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TEACHING SOCIAL JUSTICE ADVOCACY: USING THE METAPHOR OF A QUILT

Recent literature has called for the counseling and psychological field to integrate social justice issues into student training (Goodman et al., 2004; Prilleltensky, 1997; Singh et al., 2010). However, there has been little attention to the pedagogy of social justice advocacy and how instructors may bring social justice issues to life for students. Fortunately, feminist pedagogy has provided a rich foundation of the relational skills instructors may infuse in their teaching (Kimmel & Worell, 1997). These feminist pedagogical strategies have explored how instructors may address issues of power and authority in the classroom through self-reflection and the development of student-teacher collaborative relationships in the construction of knowledge. Feminist pedagogy has also moved beyond a focus on instructor pedagogical skills, seeking to understand the influence of these skills on students' experiences in the classroom (Stake & Hoffman, 2000). The purpose of my essay is to discuss how the metaphor of a "social justice quilt" is used as a feminist pedagogical tool to encourage a collaborative student-teacher exploration of the personal experiences of advocacy in a doctoral-level class on social justice issues.

Teaching About Privilege and Oppression

One of the challenges of teaching about social justice issues in counseling and psychology is the construction of a teaching environment where students can empower themselves to explore their personal experiences of privilege and oppression. Multicultural counseling and psychology courses highlight the importance of students' understanding of the cultural worldviews of themselves and others (Sue & Sue, 2008). However, social justice courses demand that students move beyond a multicultural understanding of diverse cultural worldviews so that they themselves may become social change agents and take action on issues of equity and justice (Goodman et al., 2004). Therefore, students must have a thorough understanding of not only strategies for social justice, but also—and perhaps more importantly—the ways they have specifically benefitted from previous advocacy movements. In this regard, students have the opportunity to see and experience social justice issues in a more personal manner—rather than as a construct that is more abstract than relevant and meaningful in their lives.

The Quilt as a Metaphor for Social Justice Advocacy

I am fortunate because the doctoral program in which I work is grounded in social justice principles; these principles influence students' learning and values before they enroll in the social justice course with me. Social justice is both the mission and aim of our program. However, in previous experiences of teaching about social justice issues at both the masters and doctoral-level outside this program, I had experiences with students that may be far too common for instructors who teach with these commitments. For instance, although some students could talk about the importance of social justice, they often struggled to connect the concept of the "personal is political" with individual psychotherapy and clients' experiences of oppression outside the therapist's office. Other students saw social justice as a construct that revealed a "liberal bias" in counseling and psychology that had no place in the teaching of counseling and psychology. Still others experienced intense passion around the subject of social justice, yet they felt just as intensely overwhelmed by how psychotherapists could ever address the immense issues entailed in social justice advocacy.

For these reasons, I shifted my pedagogy from asserting the importance of social justice and defining its meaning in the counseling and psychology literature. Instead, I returned to the feminist foundation of my own pedagogy and endeavored to construct a new foundation from which I could collaboratively construct knowledge with students about the personal meaning and relevance social justice advocacy has for both the instructor's and students' lives. Using the metaphor of a quilt, I developed an assignment that positioned the "personal is political" and called it the "Social Justice Quilt." As I describe the assignment, I will take direct quotes from the syllabus for the doctoral-level social justice course. (The full syllabus is avaliable online.)

Teaching in the South, the metaphor of a quilt has specific and personal meanings for some students. More often than not, students have a quilt that was made for them at their birth and/or have heard stories of quilts made by careful, meticulous hands within their family. Quilts

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themselves have particular meaning in terms of gender and race/ethnicity. The hands that often make quilts belong to generations of creative, strong women in families. In terms of race/ethnicity—often one of the most challenging oppressions from which to explore and own one's experiences of privilege and oppression—quilts also have particular meaning. People of Black/African heritage who were enslaved in the United States often made quilts that ensured the continuation of cultural symbols and values and that were also used as maps encoding pathways to liberation. Therefore, I use the following quote from Milo (1995) to introduce the activity:

