

# FACULTY FOCUS

## SPECIAL REPORT

# Diversity and Inclusion in the College Classroom



A MAGNA



PUBLICATION

# Diversity and Inclusion in the College Classroom

## Introduction

---

A fraternity member from the University of Oklahoma is videotaped chanting a racist song. At the University of Missouri, a slow response to racial slurs and graffiti fueled protests and led to the resignation of top administrators. At Bowie State University, a swastika was spray-painted on the Martin Luther King Jr. Communications Art Center. Other incidents on campuses ranging from Yale University and Ithaca College on the east coast to Claremont McKenna College in California, led to campus protests and calls for change.

All of this and more occurred in 2015, leading the *Washington Post's* Michael E. Miller to conclude “Whatever you call it, what’s clear is that unrest is spreading across American universities. One by one, campuses are lighting up with protests, demonstrations and — in a handful of cases — death threats, plunging the country into a broader debate about lingering racism more than half a century after the Civil Rights Act.”

To be sure, today’s college students are helping to shine a spotlight on race, cultural differences, and the need for more inclusive, respectful campuses. It’s no surprise that faculty play an important role.

***Diversity and Inclusion in the College Classroom*** features 20 articles from faculty teaching at a wide range of institutions throughout the United States and Canada. The articles tackle some of the trickiest challenges in creating an inclusive and respectful learning environment for a community of learners that is growing increasingly diverse.

Oftentimes, in order to truly embrace diversity and inclusion, instructors need to push themselves and their students outside their comfort zones. In *Overcoming Racial Tension: Using Student Voices to Create Safe Spaces in the Classroom*, Kyesha Jennings encourages readers to stop walking on eggshells and start stomping on them.

“The first step in supporting a more inclusive teaching and learning environment is embracing uncomfortable conversations and challenging the status quo... Walking on [eggshells] fails to provide students with the necessary tools to confront controversial issues, whereas stomping on them will directly address the issues going on with and around our students and help them navigate successfully.”

Likewise, in *Using Punk Rock to Invite Dialogues on Diversity and Inclusion*, Carlos P. Hipolito-Delgado writes, “[M]any undergraduate and graduate students [are] afraid or incapable of engaging in discussion about difference. Before engaging in dialogue about diversity and inclusion in the college classroom, one must create the appropriate space.”

To create a classroom culture that values diversity, Kentina R. Smith implements inclusive practices that model respect. In *Teaching and Learning “Respect” and “Acceptance” in the Classroom*, she outlines her D.E.E.P. model, which stands for developing appropriate language use, encouraging open and honest dialogue, empowering students to share without ridicule, and processing information shared by reconnecting it to course content.

Whether you need help managing difficult conversations and responding to “hot moments” or creating a more inclusive curriculum and incorporating culturally responsive teaching and learning practices, this 38-page special report is loaded with practical assignments and hard-hitting advice.

Mary Bart  
Managing Editor  
*Faculty Focus*

# Table of Contents

---

Managing Hot Moments in the Classroom: Concrete Strategies for Cooling Down Tension .....	4
Seven Bricks to Lay the Foundation for Productive Difficult Dialogues.....	6
Activities for Building Cultural Competencies in Our Students and Ourselves.....	7
Overcoming Racial Tension: Using Student Voices to Create Safe Spaces in the Classroom .....	9
Managing Microaggressions in the College Classroom.....	10
Classroom Tools to Defuse Student Resistance.....	12
#CharlestonStrong: Continuing the Diversity Conversation and Healing Process.....	14
Microaggressions and Microresistance: Supporting and Empowering Students .....	15
Teaching and Learning ‘Respect’ and ‘Acceptance’ in the Classroom.....	17
Using Punk Rock to Invite Dialogues on Diversity and Inclusion .....	19
Creating an Inclusive and Respectful Classroom Environment.....	21
Inclusive Assessment: Equal or Equitable? .....	22
Creating a Culture of Inclusion in the Online Classroom .....	24
Three Ways to Create a Safe and Supportive Learning Environment.....	25
Set-Create-Reflect: An Approach for Culturally Responsive Teaching .....	27
Introducing Computer Science Majors to (the Lack of) Diversity and Inclusivity.....	29
Diversity is a Foundational Value, Not an Added Value .....	30
Building a Collegial Classroom Across Cultures .....	32
Facilitating Spiritual Competence through Culturally Responsive Teaching.....	33
Establishing a Classroom Culture of Diversity and Inclusivity: One Instructor’s Viewpoint.....	35

# Managing Hot Moments in the Classroom: Concrete Strategies for Cooling Down Tension

BY TASHA SOUZA, PhD

**W**e've all experienced that moment in the classroom when the tensions run high and the air feels as if you could cut it with a knife. How we respond can shift the communication climate from supportive to defensive, which can have an adverse effect on student learning and comfort (Dallimore, et al., 2005; Souza, et al., 2010). Despite the feelings of paralysis that tend to come during hot moments in the classroom, certain practices can be implemented to increase the likelihood of maintaining a supportive climate. The following strategies are not exhaustive, nor will they be appropriate for all faculty or all courses. The strategies offered are meant to be reflected upon, modified, utilized, and evaluated so that faculty can be better equipped to effectively respond to hot moments and, as a result, move out of paralysis.

What are some strategies faculty can use when a comment has been made that causes a negative reaction? Regardless of whether you or a student were the source of the comment, it is important to view the challenge as a teachable moment and an opportunity for you, and others, to learn. Allow silent time for reflecting and for collecting your thoughts; silence can have a cooling-off effect. Asking everyone to take a couple of minutes to write down their thoughts may be appropriate as well.

Be aware of your nonverbals as well as those of students. Even though you may be surprised or shocked, express curiosity instead of judgment. Inquire about students' nonverbals that could be harmful to the communication climate (e.g., loud exhalation, clinched fists). Acknowledge emotions, as neglecting to do so can make it difficult for students to listen and understand others (Sue, 2005; Sue, 2015).

