

# Nurturing Young People’s Critical Consciousness to Thrive in and Transform the World

CT Equity Summit  
August 11, 2021

Scott Seider  
Boston College



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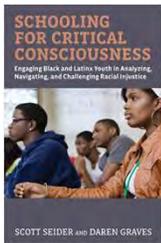
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## Introduction



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## Session Goals

By the end of our session, you will be able to

- Define critical consciousness, why it matters for youth, and ways critical consciousness can be cultivated for students in schools
- Identify opportunities in your own school context to nurture students’ critical consciousness development



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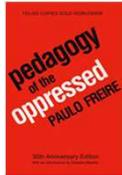
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### Definition of Critical Consciousness

- To recognize oppressive social forces shaping society and take action against them



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### What Critical Consciousness Sounds Like

- “Racism is something that’s kind of imprinted in the history of this country. Like White people have had more like opportunities throughout history and then um, like when the Japanese people came over, they were like pushed to the side. Like, different groups and ethnicities and races don’t all have equal opportunities and it’s just kind of like in people’s minds and it’s really hard to get out.”

--Melissa, 9<sup>th</sup> grader

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### Why Critical Consciousness Matters

- Resilience/healing (Ginwright, 2010)
- Self-esteem (Godfrey & Grayman, 2014)
- Political engagement (Diemer & Li, 2011)
- Professional aspirations (Diemer & Blustein, 2006)
- Academic engagement (O'Connor, 1997)
- Academic achievement (Seider, Clark, & Graves, 2020)

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### Dimensions of Critical Consciousness

Watts, Diemer, & Voight, 2011

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### Social Analysis

The ability to name and analyze the social, political, and economic forces that contribute to inequity and inequality.

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### Social Action

A wide range of activities through which individuals seek to resist and challenge oppressive forces.

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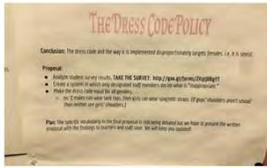
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## Political Agency

The belief that one has the capacity to effect social or political change



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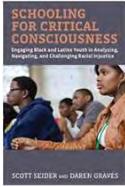
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## Our Study

- What role can schools and educators play in fostering youth critical consciousness?



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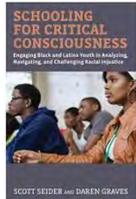
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## Practices for Fostering Youth CC

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### Practices for Fostering Critical Consciousness

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### Make the Road Academy

Mission: To offer students an education that strengthens our community by equipping them to address educational and social inequities.

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### Social Analysis: Awareness of Systemic Racism

Category	Time1	Time2	Time3	Time4	Time5
MTRA	3.46	3.85	3.88	4.01	4.23
FIVE FEATURED SCHOOLS	3.48	3.63	3.68	3.86	4.03

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Sample Item: "Prejudice and discrimination in the educational system limit the success of Black and Latino people." (5-point Likert scale)

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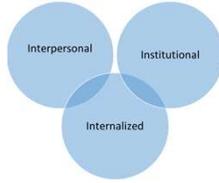
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### Introducing a Framework @ Make the Road Academy



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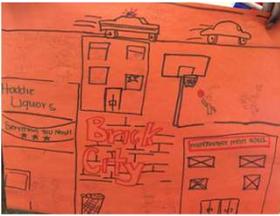
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### Social Analysis



THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY FOR SELF DEFENSE  
THE TEN POINT PROGRAM  
1. WE WANT freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community. WE BELIEVE that black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny.  
2. WE WANT full employment for our people. WE BELIEVE that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every man employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the white American businessmen will not give full employment, that the means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all of its people and give a high standard of living.  
3. WE WANT an end to the robbery by the CAPITALIST of our Black Community. WE BELIEVE that this racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules were promised 100 years ago as reparations for slave labor and mass murder of black people. We will accept the payment in currency which will be distributed to our many communities. The Germans are now giving the Jews in Israel for the genocide of the Jewish people. The Germans murdered six million Jews. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over fifty million black people; therefore, we feel that this is a modest demand that we make.