> The quilt is used symbolically for the feelings about race and ethnicity that cover us while we sleep, comfort us against the cold, and are folded and neatly put away during various seasons of the year. They may be pieced together using one small scrap at a time, sometimes cut into beautiful designs from fancy materials, at other times cut into odd shapes from plain, ordinary, well-worn fabric, and stitched by a machine instead of by hand. Regardless of any or all of these origins, they are bound with small stitches, bordered, have padded insulation, and are backed with substantial material. We think of them as so necessary to survival that we give them to babies, and often pack them when going on lone and desolate journeys. Some are tattered and torn from overuse, others are carted out for display, company, or special occasions; but we each own one (p. 4).

Using this quote to frame both the personal and political aspects of quilt making, students and I share stories about actual quilts in our lives. I describe the quilt that my White grandmother made for me on the occasion of my birth—replete with its femininity in the form of light pink cotton threads and large crocheted flowers—to invite the personal stories of quilts into the room. Reading Milo's (1995) quote aloud with the class, we then connect the metaphor of warmth and comfort to the construct of privilege—the unearned benefits that are handed down generationally and constructed by our foremothers and forefathers. Inevitably as a class, we then explore how social justice advocacy is both a strategy to "level the playing field" with regard to privilege and oppression experiences *and* the difficulty of identifying privilege because of its insidiousness, its invisibility, and its protected status through systems of privilege and oppression.

After discussing the histories and her-stories of quilts and the challenge of identifying systems of privilege and the importance of social justice advocacy, we as a class discuss the importance of creativity in becoming a social change agent. Students are encouraged to use their own creative vision to bring their own social justice quilt to life. Their social justice quilts can draw from many forms of media. They may have an emphasis on using found artifacts and objects in their lives and have a goal to link social justice theories in the course to their own personal life experiences:

> For this project, use everyday objects (e.g., magazine cut-outs, photographs, found objects around your home or workplace) to create a "social justice quilt" that represents the most salient aspects of your identity (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation) and history of personal social justice advocacy that shape how you view social justice theory, the nature of human challenges and resilience, and the reasons you have chosen a helping profession.

When students read this description of the activity from the syllabus, many questions arise. Notably, doctoral-level students endeavor to understand the boundaries of the assignment and the specific level of personal disclosure expected from them in the presentation of their quilts. Prior to discussing these expectations further, we begin a discussion of the awareness they may or may not have of social justice movements in order to illustrate the purpose of the social justice advocacy.

Connecting to Social Justice Movements

The core component of the social justice quilt assignment is the connection between the instructor's and students' experiences of privilege and oppression with larger social justice movements. Students inevitably have numerous questions about the definition of what a social justice movement is. I initially invite students to brainstorm as a group to define social justice, and students typically share words that I write on the board—such as "liberation," "rights," and "equity." A discussion invariably follows where students ask what actions "count" in terms of social justice actions for psychologists. I share recent definitions of social justice by scholars in psychology, such as Goodman et al. (2004, p. 793), as an exemplar: "Scholarship and professional action designed to change societal values, structures, policies and practices, such that disadvantaged or marginalized groups gain increased access to these tools of self-determination."

Then, I invite students to share what comes to mind for them when they hear the words "social justice." Students often identify the civil rights movement of the 1960s, the peace movement of the 1970s, and the women's liberation movement as examples of social justice advocacy. I sketch out a timeline for the movements they name, and then I make a note of the large amount of white space (representing gaps in time) that has not been filled with other social justice movements. Students have rich discussions of why this knowledge may have been missing from their history textbooks and/or from discussions within their family. Often, as the discussion continues, students begin to identify additional social justice movements in the United States, such as labor rights. Students then begin to question the U.S.-centricity of their knowledge base and identify

international social justice movements—typically related to women's rights and violence.