## Communication framework

When someone is clearly offended by a comment, inquire about what led to the offense. "What does that comment bring up for you?" "Please help me understand where you are coming from." If it's a discussion-based course in which students feel comfortable with one another and the offended student seems like he/she would be responsive, this can be done during the discussion as a group. Consider using a communication framework, such as Open The Front Door to Communication (OTFD).

The OTFD steps (adapted from The Excellence Experience, 2015) are:

- Observe: Concrete, factual observations of situation
- Think: Thoughts based on observation (yours and/or theirs)
- Feel: Emotions using "I statements"
- Desire: Specific request for desired outcome

*Example:* "I noticed (Observe) the volume of some people's voices rising. I think (Think) there were some strong reactions to what was said. I feel uncomfortable (Feeling) moving forward with the discussion until we explore this. I am hoping some of you can share (Desire) what you are thinking/feeling right now so we can have a conversation and learn from each other."

If students make blatantly inappropriate remarks, consider the following steps below (adapted from Obear, 2010):

1. Clarify what you heard. "I want to make sure I heard you correctly. Did you say..."
2. If they disagree with your paraphrase, you could move on. If you suspect they are trying to "cover their tracks," consider making a statement about the initial comment. "I'm glad I misunderstood you, because such comments can be..."
3. If they agree with your paraphrase, explore their intent behind making the comment. "Can you please help me understand what you meant by that?"
4. Explore the impact of the comment. "What impact do you think that comment could have on..."
5. Share your perspective on the probable impact of comments of this nature. "When I hear your comment, I think/feel..." "That comment perpetuates negative stereotypes and assumptions about..."
6. Ask them to rethink their position or change their behavior. "I encourage you to revisit your view on X as we discuss these issues more in class." "Our class is a learning community, and such comments make it difficult for us to focus on learning because people feel offended. So I'd like you to please refrain from such comments in the future. Can you do that please?"

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5 ►

## Common ground

If a student is hostile toward you, you have options. Ask yourself if you've done anything to contribute to the hostility, and own it. Try not to take attacks personally or become defensive, and keep the focus on learning (yours and students). It's useful to find common ground ("I know we both care deeply about...") without changing the nature of the issue. Consider using OTFD. Acknowledge student emotions (e.g., "I understand you're upset"), and convey your interest and concern to the student. Recognize that students are coming into the classroom with their own histories and issues (Warren, 2011). If appropriate, ask the other students to do some writing on the topic while you check in with the student who is upset.

If the situation escalates, remain calm and seek to regain control of the setting by requesting compliance from the student in concrete terms (e.g., "Please sit in your chair"). If the student refuses to comply, remind him/her of ground rules and the student code of conduct. If the student continues to refuse to comply, leave the academic setting to call for assistance. If a student is violent or threatening, remove yourself and instruct others to remove themselves from the situation, and summon campus police.

When hot moments ignite in the classroom, it is important to engage thoughtfully and purposively in strategies that maintain a supportive communication climate. Managing hot moments is a complex endeavor, and it is our responsibility to maintain a climate that is conducive to learning by not adding fuel to the fire.

## References:

Dallimore, Elise J., Julie H. Hertenstein, and Marjory B. Platt. "Faculty-Generated Strategies for "Cold Calling" Use: A Comparative Analysis with Student Recommendations." *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching* 16, no. 1 (2005): 23-62.

Obear, Kathy. "How to Facilitate Triggering Situations." November 14, 2010. Accessed August 12, 2012. <http://2010-2012slflc.bgsu.wikispaces.net/file/view/Obear.How+to+facilitate+triggering+situations.pdf>

Souza, Tasha J., Elise Dallimore, Brian Pilling, and Eric Aoki. "Communication Climate, Comfort, and Cold-Calling: An Analysis of Discussion-Based Courses at Multiple Universities." In *To Improve the Academy: Resources for Faculty, Instructional, and Organizational Development*, edited by Linda B. Nilsen and Judith E. Miller, 227-40. Vol. 28. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010.

Sue, Derald W. "Racism and the Conspiracy of Silence: Presidential Address." *The Counseling Psychologist* 33, no. 1 (2005): 100-14. doi:10.1177/0011000004270686.

Sue, Derald Wing. *Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence: Understanding and Facilitating Difficult Dialogues on Race*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2015.

"THE EXCELLENCE EXPERIENCE." Learning Forum SuperCamp. Accessed February 27, 2015. <http://www.supercamp.com/OTFD.aspx>.

Warren, John T. "Reflexive Teaching: Toward Critical Autoethnographic Practices of/in/on Pedagogy." *Cultural Studies Critical Methodologies* 11, no. 2 (2011): 139-44. doi:10.1177/1532708611401332.

*Tasha Souza is the associate director of the Center for Teaching and Learning and a professor of communication at Boise State University. ■*

# Seven Bricks to Lay the Foundation for Productive Difficult Dialogues

BY ANNIE SOISSON, EdD

There are three basic ways that I hear faculty talk about difficult dialogues—in-class dialogues that were planned but did not go particularly well; in-class hot moments that were not anticipated and that the faculty member did not feel equipped to handle; and difficult dialogues that happen during office hours or outside of class.

In all three instances, faculty are challenged to use skills they may not have learned at any point in their disciplinary training. That lack of skill can actually cause them great angst, and in the most extreme situations, cause them to avoid addressing important issues directly. This is not to anyone's advantage, and many learning opportunities can be lost. In this article, I will focus on the first of these three instances. If challenging dialogues are to be an important part of a course, it is essential to develop, beginning the first day of class, the environment and skills that will allow you to capitalize on difficult dialogues as effective learning opportunities.