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### Applying a Framework

• “Like, in our city, it’s a lot of Chicken Shacks everywhere. You can always find a Chicken Shack here, but if you go out to like the suburbs or something like that, you’re not gonna find one nowhere around. Like you might find a Whole Foods or like a farmer’s market or something like that. The options of everything is just much different, and it just seem like certain things are put where they put for a reason... Freshman year, when we was in the [Social Engagement] class, it made me think about stuff differently, and once I started thinking about it, you start putting the pieces together, and you start noticing like nothing happens just because. Like, it’s all for some reason, like somebody’s benefitting from everything, somebody’s not benefitting from everything. It’s set up this way for a certain reason.”

--Michael, 12<sup>th</sup> grader, Make the Road Academy

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### Applying a Framework

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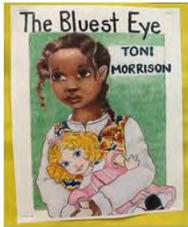
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### Applying a Framework




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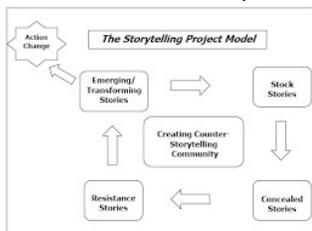
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### Introducing a Framework @ Espiritu High School




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### Social Analysis: Elementary Math Class

Kaliyah wants to make a gumbo for her grandmother, but there are no grocery stores in her neighborhood, so she has to take the bus to several stores to get the ingredients she needs...



Part A:  
 What do you think about Kaliyah's access to food? Do you think that it is fair? What issues might this cause Kaliyah and her family? Or other people of her community?

Part B:  
 Kaliyah gets on the bus by her house. She takes the bus 17 blocks north to go Grocery Mart to get the shrimp that is on sale. She gets back on the bus, and takes it 29 blocks south towards her house to get the fresh okra from Produce Market. Finally she takes the bus back towards her house north 7 blocks to get the crab meat from Fresh Seafood.

Draw a diagram showing her TRIP through out the day.

1. Label the stop by her house as ZERO, because that is where she started
2. Label all of the distances on the trip in numbers and what she got. (CRAB, OKRA & SHRIMP)
3. Identify where she ended her trip in relation to her house, which is ZERO.

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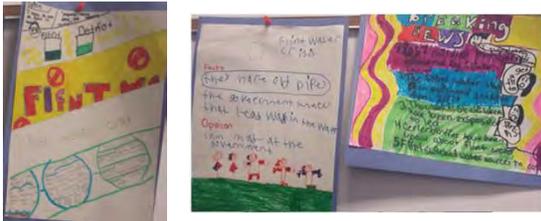
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### Social Analysis at Detroit Elementary



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### Social Analysis

- What practices for fostering students' social analysis of racism and other types of oppression do you already use within your classroom or school?
- What ideas got sparked for you by these social analysis practices in our slides?
- What questions do you have about engaging students in social analysis of racism and other types of oppression?

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### Practices for Fostering Critical Consciousness

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### Leadership High School

Mission: To educate socially responsible students for a life of active and engaged citizenship.

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### Social Action: Commitment to Activism

School Group	Time1	Time2	Time3	Time4	Time5
LEADERSHIP HS	3.1	3	3.3	3.49	
FIVE FEATURED SCHOOLS	3.03	3.02	3.14	3.18	3.33

Sample Item: How likely is it now or in the future you will take part in a protest? (5-point Likert scale)

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**Sociology of Change**

### Ganz's Theory

1. Relationships
2. Storytelling
3. Strategizing
4. Action
5. Structure

### #ACTIVISM

Use Twitter to check out the following hashtags to find evidence to support AND refute your assigned proposition.

- #StandWithAhmed
- #BringBackOurGirls
- #StandWithPP
- #Kony2012




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**Change the World Projects @ Leadership HS**







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**Change the World Projects**

- "Some of the seniors had to make a Change the World project in order to graduate, and their project was like make some kind of change, with like police violence. So like, we went on basically a march, I guess. We went to a precinct. And then we just stood there with posters, some of us laid on the ground, you know. We stayed there for a while... It kind of made me feel like maybe what I'm doing may change something, you know. Maybe people are going to start seeing what we did as, you know, something important."