When students understand the parameters of the assignment, I then present my own social justice quilt. Exploring the specific intersections of privilege and oppression in my life, I use a Powerpoint presentation with artifacts from my home (e.g., photos, drawings) to bring my social justice quilt to life. I discuss the varying degrees of class privilege I have had over the lifespan, from working class to poverty to upper middle class to middle class. As a queer South Asian woman born in New Orleans, I discuss how my father's academic class bought me the value of education and eventually brought our family to various class levels and out of poverty. I also discuss the ways that my class status intersected with my race/ethnicity, gender, geographic region, and sexual orientation. As I explore these identities and intersections, I endeavor to link the ways I specifically benefitted from previous social justice movements, such as the civil rights movement, women's liberation movement, Indian liberation movement from British colonialism, and labor rights movements in both the United States and India. I welcome personal questions from students at the end of the presentation, and then I take further questions about the assignment.

For the students' presentations of their Social Justice Quilts, I intentionally schedule the presentations at the beginning of each class in order to ensure that we as a class infuse feminist philosophies of the "personal is political" into each class. I then have the ability to weave the personal examples of benefiting from social justice movements from students' own lives into the more general class discussions. For instance, if we are discussing theories of counseling and psychology, I integrate a class exploration of how issues of privilege and oppression they identified in the Social Justice Quilts are connected to the topic. I invite each student in these discussions to identify personal biases and assumptions they hold (or have held in the past) about social justice issues (e.g., immigration reform, reproductive justice).

Overall, the students' presentations have been creative, forward thinking, inspiring, and emotional. For instance, a White heterosexual student in her late 20s who is a mother explored the complex intersections in her life of both privilege (White, married to a man, Christian) with her experiences of being a woman and a mother. In terms of an identity that is typically marginalized, her gender, this student explored specific ways she was not connected to the women's liberation movement and did not have information about this movement throughout her high school and college experiences. This student discussed the isolation she has felt as a woman and mother, and how various privileged identities might have brought her access to resources, but did not mitigate the feelings of being "othered." She also shared a renewed interest in reading about the women's liberation movement and specifically becoming involved in third wave feminist movements.

From Social Justice Learning to Action

As hooks (2003) reminds us, feminist pedagogy at its best inspires not only social justice awareness, but also social justice change. One of the most rewarding aspects of the students' sharing of their Social Justice Quilts has been witnessing how they integrate their own personal learning about advocacy into the ways they interact professionally with clients and personally with their kinship and peer networks. For instance, one student (White woman) who works in school settings shared the following reflection about her transition from awareness to action in compiling her Social Justice Quilt project:

> I used to think, "Why is there a Black History month? There isn't a White History month." Now I see that everyday, every month is White History something. I would have also described myself as open-minded and accepting of others, but now that my perspective has changed, I realize that I was accepting of others as to what I was comfortable accepting or I was open-minded about what topics I was comfortable being open-minded about. Now, I make sure to speak up in school meetings about White privilege. I talk to my family and friends about what I have learned. It's hard for them to understand, but I can't keep silent anymore. Now, I include issues of privilege and oppression in my case intakes and write-ups. I track how oppressive experiences influence my clients' achievement, hopes, and dreams.

Interestingly, the Social Justice Quilt assignment also helps students who have typically seen themselves as having little privilege in their lives to see how they may have not considered privileged statuses they do have. Recognizing this privilege, these students often feel empowered by their Social Justice Quilts to use these statuses to interact differently with their clients even when identifying these privileged identities may be challenging. One student (African American man) shared:

> This assignment has been challenging. It was difficult to talk about some of my past experiences of privilege in being heterosexual because they are still so painful, especially when I bullied others because they were gay. However, I felt I needed to be completely honest in describing these experiences not only because they have created the impetus for my advocacy, but also because they have limited me in some ways from being as strong of an advocate as I would like to be. Now, people at work joke that I won't stop talking about being a LGBTQ-ally. They can joke all they want. I won't go back to being ignorant or not helping the LGBTQ kids. It would be criminal.