1. Think ahead about what topics you are teaching and whether hot moments might be triggered. If it is a course you have taught before, chances are you know when these moments might happen. Plan for structuring those moments intentionally. Are there readings that honor multiple perspectives on the issue? Are there opportunities to have students adopt perspectives that may not be their own? What skills do students need to be able to successfully engage in the discussion?
2. Know and communicate the learning goals and the connection to the course overall for each potentially hot topic. Keeping the focus clear for the conversation affords the opportunity for you or students to redirect if the conversation strays, and to embed the learning in the structure of the course. There are many ways to structure conversations that are not a free-for-all or win-lose scenario. What kinds of questions could you pose that would most effectively help students meet the learning goals? What conversational structure would best help you meet those goals? You will find many concrete suggestions for a variety of ways to conduct conversations in Brookfield and Preskill (2005).
3. Build community, trust, and a supportive climate. Often overlooked is the understanding that the relationships students have in the classroom with each other and

with you need to be created intentionally and nurtured. On the first day, introductions can be shaped to be a little more personal than just names and majors while not being intrusive. Depending on the size of the class, you may choose to have students talk in small groups, or as a whole group. Scaffold activities to foster relationships among students each week. Model the kinds of behaviors you would like to see.

4. Have a [statement on your syllabus](#) about the environment you hope to create together. Describe your expectations and how you would like students to approach the class. For example: "I want to take a moment to clarify how I want you to approach the readings. The first rule is: Don't take the readings as gospel. Just because something is printed doesn't make it absolute truth. Be critical of what you are reading. I have chosen many readings precisely because they are provocative. If you find yourself strongly disagreeing with a reading, that's fine. I encourage strong disagreement. However, if you disagree, you must clarify in your mind the reasons and evidence upon which you are basing your disagreement. At the same time, keep an open mind. Listen to what the readings have to say. Think about what other experiences you have had and readings you have done that might corroborate the course readings. Give yourself time to reflect on the information, insights, and perspectives offered in the readings" (Sulk and Keys, 2014).
5. Create shared goals and guidelines for dialogue and post them. You may have a few of your own to add at the end, but let students generate their own list first. This gives them ownership, and the collective generation lets them discover shared values. One of my favorites to add is "look for the truth in what you oppose and the error in what you espouse" (Nash, 2008).
6. Help students develop skills for productive conversation as part of the learning. Use active listening and perspective-taking exercises. In Western society, argument is often the mode of conversation. We frequently expect that students will be able to address challenging issues devoid of passion (and if you go to faculty meetings, you know that even we are not always good at this). Skills like paraphrasing, summarizing, and building on

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7 ▶

each other's thoughts need to be consciously taught, modeled, and practiced in the classroom in order to support successful difficult dialogues.

7. Start early in the course with lower-stakes conversations, and build to more difficult ones. This gives students the opportunity to build trust, and gives you time to help them develop their skills. Vary the types of questions—perhaps use some hypothetical questions like, “What would happen if...” “In a perfect world...” Or experience-based questions such as, “In your experience...?” Or opinion-based questions like, “What do you think about...?”

## References:

Online book: Start Talking: A Handbook for Engaging Difficult Dialogues in Higher Education

<http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/cafef/difficultdialogues/upload/Start-Talking-Handbookcomplete-version.pdf>

Brookfield, S.D., & Preskill, S. (2005). *Discussion as a way of teaching: Tools and techniques for democratic classrooms*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Nash, R.J. (2008). *How to Talk About Hot Topics on Campus*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Sulk, G. and Keys, J. (2014). “Many students really don’t know how to behave!”: The syllabus as a tool for socialization. *Teaching Sociology*, 42 (2), 151-160.

Annie Soisson is associate director of the Center for the Enhancement of Learning & Teaching (CELT) at Tufts University. ■

# Activities for Building Cultural Competencies in Our Students and Ourselves

By MELISSA GOMEZ, EdD

“Who am I to speak about diversity and inclusion? I am a middle-aged white woman from an upper-middle-class family. I have been afforded numerous opportunities many of my students never have been, and possibly never will be, afforded. I am the picture of privilege.” This is what I told myself at times when the topics of diversity and inclusion came up. However, when you look at the racial/cultural makeup of most college campuses, if faculty “like me” do not broach the sensitive topics of diversity and inclusion, who will?

Therefore, when I was presented with the opportunity to creatively approach diversity and inclusion via a health disparities course, I saw this as an amazing, if not somewhat frightening, opportunity. The result has been both humbling and empowering for me personally. Health, inherently, is a very complex, dynamic, and enigmatic topic to begin with. When you then ask students to look at not only differences in health outcomes for various populations, but why those differences exist and are so pervasive, it becomes even more complicated. Why do some racial groups experience significantly poorer birth outcomes compared to other groups, particularly when there are no clear genetic/biological explanations? Why are rural residents at significantly higher risk of dying from a heart attack than urban residents? Why is the relationship between income

and health so tight? These are just some questions we address in our health disparities course, and underlying these important questions is the need for a foundational appreciation and understanding of our individual strengths, challenges, and historical perspectives. Here are a few guiding principles I have learned along the way to help students, and myself, get somewhat closer to bridging some significant gaps related to diversity and inclusion.

**Be a brave yet humble example.** In my class I ask students to investigate, question, and reflect on their own biases from a place of nonjudgment. Therefore, I must be willing to do the same and share the results of my personal inquiries. I must be brave enough to admit I may not fully understand and appreciate the challenges of many of the populations we discuss in this class. I must be brave enough to admit and investigate my own biases. I must be humble enough to recognize I will always have much to learn. I must set the example for approaching topics and situations that I am uncomfortable with from a place of compassion, a genuine desire to improve my own understanding, and an acceptance that I may not always get it right. What’s more, with the right intentions, I must not let the fear of getting it wrong keep me from trying.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8 ►

**Provide students the opportunity to investigate their own biases and/or cultural experiences from a place of nonjudgment.** Several times a semester I provide in-class opportunities for students to sit quietly, reflect, and respond in a private journal to some leading questions about the population, topic, or disparity we will discuss. I encourage them to approach the exercise as a witness, not a judge. They should not feel the need to be punished for acknowledging their own biases. Instead I encourage students to investigate their biases and look at them as opportunities to learn more about themselves and ways they may interact with their environment and fellow humans. Once ground rules have been established, as well as an environment of mutual respect, we often move on to discussing and sharing our biases and typical stereotypes. This includes breaking down those stereotypes that appear on the surface as well-intentioned, such as Asians are good at math, Mexicans are hard workers, Native Americans are very spiritual, and African-Americans are good athletes. This often leads to great discussions regarding the danger of lumping people together even with seemingly positive attributes. It is also interesting that rarely, when I lead this discussion, can a class come up with any positive stereotypes for white people.

