralized and becomes key to successful pedagogical practices.

In addition, in the way that academia is moving, it is becoming increasingly difficult to meet the demands of teaching, research, and service (Martusewicz, 2013; Nel, 2014), and this projects-based method has helped us focus on teaching, research, and service at once. As Martusewicz (2013) lamented in the Editor's Corner of *Educational Studies*, changes in academia are “making it more and more difficult to find the time needed to engage in scholarly activities that are at the heart of university life, and good teaching” (p. 462). This is an added benefit of working closely with students in project-based courses. This is not to say, of course, that we should engage in these projects simply for research purposes or view the communities and individuals with whom we work as research subjects. We have to keep the needs of our community partners, children, and students at the forefront and ensure that all parties have a voice in creating and facilitating these projects. We should reflect continually on issues of power, privilege, and access in conducting research, and we should be mindful of why we are engaging in projects, what our role is, what our students' roles are, and how we can work with local communities to create changes they *want* (DeVault, 1999). As academics, “We are not free to ignore how the social sciences have served and continue to serve as conceptual practices of power” (Schwandt, 1996, p. 68), and we have a responsibility to ensure that our work and, as much as possible, our students are not reifying stereotypes or maintaining current unequal power relations (Ellsworth, 1989). As researchers and educators, we should think about how our various roles impact our projects, and this is where constant reflexivity for ourselves (and our students) is key (Anderson, 1989; Kleinsasser, 2000). We have to engage in purposeful projects that we feel called to and for which we have a passion, and we need to reflect each day on our changing roles in the process of engaging in these projects. It becomes an added benefit, though, when we can engage with students and community members in projects meant to improve education and strengthen the presence and staying power of SFE for classrooms and communities.

Lastly, we see these projects as a way to move our students, and sometimes colleagues, past resistance or the failure to realize that SFE topics will be significant in their classrooms, which are burdens that we deal with all too often in SFE (Butin, 2005b). These projects demonstrate ways in which we can begin to move students beyond this resistance through active engagement in service-based projects intimately tied to their course readings in SFE. We have found that these projects help our students “begin to see that they are a part of a larger social system where they are not radical free agents but embedded within powerful, complex, and implicit normative frameworks and social habits” (Butin, 2005b, p. 122). These

projects have enabled students to witness inequities first hand but also work to resolve them, albeit on a small scale. They allow students to form relationships with the children and families with whom they are working, and they provide students with the opportunity to recognize their participation in these oppressive systems through their unearned privilege and work, instead, toward a role of possibility as advocates and allies. In addition, as we have worked through these projects, the underlying theme that emerges time and again with our students is that they are learning what it means to authentically care about students (Rolón-Dow, 2005), to feel their students' pain, to actively seek to understand their students, and to be passionate about their roles as socially just educators. If our students are engaged and interested in these types of projects and excited about their SFE classes, then our colleagues cannot ignore SFE.

This does not mean, though, that all students leave these courses fully understanding the impact or significance of SFE on their future careers and classrooms. We are not disillusioned to think that every student “gets it” or that our students will be dedicated to social justice and social change. Some students enter these special projects hating every minute, and they leave having hated every minute. We feel that we have a responsibility as SFE faculty, though, to help students put SFE theories into action. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2009) reminded their colleagues in reference to social justice education, “Proclamations of support without a foundation of action undermine the work and render it meaningless” (p. 348). We want our students to understand the significance of their actions in the classroom, and we want them to have a basic understanding of their role in our social structures, including the parts of their identities that may be privileged or disadvantaged and how this impacts their philosophy of education and their teaching pedagogy.

Conclusion

Given the challenges currently facing the SFE, both at the micro level of our individual program and at the more macro level as a field, we argue there is a need for the resocialization of P-12 and postsecondary educators in relation to SFE teaching approaches. Through our special projects method, we are attempting to revitalize our SFE program for ourselves, our colleagues, and our students. In addition, our goal is to make connections with local P-12 schools, students, educators, community members, and other educational organizations. We want to create opportunities for our students and colleagues to actualize foundational practices and understand the importance of SFE in their daily lives at the same time that we embrace and develop opportunities for ourselves, as SFE faculty, to bolster our field—because it is important to us; it is our livelihood, both literally and figuratively.

We understand that it takes more than revitalizing our pedagogies to sustain SFE courses and programs. As other SFE faculty across the globe, we are passionate about SFE, social justice, and educational reform for the benefit of underrepresented and minoritized students. Change requires a group of people working together for a common goal. We have had supportive administrators, faculty, and students who

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have allowed us to succeed as a group. We have had interested community members and local public schools who have invited us, welcomed us, through their doors. Starting in the college classroom, though, provides the opportunity to create a web linking students, colleges/departments of education, institutions of higher education, and communities with SFE as the lynchpin. The students in our classes right now are the future of education. If even some of them can take the goal of social justice—a dedication to change backed with historical, political, economic, social, cultural, and philosophical theory—into their future classrooms and schools, then the value of SFE will expand. If we can continue to form partnerships bringing local educational institutions, community members, and other departments into our classrooms, then this is one way in which the Social Foundations of Education can “refuse to be silenced” and “refuse complacency” (Butin, 2005a, p. 197).

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