Implications for Feminist and Social Justice Pedagogy

There are several implications of the Social Justice Quilt for feminist and social justice pedagogy. As the field of counseling and psychology recommits itself to values of social justice, the inclusion of feminist practice, theory, research, and advocacy often becomes invisible to these discussions. The Social Justice Quilt breathes life into feminist pedagogy, constructing a space where students can inspire themselves to learn about the importance of feminist movements and their relationship to social justice values. Because many of the students in the class may not have previously learned about issues of social justice and their relationship to counseling and psychology, these discussions have the potential to become overwhelming to students. Therefore, instructors using this activity should take an initial pulse of students' knowledge of these issues at the beginning of class to assess the range of social justice awareness and knowledge. Then, instructors can ensure that students who are new to this topic and/or who have great passion for social justice advocacy may explore how to balance attention to social justice issues in the practice of counseling and psychology.

Additionally, when instructors and students discuss social justice issues in counseling and psychology, these discussions often focus on the future action and social change that counselors and psychologists may engage in as helping professionals. This focus on students' future roles as social change agents is indeed important; however, it can be challenging for student trainees to understand the real importance and meaning that social justice movements have for everyday people, human rights, and policy changes without understanding past history and her-story. The Social Justice Quilt supports a balance between two forces. One force looks back, so that students can "see" themselves in the history and her-story of liberation. The second force looks forward, so that they can see how they hold the products of liberation (e.g., opportunities, resources, access) in addition to holding the power to create change on behalf of others. Finally, the Social Justice Quilt combines the best features of feminist pedagogy, such as attention to reflexivity, instructor power, and collaborative relationships with students in the construction of knowledge. In addition, it also provides an ongoing accountability check for the importance of making the "personal is political" in becoming a social change agent.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The following supporting information is available for this article online at http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1471-6402: Dr. Singh's class syllabus.

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TEACHING CRITICAL THINKING ABOUT PSYCHOLOGY OF SEX AND GENDER

In 1980, Professor Ronnie de Sousa, then head of the University of Toronto Women's Studies Programme, invited me to coordinate a course he had conceived, to be called "Scientific Perspectives on Sex and Gender." I accepted on the condition that we teach it from a strong critical thinking perspective. At that time, there was one full-year core course in Women's Studies focused on history, philosophy, and literature and film. Dr. de Sousa's plan was to focus a second full-year core course on the ways that researchers and theorists from the sciences—specifically, psychology, biology, and anthropology—investigated questions related to sex and gender. That year (and for some years thereafter), I coordinated that second course and gave the one-third of its lectures that were about psychology.

Despite the important work of many second wave feminists, the vast majority of students who enrolled in the course had a great many beliefs about sex and gender differences in emotions, attitudes, cognition, and behavior

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for which there was little or no solid support from well designed, well executed, and responsibly interpreted research. Rather, their beliefs came partly from the messages in popular media and partly from academic journals.

I considered it important to have no prerequisites for the course. However, many students began with considerable anxiety about their ability to understand and think critically about scientific material. Thus, it was important to instill in them some confidence about approaching the topics in the course and applying a critical thinking approach. Indeed, when I taught this material at Harvard University very recently, students who had been concentrating in Psychology for two years or more reported that this was the first time they had been asked to think critically about psychological research. Some found it at first disconcerting to be asked to switch from the mental set that one student described as "the professor tells us what to read that is important and just learn it." Despite some initial discomfort, however, most said that they ultimately found it liberating to be asked to think critically. Many said that the approach helped them understand the uneasiness they had experienced with some of the material that professors had assigned and discussed as though it represented facts, even though the studies sometimes were poorly conceived and designed and/or included unwarranted interpretations of data.

Beginning with the first year that I taught the course at the University of Toronto, I found it frustrating that so little critique had been written about the psychological research about sex and gender. Ultimately, I co-wrote a book entitled *Thinking Critically About Research on Sex and Gender,* which was intended to fill this need (Caplan & Caplan, 1994). Two more recent editions of the book have subsequently been published (Caplan & Caplan, 1999, 2009).