**Emphasize that a collective response may not be appropriate for everyone identified with a particular “group.”** When discussing diversity/inclusion issues, I have found it is critical to introduce the concept of intersectionality, and how different aspects of identity and discrimination can intersect or overlap. There is an activity from the Australian Attorney General’s Department that I have incorporated into my courses. It introduces, via an interactive activity, the concept of intersectionality (which originated during the women’s rights era, highlighting the fact that many of the voices of the women’s rights movement were white and were not representative of black women and their experiences with discrimination and disadvantage).

To begin the activity, students are first provided a new “identity.” Examples include: refugee woman, 35, recently arrived from the Congo through the women-at-risk program; male, doctor, with two children; young boy, 14, who recently left home after confrontation with a physically abusive step-father. Once the students have assumed their new identities, they are asked to stand even in a line while statements are read aloud. Based

on the statements read and their identities, students can decide if the statement applies to their identity in a negative (step back), positive (step forward), or neutral (stay in place) way. It is interesting for students to see how quickly some parts of an individual’s social identity can lead to advantage or disadvantage. In just several statements, students visibly see the gaps between themselves and their classmates’ new identities—very rarely do they ever meet again in the middle. I view our job as faculty, in part, as one to help students become responsible citizens who will somehow find ways to bridge these gaps.

**Approach it from a competency perspective rather than a deficit perspective.** Introduce students to opportunities and tools that will help them continuously build cultural competency. In my field there is an excellent, free online course on developing cultural competencies in the health professions. This online course, developed and delivered by the Department of Health and Human Services, provides the groundwork for us to discuss what cultural competency “looks like” in our field of health care. Students engage in the course online, which includes a pre- and post-test. There are scenarios, video vignettes, discussion questions, and reflections. I also point out to students that just because they earned a certificate indicating they completed a cultural competency course, it does not mean they have suddenly arrived at this magic place of being culturally competent. There is no such place; it is a journey, not a destination, and one we are on together.

## References:

Australian Attorney-General Department, (2010), AVERT family violence: Collaborative responses in the family law system. *Intersectionality Exercise*. Retrieved from: <http://www.avertfamilyviolence.com.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2013/06/Intersectionality.pdf>

Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health, (2016), *Think cultural health: Culturally competent nursing care: A cornerstone of caring*. Retrieved from: <https://ccnm.thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/>

*Melissa Gomez is an associate professor in the Department of Health and Human Performance at Austin Peay State University. ■*



# Overcoming Racial Tension: Using Student Voices to Create Safe Spaces in the Classroom

By KYESHA JENNINGS

Since the election of President Barack Obama, America has been pushing a false narrative of a post-racial society. The continued killings of black and brown youth and heightened racial tension on college campuses prove this narrative is a myth. Race still matters. An academic setting, such as a college classroom, should create opportunities for students to engage with these topics in productive ways. The first step in supporting a more inclusive teaching and learning environment is embracing uncomfortable conversations and challenging the status quo. I refer to this as stomping on eggshells rather than walking on eggshells. Walking on them fails to provide students with the necessary tools to confront controversial issues, whereas stomping on them will directly address the issues going on with and around our students and help them navigate successfully. Michelle Alexander (2015) speaks to this point when she writes, “Today [students] receive little meaningful education about race and its continuing role in our society. Too often students feel discouraged from discussing race in the classroom . . . If we are ever going to overcome racial inequality in the United States, we first have to be able to talk about it, describe it and know what it is.”

In order to have comfortable and productive conversations around race and racism, students must feel supported *and* safe. In my classroom, I do not assume I know what “safe” in an academic setting means for my students; therefore, I facilitate a process that allows my students to collectively define what a safe space is to them. This process is particularly important before topics and units that touch on race-related topics, like our social justice unit on police brutality. As an African-American female instructor who teaches to a predominantly white audience, I find that in order for the conversation to be both effective and impactful, it is important the environment is safe for my students and me. Discussing race-related topics is often uncomfortable for students, and doing so in the presence of a black person often increases that discomfort. My emphasis in creating safe spaces is not simply to make students feel comfortable but to create inclusiveness so that both the instructor and students of all ethnicities can offer thought-provoking commentary.

## Using student voices

In order to create a safe space with my students, I typically proceed through the following steps. Students are provided the following directions to complete independently:

*Define the word safe. In your own words, what does it mean to be safe?*

*Define the word space. What is it? What does it look like?*

Next, I ask my students to engage with their peers to discuss and document their individual responses. I then prompt them to develop a collaborative definition for “safe space.” Below I have included the directions verbatim:

*Have a conversation with your surrounding peers about your definitions (place on chart paper).*

*After you have actively engaged in conversation, together, develop a definition for safe space.*

*(What does a safe space look like? What does it feel like? What are the requirements for you to feel safe in a particular space? What are the rules in this space?)*

I provide each group with chart paper, which they can then hang around the room. Using chart paper allows the students to display their answers on the board as well as visually identify any overlapping ideas/definitions. More importantly, thinking about the two terms separately emphasizes both the denotative meaning and the connotative power of each word. The following words or phrases often recur: *reassured, comfortable, free from harm, physical or mental protection, and secure.*

With my students’ group responses displayed on the board, I then facilitate an open discussion. The conversation is based directly on their responses. We unpack what it means to have mental protection in a classroom and explore various ways to feel secure. My primary intent is to encourage my students to think about the importance of being positioned in an environment where ideas can be exchanged and shared freely. Next, I pass out Post-it notes along with the following directions:

*Identify when you have felt comfortable sharing your ideas and questions in a class. What*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10 ►

*happened in those moments to help you feel comfortable? (Facing History, 2015)*  
*Identify when you have had ideas or questions but have not shared them. Why not? What was happening at those moments? (Facing History, 2015)*

The questions above were adopted from Facing History and Ourselves (2015), a nonprofit organization that provides resources for educators worldwide to address controversial topics, specifically in history courses. I then divide the board into two categories—Safe and Not Safe. The students then place their Post-it note responses accordingly. They are instructed to omit their names from the Post-it. This permits anonymous sharing of ideas. I then proceed to read aloud various responses, and each response serves as the foundation for discussion. Ultimately, we are creating safe spaces through our exploration of defining what a safe space is.

