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Report from the 2022 National Communication Association Annual Convention

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At the 2022 National Communication Association's annual convention I had the privilege of presenting on several paper and discussion panels. The majority of this work centered various critical elements concerning research and teaching, namely syllabus decolonization and the importance of centering social class in our teaching and research practices.

Panel One: Critical Efforts in and Disruptive Junctures to IFC Pedagogy: Decolonizing the Course Syllabus

This panel, which I created, chaired, and presented during, explored the importance of mindfulness concerning syllabus and course decolonization. Broadly, syllabus and course decolonization is the attentiveness to and mindfulness of the ways in which pedagogical practices draw from and reinforce dominant hegemonies in higher education, namely along the lines of colonial, racial, and heteronormative identities and structures. This discussion panel featured an array of junior and established scholars dialoguing on experiences with and practices related to syllabus/course decolonization.

Our discussion facilitated multiple approaches to decolonizing classroom practices in a bid to make our pedagogy more inclusive and freer of hegemonic ideologies as they concern knowledge production and dissemination. Some of the practices the panel discussed were:

- Centering power dynamics within the classroom, including those between the teacher and student.
- Drawing from non-canon literature and research in our teaching, with emphasis placed on Black, non-Western, indigenous, women-oriented, and queer research.
- Reconceptualizing standardized assignments and grading scales in the course.
- The significance of facilitating interpersonal connections with students both within and beyond the classroom.
- The importance of drawing from critical theories and paradigms to inform pedagogical practices, goals and objectives, learning outcomes, and teacher-student relationships. Here, an emphasis is placed upon the work of Black feminism, postcolonial studies, critical race theory, and feminist and queer theories.
- The necessity of conceptualizing the college classroom as a power-laden space in which cultural norms may be either challenged or reproduced, in turn underscoring the cyclical relationship between macro systems and micro practices.

Thinking about Social Class and Social Mobility in Interpersonal Communication Studies: A Roundtable Discussion

This discussion panel underscored the important yet routinely neglected role of social and economic class as it shapes both research and teaching within the field of communication studies (though the themes identified and addressed in the panel are by no means exclusive to this discipline). The discussion panel featured conversations on the following themes:

- Social class as a major influence on research practices including methodologies and theory development.

- The role of social class in the lives of our students, especially when approached from an intersectional perspective that is mindful of the various ways social identities inform and augment the realities of those embodying such identities. For example, a discussion was had on the ways a “first-generation” college status may be negatively impacted by other socially constructed identities/positionalities, such as being Black.
- The hidden nature of social and economic class in academia, which results in the ongoing construction of power-laden hierarchies in the profession that works to disenfranchise and disempower others, especially graduate students and junior faculty.
- How the distinction between physical and intellectual labor results in inferiority complexes from those engaged in the latter. This complex, in turn, often results in the internalized desire to work more, given that intellectual labor is routinely conceptualized as inferior to manual labor, which, in turn, creates exceedingly high standards and feelings of inadequacy for those working in the academy.
- A focused discussion on the ways intellectual labor as a classed position has problematically become entangled with neo-liberal and radical politics, in turn contributing to further splinters between not only manual and intellectual laborers, but across political party lines.
- The concluding consensus is that much more work needs to be done to normalize discussions of class within higher education. We discussed various strategies and channels in which these changes may be made, including the creation of themed issues in our journals, edited volumes, and more pronounced discussions related to class in our classrooms and with university administration.