An important early step is to explain that there is nothing magical about critical thinking. This point has been true from the first time I co-taught "Scientific Perspectives on Sex and Gender" at the University of Toronto through my most recent teaching of it (as "Psychology of Sex and Gender" at Harvard University). As Jeremy B. Caplan and I have written (Caplan & Caplan, 2009), if one were walking along the sidewalk and saw a dog suddenly zoom straight up from the sidewalk into the air, certain questions would immediately come to mind (such as "What happened to gravity?"). Critical thinking about scientific theory and research is nothing more than logical, careful thinking, some of which requires no special training or information and some of which is easier once one knows some methods, principles, and conventions.

It is also helpful for the student to understand that research about sex and gender is not free from subjectivity and bias. To convey this point, some historical perspective is useful. Students find it easier to spot the flaws in research from the 19th or early 20th centuries (Caplan & Caplan, 2009, Chapter 2) than in contemporary research. They can begin by reading about 19th-century researchers' tireless efforts to discover *some* part of the brain where men's superior intelligence resided and the way their theories and methodologies became protean as they repeatedly failed to make such a discovery. Often, they are amused by these long-ago researchers' persistence and puzzled by the tenacity with which they clung to the claim of males' superior intelligence and brains, despite evidence to the contrary. Thus, they have an interesting foundation for discussing contemporary efforts to discover a consistent sex difference between the brains of girls and women and those of boys and men. This background makes it relatively easy to notice parallels between the two lines of research and the similarities of their flaws in theory, methodology, and interpretation of data (Caplan & Caplan, 2009, Chapter 3).

It is important to say at the beginning of this course: "Virtually everyone believes certain things about sex and gender and sex differences to be true, but a major goal of our course is to find out what is accurate, based on the quality of the research." This is not like learning solid geometry or particle physics, because all our lives we are flooded with information about what we should and should not do and feel, depending greatly on whether we are classified as female or male. So, I say, "This course will resonate in an astonishing number of ways with your own life. Some will be positive, even liberating, but others may be deeply disconcerting. So, hold on to your hats." I have sometimes had students tell me, even close to tears, that it is upsetting to be asked to question so much of what they have always believed, especially because they often are not sure what to believe instead. For instance, they want to know, if men are *not* naturally aggressive and women naturally self-denying and patient, then what *do* we know about differences between them in these traits? Where will we find the certainty that can be somewhat comforting, even if limiting? My response begins with: "It is important to make decisions based on what is known, as well as on knowing what is not yet known. I would prefer to avoid making decisions based on unfounded claims about sex differences, no matter how widely they may be believed." It is also important to help students consider that their decisions about people's behavior should be based on real understanding of research, rather than on irrelevant factors.

Lest students believe that the instructor is simply a curmudgeon who refuses to say that some research is well done, it is important to say that some research is quite good. However, it is genuinely challenging to carry out research about human behavior. If this research is conducted in a laboratory, where many variables can be controlled, then it may be well done but help us little in understanding the real world. However, if it is carried out in the real world, then such a multitude of factors can influence the results that it is often difficult to know just what one can learn from such research. I explain that this does not mean that we should give up hope for carrying out high-quality research but only that we must understand the limitations

of that endeavor and realize that perfect single studies are nonexistent.

From the first meeting of this course, it is important to jump in immediately to talk about research questions, designs, and interpretations of results. One should not assume that using an extremely simple example will come across as silly or condescending. In fact, it is an effective way to ease them into a critical thinking approach and to provide an immediate experience in which they can recognize their ability to think critically. For instance, I tell them about the 7-year-old children with whom I first tried this approach (Caplan, Secord-Gilbert, & Staton, 1990; Caplan & Caplan, 2009). (Sometimes they are interested to learn that that took place with the third-grade class of my son, Jeremy Benjamin Caplan, who at 16 coauthored with me *Thinking Critically About Research on Sex and Gender* (Caplan & Caplan,1994) and who is now a cognitive neuroscientist at the University of Alberta.)