### Safe for students and instructors

The “Creating a Safe Space” activity cultivates a climate where all opinions are respected and students can demonstrate the ability not only to think critically, but also to connect the content discussed to a broader context. More importantly, the sense of community in

the classroom is strengthened through the process. My commitment to creating safe spaces has decreased tension in my classrooms, improving discussions and making the overall learning experience more enjoyable—even if my students don’t always agree with each other. Creating safe spaces directly supports and engages various pedagogies. For me specifically this includes social justice pedagogy, hip-hop pedagogy, and popular culture pedagogy. When entering an academic setting, the identities and experiences brought by students and instructor alike should not be ignored. Embracing such differences and seeking to learn from the uniqueness we offer enhances the learning experience for everyone (instructor included) and allows progressive, respectful dialogue to occur.

### References:

- Alexander, M. (2015) Teaching Tolerance. Retrieved from <http://www.tolerance.org/supplement/introduction-teacher-s-guide>
- Facing History and Ourselves (2015). Teaching Strategies: Contracting. Retrieved from <https://www.facinghistory.org/for-educators/educator-resources/teaching-strategy/contracting>

*Kyesha Jennings is an English and literature instructor at Danville Community College. ■*

## Managing Microaggressions in the College Classroom

BY GAYLE MALLINGER, PHD, JAY GABBARD, PHD, AND SAUNDRA STARKS, ED D

College students are increasingly diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, ability, religious/spiritual beliefs, immigration status, social and economic class, veterans’ status, and the intersections therein. However, microaggressions—subtle forms of prejudice and discrimination—continue to occur inside our classrooms. Although most faculty members are mindful of overt biases in the classroom setting, the recognition and management of microaggressions present more of a challenge. This article adds to the nascent literature on microaggressions in higher education by defining the multifaceted nature of microaggressions, discussing the damaging consequences of microaggressions for faculty and students, and examining various methods of effectively managing microaggressions in college classrooms.

Unlike overt prejudice and discrimination, microaggressions are defined as subtle verbal or nonverbal communications, intentional or not, resulting in harmful consequences to members of marginalized groups (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Sue and colleagues (2007) discuss three specific types of microaggressions. Microassaults are considered explicit derogatory attacks consciously meant to harm the intended target, such as a student’s use of the word “gay” as a pejorative. Microinsults are more covert and demean a person’s identity through rudeness and insensitivity. A microinsult, for example, would occur if a professor did not take the time to properly pronounce the first name of a student whose ethnicity differs from her/his own. Microinvalidations are messages that exclude or deny the individual’s statements, feelings, and/or experiences, such as a white

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11 ▶

professor's pronouncement about living in a "post-racial America" or claiming "color-blindness."

Although or perhaps because microaggressions are elusive, this vague form of prejudice has damaging effects on students. Nearly one-third of college students have experienced microaggressions (Boysen, 2012). Peers and professors can be perpetrators of these covert attacks. Smith and associates (2011) suggest that microaggressions create a hostile and stressful environment for college students. Due to the subtleties of microaggressions, recipients often doubt their own perceptions. Student victims of an unwelcoming classroom climate are at risk for psychological stress, decreased self-esteem, reduced participation, diminished academic performance, and decreased persistence (Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015).

Overall, the literature addressing overt and covert biases in college classrooms discusses student coping mechanisms. Although support from faculty and institutions is considered essential in buffering these negative effects, there is a dearth of literature regarding the effective management of microaggressions within the classroom environment. While professors may be tempted to ignore instances of bias, identification of microaggressions presents an opportunity to address difficult issues. Research suggests class discussions are effective in ameliorating the negative effects of microaggressions (Boysen, 2012; Sue, et al., 2011). Faculty can set the stage for facilitating difficult dialogues through the creation of a supportive culture. At the outset, educators must question assumptions they may hold about those different from themselves. Biases that affect perceptions and treatment of students should be challenged. For example, instructors might ask themselves, "Do I assume Asian-Americans are 'good students?'" "Do I tend to ask a lesbian-identified student to be the spokeswoman for all LGBTQ students?"

Statements defining respectful communication within the classroom setting should be included in syllabi. For example, educators could include the following statement: "Classroom discussions are designed for the expression of divergent viewpoints in a safe, nonjudgmental environment. Thus, all communication will be civil and respectful of diverse perspectives." Syllabi should also include definitions of prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination, and microaggressions. When designing course content, professors have a duty to vet the resources with regard to bias and to ensure the inclusion of multiple perspectives for each course topic. Are authors of multiple backgrounds represented in the selection of materials? Do the videos appropriately address the experiences of marginalized groups?

Professors are also charged with creating an inclusive

classroom community where students feel safe to express their views and are comfortable identifying and confronting subtle biases. One such way to facilitate student comfort is to initiate a "word watch"—identifying various terms used in common conversation that are considered microaggressions. Students and the instructor are charged with keeping a list of pejorative terms used within the classroom (Gabbard, Starks, Mallinger, & Lockett, 2013). The instructor first writes "Word Watch" on the board and begins listing, with the class, words that should be mindfully avoided. Students then analyze these expressions and present alternatives.

