

Washington University in St. Louis

Washington University Open Scholarship

Spring 2017

Washington University
Senior Honors Thesis Abstracts

Spring 2017

Critical Dialogue as Standard Practice: Exploring Identity Politics and the Impact of Social Justice Education on St. Louis Area High School Students

Lucy Chin

Washington University in St. Louis

Follow this and additional works at: https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/wushta_spr2017

Recommended Citation

Chin, Lucy, "Critical Dialogue as Standard Practice: Exploring Identity Politics and the Impact of Social Justice Education on St. Louis Area High School Students" (2017). *Spring 2017*. 18.

https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/wushta_spr2017/18

This Abstract for College of Arts & Sciences is brought to you for free and open access by the Washington University

Senior Honors Thesis Abstracts at Washington University Open Scholarship. It has been accepted for inclusion in Spring 2017 by an authorized administrator of Washington University Open Scholarship. For more information, please contact digital@wumail.wustl.edu.

CRITICAL DIALOGUE AS STANDARD PRACTICE: EXPLORING IDENTITY POLITICS AND THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION ON ST. LOUIS AREA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Lucy Chin

Mentor: Bret Gustafson

For the past 25 years, NCCJSTL's Anytown Youth Leadership Institute has offered a meaningful opportunity through which high school students are able to dialogue across differences and explore their personal identities in relation to contemporary social justice issues. The eight-day residential training program combines facilitated dialogue and experiential learning to encourage self-reflection, ultimately, empowering students to be agents of change in their own communities.

Over the summer, I worked as a program Facilitator at Anytown. I led educational activities for the students and coordinated small and large group discussions. Additionally, I tracked student learning and insight through semi-structured interviews and a mixed method survey administered before and after their camp experience. These methods informed my thesis research, which presents the salient themes and takeaways of camp as articulated by the student participants including simultaneous feelings of concern and excitement for reintegrating their newfound social justice knowledge into their own communities, realizations about the expansive and intersecting nature of social justice issues, and challenging perspectives that arose out of new relationships with students from distinct and diverse backgrounds. Supplementary to analyzing the student insight, this study also analyzes the format of Anytown in order to understand how the camp fosters specific norms and learning objectives. By examining the relationship between camp infrastructure and student experience, I hope to demonstrate the importance of the choices made by camp administrators and illuminate how camp environments actively affect student learning. Ultimately, socialization around one's identity is informed by a number of direct and indirect factors. Though impermanent and somewhat limited in their scope, Anytown can play a crucial role in exposing students to new thought process and shifting their previous socialization experiences, which undergirds the broader relevance of this study.