After this description, I ask them to read and discuss Chapter 3 in *Thinking Critically About Research on Sex and Gender*, which my son wrote as an accessible way to introduce students to a great many of the most common methodological errors. In that chapter, he examines the question of whether there are sex differences in strength. Through that example, he describes numerous problems of methodology, ranging from choosing what to study, to designing the research, to carrying out the study, to interpreting the results.

That hypothetical example paves the way for discussion of actual studies and critiques of their methodology that we model in lectures with ample class participation. The class also reads chapters of the Caplan and Caplan (2009) book about particular topics, including research allegedly showing sex differences in certain emotions, certain kinds of behavior, cognitive performance, and the brain. It is helpful to introduce a simple document such as "How to Do a Critique" (see the Appendix) and to help students think through the steps involved in considering a study's value.

It is also helpful to introduce variety in the kinds of articles you discuss and ask them to critique, including reports of research that appear in popular media and in scholarly journal articles. Students can use the "How to Do a Critique" document and the chapter about methodological errors from the Caplan and Caplan (2009) book. For still more practice in discussion sections, students can be encouraged to bring in popular and scholarly articles for critical analysis.

Early in the course, I have students work in small groups with the following instructions:

> Choose a topic related to sex and/or gender that interests you, and then within that topic area, choose a hypothesis or research question to investigate. Together, design the best study you can think of to test that hypothesis or address that question. Produce a written description of your study, including the hypothesis or research question and the design of the study with regard to the participants, instruments or interventions, and procedures. Then, using the approach we have been employing in class, write a critique of your study. No piece of psychological research is ever perfect, and most are far from it, so do not be concerned when you notice that yours has flaws or limitations. [Depending on the course, I may ask the students to write their critiques individually or as a group.] Hand in the description of the study and the critique together.

Time permitting, each small group can trade research designs with another group and critique each other's design, a particularly good exercise for discussion sections. Also time permitting, students might design a simple enough study that they can actually carry out, such as observations in a dining hall. Thus students acquire experience in identifying real-life limitations of executing even the best-conceived research. Then they write a critique that includes some of those limitations that they had not foreseen. When students design their own study, they understand some of the difficulties in trying to produce high-quality research about psychology of sex and gender. This project also relieves some of their uncertainty about whether they are qualified to understand and critique research.

A next step is to choose an article from a popular medium and ask the students to write a three-page critique, again using the "How to Do a Critique" document as a guideline. I sometimes compare this exercise to workbooks' "What's Wrong With This Picture?" exercise, in which children are asked to identify all of the problems they can find. The instructor must provide *very* detailed feedback to the students so that they can see which steps from the critique document they have followed well and which steps require greater attention. Later in the course, I choose an article from a scholarly journal for the students to critique in the same way.

During this time, in lectures and discussions, we use portions of many chapters in the Caplan and Caplan (2009) book. I often compare and contrast at least two articles of different quality about a given topic. This exercise gives students a sense of the problems in research about topics such as sex differences in mathematical abilities. They can also learn how the choice of research question, study design, and responsible interpretation of data can contribute to higher-quality work.

One essential topic that is rarely addressed in writing about research on sex differences and similarities is that of intersex people, those who do not fit the usually strict definitions of biological femaleness or of biological maleness (Fausto-Sterling, 2000). As Jeremy B. Caplan and I point out, the existence of people who are intersex

> has the potential to revolutionize the field of psychological sex differences, because virtually every study

> of psychological "sex differences" has been based on the erroneous assumption that only typical females and males were studied. Researchers in these studies have virtually never done chromosomal analyses or physical examinations to determine a participant's sex, and when classification by sex has been based on "Check one: male or female," many intersex people have not even been aware that they were intersex and thus would have reported the sex to which they were assigned at birth. This is especially important, because those psychological sex differences that have been reported have usually been so small. . . . Keeping in mind that intersex people vary greatly from each other, how might that alter the picture? . . . there is simply no way to know how their inclusion in studies has altered the field (p. 8).