Recognition of microaggressions related to issues of power may also be enhanced through a class exercise teaching about the Oppression Olympics—the tendency of members of oppressed groups to compete with those in other oppressed groups (Martinez, 1994). The instructor writes "isms" on separate sheets of paper and adheres each to the wall. Students are asked to stand under the paper they believe has the most negative impact on members of each disenfranchised group. Students are then asked to discuss why they chose that particular "ism" and select a spokesperson to argue why that "ism" has the most negative influence. If no students stand under a particular "ism," the instructor should explain why this failure to acknowledge the "ism" has the most potential to harm. Students are then given an option to change where they stand. Once this is complete, the instructor discusses the concept of competition among individuals who are marginalized (Gabbard, et al., 2013) and how this rivalry among oppressed groups has the unintended consequence of helping those with privilege maintain their power.

Simple acknowledgement of biases is key, as lack of response may indicate tacit support of microaggressions. However, instructors should also assess the efficacy of responses. This may be accomplished through soliciting feedback from students (Boysen, 2012). Equally important, educators should continue to self-assess their understanding and awareness. A faculty consciousness-raising group can also be effective in providing support and sharing strategies to manage microaggressions.

## References:

Boysen, G. A. (2012). Teacher and student perceptions of microaggressions in college classrooms. *College Teaching*, 60(3), 122-129. doi:10.1080/87567555.2012.654831

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12 ►

Gabbard, W. J., Starks, S., Mallinger, G., & Luckett, R. (2013). Effective strategies for teaching diversity and cultural competency. Workshop presentation at the 10th Annual Teaching Professor Conference June 1, 2013 in New Orleans, LA.

Hotchkins, B. K., & Dancy, T. E. (2015). Black male student leaders in predominantly white universities: Stories of power, preservation, and persistence. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, 39(1), 30-44.

Martinez, E. (1994). Beyond Black/White: The racisms of our times. *Social Justice*, 20(1/2), 22-34.

Smith, W. A., Hung, M., & Franklin, J. D. (2011). Racial battle fatigue and the mis-education of Black men: Racial microaggressions, societal problems, and environmental stress. *Journal of Negro Education*, 80(1), 63-82.

Solorzano, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial

climate: The experiences of African American college students. *Journal of Negro Education*, 60-73.

Sue, D.W., Capodilupo, C.M., Torino, G.C., Bucceri, J.M. Holder, A., Nadal, K., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *American Psychologist*, 62, (4), 271-286. doi: 10.1037/0735-7028.39.3.329.

Sue, D. W., Rivera, D. P., Watkins, N. L., Kim, R. H., Kim, S., & Williams, C. D. (2011). Racial dialogues: Challenges faculty of color face in the classroom. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 17(3), 331-340. doi:10.1037/a0024190

*Gayle Mallinger is an assistant professor of social work at Western Kentucky University (WKU). Jay Gabbard is an associate professor of social work at WKU. Saundra Starks is a full professor of social work at WKU. ■*

## Classroom Tools to Defuse Student Resistance

BY CAROLYN IVES

While we instructors have good intentions when trying to integrate understanding of cultural diversity into our classrooms, many of our efforts can have the opposite effect of the one we desire. As a result, guilt and resistance can overshadow the goal of increased student awareness and understanding. Many of the negative student reactions can be lessened, however, with an increased emphasis on awareness of one's own identity and social location and a decreased focus on those of the other (those that are different from one's own or the dominant culture in one or more ways, such as race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, ability, etc.). As Kowal, Franklin, & Paradies (2013) explain, focusing on the other through cultural awareness training can actually lead to a false sense of mastery of another culture, which not only reinforces problematic power relationships, but can also grossly oversimplify the culture such training seeks to reveal.

### Power flower

In order to shift the emphasis from the other to the self, I like to use a number of different tools and strategies. One such tool is the power flower. For the purposes of this article, I will be referring to the version outlined on the University of Toronto Educational Activism site ([http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/edactivism/Activist\\_Resources/The\\_Power\\_Flower.html](http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/edactivism/Activist_Resources/The_Power_Flower.html)). Through the use of this tool, instructors can help students unpack their own

social locations, placing emphasis on the self rather than the other.

Although most websites that share power flowers offer slightly different flower graphics and instructions, they all serve a similar purpose: they allow the group to identify prominent features of the dominant culture, often focusing on what some perceive as social ideals; then students can examine those "norms" or "ideals" to see how many elements of the dominant culture figure into their own lives. For example, my classes may identify "white," "Christian," "affluent," "educated," "able-bodied," "heterosexual," and "healthy" as social norms or ideals based on their communities, and they would label each petal of the flower with one of those terms. Students would then individually determine how close they are to each of those norms to see where their social privilege exists—or doesn't, as the case may be. Results may or may not be shared, depending on the class and the purpose of the activity; the goal is to allow students to identify where they are privileged in their societies and where they are disadvantaged. In any case, the best discussion comes not necessarily from asking students to fill in their flowers with their own experiences, but often from the preliminary discussion about what their particular communities perceive as ideal. It's also interesting to see how ideals and norms shift from group to group.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13 ▶

## Triangle tool

After students have focused on their own social locations, they are better positioned to examine and discuss behaviors that may be identified as racist, sexist, homophobic, or discriminatory in another way. The tool I like to use for this purpose is the triangle tool (Lopes & Thomas, 2006). For the purposes of this article, I will be outlining a rather simplistic use of the triangle tool, but in conjunction with Lopes and Thomas's book (2006), the tool can also be used in more sophisticated ways to unpack and address complex issues; it essentially enables instructors to help students examine individual behaviors and discover their underlying systemic roots and causes without placing blame on individual people. The three points of an equilateral triangle each represent different levels of discrimination: the top point represents individual behaviors, that which we see; the two bottom points represent powerful, unspoken beliefs and systemic forces, laws, and structures that keep the beliefs in place. Finally, after exploring the three points of the triangle with students, instructors can guide students through an examination of the impacts of the behaviors and beliefs.

