

## 60-Second SoTL

### Episode 38 – Participation in Classroom Discussions

(Piano Music)

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#### **Jessie L. Moore:**

How do students' and instructors' identities influence students' participation in class discussions? That's the focus of this week's 60-second SoTL from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning. I'm Jessie Moore.

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(Piano Music)

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In "Participation in Higher Education Classroom Discussions: How Students' Identities Influence Perspective Taking and Engagement," published in the open-access journal *Teaching & Learning Inquiry*, Crystena Parker-Shandal shares results from a survey of 152 students enrolled in an undergraduate program focused on social issues at a university in southern Ontario, Canada.

Her participants spanned students in their first year of study to students in their fifth year of study or above, and they anticipated pursuing careers in social work and related human services fields. Her questionnaire included 32 select-choice questions and 7 open-ended questions.

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Parker-Shandal highlights the benefits of student-centered classroom discussions for student learning, but she also identifies them as "risky pedagogy" when conversations focus on contextually contentious issues and given that many instructors do not pursue training in facilitating classroom discussions.

Parker-Shandal reports that:

- Most students report only minor participation in and minor enjoyment of classroom discussions, but students who engaged in them more also enjoyed them more.
- Students' identities, level of confidence, and preparedness influenced how they participated in classroom discussions.
- The identities of their peers and instructors also influenced their participation, sometimes guided by gendered stereotypes.

Published by the Center for Engaged Learning at Elon University

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- While the majority of students felt comfortable sharing personal experiences, approximately a quarter of the participants felt uncomfortable sharing personal experiences in class discussions. Some, for example, didn't want to be interpreted as representing all members of their minoritized identity, while others didn't want to disclose dissenting perspectives.

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Parker-Shandal also asked participants about conditions that would make them more likely to participate in classroom discussions. Approximately three-quarters of participants indicated that opportunities to participate in small group discussion first would enable them to engage more actively in classroom discussions.

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To learn more about this study, follow the link in our show notes to read this open access article and to review our supplemental resources for this episode.

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(Piano Music)

Join us next week for another snapshot of recent scholarship of teaching and learning on **60-second SoTL from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning**. Learn more about the Center at [www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org](http://www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org).

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