Having raised this matter, it is useful to return to it every time research about a new topic is introduced.

Depending on the class size, I ask students to give oral presentations during lecture or discussion sections. Each presentation lasts no more than 12–15 minutes. The student chooses two pieces of research about a particular topic related to sex and gender. One must be better designed, executed, and/or interpreted than the other. The presentation includes a concise but clear description of each study, including whatever listeners need to know in order to understand the critique that the presenter then offers. This exercise provides a good foundation for students in writing the final paper for this course, as well as for writing literature reviews for theses and dissertations.

The final essay for the course is a 12- to 15-page paper. I explain that this paper must be very carefully thought out, well organized, and efficiently written. The paper must be based on 8–10 research articles about one topic they choose. They can select these articles in a number of ways, such as two reports from each of the past four or five decades or else the best research reports about the topic that the student can find, combined with the worst. I strongly advise students before writing the paper to read each of the research articles and take extensive, careful notes using the "How to Do a Critique" approach. This strategy provides a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of each study and of whether any studies are so seriously flawed that we can learn nothing from them. In writing the paper, students should look for ways to critique the body of studies efficiently. For example, they may describe in some detail one, two, or three of the studies and their flaws. Then they can more briefly compare and contrast the subsequent studies to their initial study. Or they may list all of the kinds of problems found in one or more of the studies, and then say which studies include which problems. Where relevant and illuminating, they should also mention studies' strengths.

Crucial to the paper is to compare what each paper's authors *claim* their research shows with what—given the paper's limitations—their research *legitimately* does show. The paper should end with one or a few sentences that many students find to be the most difficult to write: a "state of the science" statement. This statement is the student's opinion about what, given the pros and cons of each study, one can confidently say is definitely known about the topic. By the time the reader reaches that final statement, the student's evaluative descriptions of the research reports should be extremely clear. In fact this final statement should come as no surprise; rather, it should be a crystal-clear digest of the preceding pages.

I give a final examination when I teach this material to undergraduates. About one-third consists of short-answer identification items, designed to encourage students to do the reading. The remainder consists of a single essay question. For the essay, I construct an article that is written as though it comes from a scholarly journal or presentation. This article includes as wide a variety of problems as possible, including (a) citation of previous research without questioning its quality or the conclusions its authors reached; (b) biases in choosing the research question; (c) problems in logic when shifting from existing literature to hypothesis or research question; (d) problems in whether the research design follows logically from the hypothesis or research question; (e) problems of various kinds within the design itself; and (f) unwarranted or inadequate interpretations of the data. The student's task is, on the spot, to write a critique of that paper. (An example created with Kathryn Morgan and other instructors is available online.) It is important to include specific instructions on the actual examination that they must not just criticize the authors for not choosing a different topic or for not conducting a larger study. As a result of the elements of this kind of course, students acquire depth of practice in thinking critically about research on sex and gender.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

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journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1471-6402: Caplan, Morgan, et al.'s final exam research critique.

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APPENDIX: HOW TO DO A CRITIQUE

1. Read the article carefully. Read it at least three more times, making notes as you go, about the authors' claims and the questions that come to mind.
2. Identify theoretical assumptions the authors make. These may be either explicitly stated or implicit. Consider whether or not these make sense and seem true. Furthermore, are there any internal inconsistencies within the theory?
3. What predictions do they make or hypotheses do they state? Do they follow from the theory? Are they clearly stated?
4. Method: Was the study designed and carried out in a way that actually allows the authors to test their predictions or hypotheses? Is it clear what the authors actually did in the study? Are there problems with the way the study was designed?
5. Results: Were the results analyzed appropriately? Are the methods of analysis clearly described (either in the Method or the Results section)? Are the results clearly presented?
6. Discussion: Do the authors' conclusions follow from the results they obtained? Are there any rival hypotheses that could adequately explain the results?

Note: DO NOT criticize the authors for not choosing a different topic or doing a larger study UNLESS their predictions/hypotheses cannot be tested using the study they designed.

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