For example, if a student witnesses a homophobic remark, we can use the tool to unpack that remark and its impact:

- Individual behavior (top triangle point): homophobic comment
- Powerful, unspoken beliefs (bottom triangle point 1): homosexuality is wrong
- Systemic forces, laws, and structures that keep the beliefs in place (bottom triangle point 2): certain religious teachings and beliefs, laws that prevent same-sex marriage
- Impact: pain and suffering of homosexual individuals and couples, denial of spousal rights, estrangement from family members, sometimes even physical and emotional abuse

Students may (and often do) come up with many, many more answers for each category. The tool can be used to uncover many different levels of discriminatory behavior, from, for example, mild sexist comments in a meeting all the way to racially directed violence on the street. By asking the students to unpack these points of the triangle, the instructor can allow discussion to happen without judgment or blame, as students can then see that although all they witness is the individual behavior, there are larger social forces at work that perpetuate that behavior. Again, this realization often helps them understand that larger social change is necessary for social justice and equality, and it can be impacted by

individual acts, just as those acts can be influenced by the larger forces. Instead of feeling guilt and shame, students may feel empowered to seek positive change.

If used carefully and sensitively, these two tools may allow students to explore their own perceptions and beliefs in a safe environment that is free from judgment. Encouraging students to focus on their own social identities before approaching the other identities facilitates their realization that their own experiences may be markedly different from those of others, even others within their own communities. Asking them to then look at specific individual behaviors without personalizing them or placing blame solely on an individual can also help them understand some of the larger social forces underlying individual acts—as well as some of the impacts of those forces and behaviors. Through this examination, which can often be enlightening for students, instructors can encourage students to carefully consider their own values, ethics, and actions. This increased self-awareness has the potential to be a first step toward initiating positive social change.

## References

Kowal, E., Franklin, H., & Paradies, Y. (2013). Reflexive antiracism: A novel approach to diversity training. *Ethnicities*, 13(3), 316-337. doi:10.1177/1468796812472885

Lopes, T., & Thomas, B. (2006). *Dancing on live embers: Challenging racism in organizations*. Toronto, ON: Between the Lines.

University of Toronto OISE Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. (2012). The Power Flower: Reflection on our Social Identities. Retrieved from University of Toronto OISE Educational Activism site: [http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/edactivism/Activist\\_Resources/The\\_Power\\_Flower.html](http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/edactivism/Activist_Resources/The_Power_Flower.html).

Special thanks to Evelyn Hamdon from the University of Alberta and Elizabeth White-MacDonald, Margaret Milner, and Alissa Overend from MacEwan University for introducing me to these tools.

*Carolyn Ives is a curriculum planning and development coordinator in the Centre for the Advancement of Faculty Excellence (CAFÉ) at MacEwan University in Edmonton, AB, Canada. Prior to this appointment, she was a full-time faculty member in MacEwan's English Department. She is interested in integration of ethical elements, such as diversity, sustainability, and academic integrity, into curricula. ■*

# #CharlestonStrong: Continuing the Diversity Conversation and Healing Process

BY JENNIFER BRADLEY AND MARLA ROBERTSON

**D**iversity conversations are essential; however, conducting these conversations is not always easy. Even the most experienced tenured faculty, those who have spent years in the classroom, have expressed anxiety and apprehension when it comes to talking about predominant issues, topics, or events relating to diversity. The sense of unease is intensified by recent traumatic events relating to racial disparity.

So why is it so important, regardless of specific discipline, to be able to have a constructive conversation with our students about diversity? Why take on yet another responsibility outside our immediate discipline? Because these discussions just might lead students to understand perspectives, experiences, and opinions other than their own. Students might walk away from these discussions motivated to help their communities improve race relations and social injustices. Perhaps these discussions will prevent another incident in which lives are lost.

Mother Emanuel AME Church is located two blocks from the College of Charleston campus. The murderous rampage that took place on June 17, 2015, killed nine outstanding citizens who were pillars of the Charleston community. Mother Emanuel AME Church, and specifically Cynthia Hurd, worked closely and influenced multiple areas of study at the College of Charleston; Hurd served as a part-time librarian at the College for many years. As our community continues to heal and move forward, it is our responsibility as faculty, staff, and students at the College of Charleston to continue the diversity conversations and discussions to ensure and enhance understanding, acceptance, and unity among people from different races, cultures, beliefs, and lifestyles.

## Peer-led discussions

First-Year Experience peer facilitators (PFs) are faculty nominated students who have been trained to conduct weekly seminars for first-year students throughout the semester. These seminars are connected to First-Year Experience courses or Learning Communities taught by a roster of faculty. PFs cover a host of topics commonly associated with students successfully transitioning from high school into higher education, both academically and socially. One of the topics has always been diversity; however, after the Mother Emanuel murders, the Peer Education leadership at the College determined that PFs

need to incorporate diversity discussions (formally and/or informally) throughout the semester, in addition to the specific lesson.

Numerous faculty, including the director of the First-Year Experience program, Chris Korey, acknowledge the benefit of having trained peer leaders engage in difficult conversations with students. He adds that peer leaders have a unique perspective on current issues associated with race, relative to faculty.

The revised PF training incorporated the Intergroup Dialogue (IGD) model that was developed and refined at the University of Michigan's Program on Intergroup Relations. It's the most effective model for PFs to use in difficult discussions that may challenge ideology and concepts. Their main focus throughout this process is to implement a level of comfort with uncomfortable topics.

The first step for the PFs was to mentally and emotionally prepare to facilitate effective conversations with their students. This meant that they had to do a significant self-evaluation of their own limitations and biases. This type of critical introspection involves "students examining and understanding their own perspective and experiences, and those of other students in the dialogue, through the lens of privilege and inequality" (Maxwell, Nagda, & Thompson, 2011). They not only had to become connected to their personal narratives in a way that allowed them to see the gaps in their experiences when addressing discrimination and prejudices, but they also had to allow their narratives to become teaching tools to help others share and address their own stories and encounters. Oftentimes, this is a place where conflicting ideas arise, and the need to talk through those ideas is essential to the progression of the dialogue. Despite the negative connotation of conflict, PFs were taught that conflicts arising in a conversation are "not [to be] taken as a sign of failed dialogue; rather, they are opportunities for deeper learning" (Nagda & Gurin, 2007).