--Angela, 11<sup>th</sup> grade, Leadership High School




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### Change the World Projects

- “Some of the seniors had to make a Change the World project in order to graduate, and their project was like make some kind of change, with like police violence. So like, we went on basically a march, I guess. We went to a precinct. And then we just stood there with posters, some of us laid on the ground, you know. We stayed there for a while... **It kind of made me feel like maybe what I’m doing may change something, you know. Maybe people are going to start seeing what we did as, you know, something important.**”

--Angela, 11<sup>th</sup> grade, Leadership High School




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### Change the World Projects @ Leadership HS

- “I feel like the twelfth graders are...teaching us their ways so that we’re able when we get to twelfth grade to have a Change the World project that actually means something.”

--Socorro, 9<sup>th</sup> grade




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### Social Action at the Mendell Elementary




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# OUR BOOK PROJECT

This year, first graders took agency by creating and implementing a plan to diversify the guided reading book collections in our classroom libraries.



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## STEP 1: IDENTIFYING THE GAPS

First graders worked together to inventory the guided reading books in our classrooms. We made observations about who was represented and whose voice was left out of our book sets. Students were very engaged in this process and excited to sort the books in our classroom libraries. In doing so, we realized that not all voices were equally represented.



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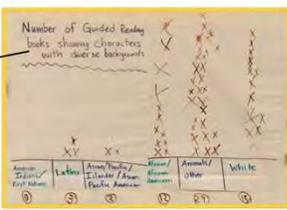
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## STEP 1: IDENTIFYING THE GAPS



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### STEP 2: FINDING BOOKS TO FILL THE GAPS

Next, we examined different websites to determine the kinds of books we would like to fill the gaps we identified. Students enjoyed finding books that reflected the diversity we see in our school community on a daily basis.




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### STEP 3: CREATING OUR DONORS CHOOSE PROJECT

Then, we created a Donors Choose project to raise money for the books we hoped to buy!

**Seeing Ourselves in Books: Creating Diverse Classroom Libraries**  
 Inspire the growing students excited to explore their world and their classroom communities.

**My Needs**  
 I am looking for books that represent diverse backgrounds and experiences. I am looking for books that represent diverse backgrounds and experiences. I am looking for books that represent diverse backgrounds and experiences.

#### Where Your Donation Goes

ITEMS	COST	QUANTITY	TOTAL
The Princess & the Pea (Hardcover) (K-1)	\$1,000.00	1	\$1,000.00
The Princess & the Pea (Hardcover) (K-1)	\$1,000.00	1	\$1,000.00
More About! Medium Book: Reader (Hardcover) (K-1)	\$295.00	1	\$295.00
More About! Medium Book: Reader (Hardcover) (K-1)	\$295.00	1	\$295.00
More About! Medium Book: Reader (Hardcover) (K-1)	\$295.00	1	\$295.00




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### STEP 4: CELEBRATION - WE ARE FULLY FUNDED!

First graders shared the project with family and friends. We received donations from several Mendell families (Thank you!) as well as anonymous donors. In early March, we celebrated - our project was fully funded!

#### Project Activity

Thank you all so much for your generous donations and kind words of support. Our first graders will be excited to learn that this project has been fully funded! We're all looking forward to enjoying these new books together. We truly appreciate your generosity and care! Thank you all so much. Let's be sure to send updates once these materials arrive in our classroom!

With gratitude,  
 Ms. Mendell

Good news: Project fully funded!




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### STEP 5: SAYING THANK YOU!

Shortly before school closed, students took time to make thank you notes to share with all of our donors.



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### IMPACT FOR FUTURE FIRST GRADERS

These new books will arrive at the Mendell when school reopens. While the current first graders will have moved up to Grade 2 by then, they leave behind an amazing collection of diverse books for future first graders. What an amazing legacy! Our K2, K1, and K0 friends will all have opportunities to see themselves in guided reading books because of this project and this class!



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### Real World Assignments @ Community Academy



"I feel like it gives us a voice cause we're writing letters to the senators and representatives, and I feel like if we send out those letters, that it would make some type of improvement to what's happening."  
--Dana, 9<sup>th</sup> grade

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### Social Action

- What practices for engaging students in social action do you already use within your classroom or school?
- What ideas got sparked for you by these social action practices in our slides?
- What questions do you have about engaging students in social action?

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### Keep Learning, But Don't Wait!

- "Even though I still have room to grow, I also understand that I cannot wait for perfection to teach for equity and justice. This work is simply too urgent."  
--Cami Touloukian, elementary educator



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### Thank you!

- Prof. Scott Seider
  - [seider@bc.edu](mailto:seider@bc.edu)
  - @scottseider



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