Once the PFs understood their complex roles in the IGD model, the next step was to create parameters that encouraged candid discussion about the effects of the massacre on students and how that may be amplified on a predominantly white campus. They were trained to explicitly discuss the anticipated conflict and the uncomfortableness that can arise, and encourage their

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15 ▶

students to name what's needed from their peers to help create a safe environment for learning. This task allowed the participants to name what makes them feel liberated enough to make connections with others who have differing perspectives. The PFs would also urge their students to let themselves be pushed out of their comfort zones during conversations in which they felt challenged or uneasy. In that same respect, the PFs understood that they would encounter similar challenges when discussing issues they may not be particularly knowledgeable about or that may carry an emotional charge.

One of the most important benefits of IGD is it creates a "democratic space for mutual learning of all participants. Peers as facilitators actualize this democratic, multicultural arena...[minimizing] hierarchy," making the environment the responsibility of all those who participate (Maxwell, Nagda, & Thompson, 2011).

## Social justice

What we as educators gain from preparing an environment most conducive to meaningful dialogue are tools and resources to do the work for social change and equality, and that starts with talking to one another. Although the current climates of our nation and on our campuses may not be where we'd like them to be, it is important to discuss tragedies like the Mother Emmanuel massacre in a way that promotes connection and growth instead of driving separation and creating silence.

Our PFs understand that one of the many far-reaching effects of facilitating classroom conversations that

bring us together through our differences is creating a "democratic living not just politically but personally... [empowering] students to know and to learn, to care and to act, and to be and to interact in more socially just ways in the world" (Nagda & Gurin, 2007). This approach significantly complements the ideology of a liberal arts education and makes our students not only more equipped to have the difficult conversations and do the hard work of social justice in their academic careers, but also make substantial changes in the world around them.

## References:

- Maxwell, K., Nagda, B., & Thompson, M. (2011). *Facilitating Intergroup Dialogues: Bridging Differences, Catalyzing Change*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.
- Nagda, B., & Gurin, P. (2007). Intergroup dialogue: A critical-dialogic approach to learning about differences, inequality and social justice. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 111, 35-45.

*Jennifer Bradley is the assistant director of Peer Education, and an instructor for Learning Strategies at the College of Charleston in Charleston, S.C.*

*Marla Robertson is a staff advisor and diversity liaison at the College of Charleston. She is a founding member of the Transformative Teaching Collective, which is a worker-owned cooperative that promotes social justice education in the South Carolina Lowcountry and beyond. ■*

# Microaggressions and Microresistance: Supporting and Empowering Students

BY FLOYD CHEUNG, PHD, CYNTHIA GANOTE, PHD, AND TASHA SOUZA, PHD

In 1970, Chester Pierce, a professor of psychiatry at Harvard University, coined the word "microaggression" to describe relatively slight, subtle, and perhaps even unintentional "offensive mechanisms...as opposed to a gross, dramatic, obvious macroaggression such as lynching" (p. 266). Whereas Pierce originally used the term to name offenses relating to race, we now apply it to offenses targeting women, LGBTQ individuals, and others vulnerable on account of their minority or oppressed status. Such microaggressions can contribute to stereotype threat, which Claude Steele and others have shown can negatively affect students' learning and performance in academic

and other settings. Even seemingly small offenses like reminding women of the stereotype that they aren't mathematically inclined or black people of the stereotype that they aren't rational can put a "threat in the air" that leads to their decreased performance on tests and other measures of success (Steele, 2010, p. 5). Omissions can have a negative impact as well. For instance, not including female writers, LGBTQ scientists, and artists of color on a syllabus can signal to students from these groups that they don't belong and reduces their chances to thrive (Steele, 2010, p. 146).

As the diversity of our student populations continues

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16 ►

to increase, we must work harder to include all learners by raising our own awareness of microaggressions, preventing them whenever we can, and stopping them when they occur. Reading Claude Steele’s accessible and erudite *Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do* is an excellent start to raising awareness. Preventing microaggressions can begin with a reexamination of our own syllabi and teaching practices. Have we included a diverse range of scholars on our reading lists? Can we make women more visible by referring to authors not as B. D. Tatum but as Beverly Daniels Tatum? Are we really calling on everyone in class or are we unintentionally preferring some students? What practices might we consider adopting to combat our own unconscious biases, like grading anonymously or putting everyone’s ideas on the board (Cook-Sather, et al., 2014)?

### Practice microresistance

Stopping or addressing microaggressions when they occur in the academic context may be trickier, but as responsible leaders of developing learners, we ought to do something. We can practice and encourage our students to practice microresistances. According to Sayumi Irey, director of the Faculty Commons at Bellevue College, microresistances are “incremental daily efforts to challenge white privilege” as well as other kinds of privilege based on gender, sexuality, class, etc. They help targeted people “cope with microaggressions” (Irey, 2013, p. 36). When we, as teachers, intervene by practicing microresistance on behalf of our students, we do so not to “save” the underprivileged but because it is the right thing to do. This is a matter of social justice. Also, by choosing to practice microresistance, we are decidedly not giving up on macroresistance. It’s just that the revolution can be long in coming, and we—our students and ourselves—need to survive one day at a time. Furthermore, we can choose to calibrate a smaller or gentler response to suit a subtler or even unintentional offense.

How can we serve as allies to students experiencing microaggressions? What do we do when we witness students who are the targets of microaggressions? To some degree we can shield ourselves and our students by practicing forms of microresistance and ally behaviors when we see, or hear of, students targeted. We can give students tools to respond as well. Space limits our description of the many ways that microresistance can be practiced, but here are a few actions we can take ourselves and/or can encourage from our students.

### Increase personal and emotional strength by

- reminding yourself what you value (Steele, 2010, pp. 174-75);
- practicing self-care; as Audre Lorde wrote, “Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare” (Lorde, 1988, p. 131);
- taking power poses, especially before potentially stressful situations (Cuddy, 2012); and
- thinking about the “bigger fish you have to fry” (Madden & Gillespie, 2014, pp. 147-48).

### Increase social resources by

- building your network of mentors (Rockquemore, 2014)
- practicing gratitude (Wood, et al., 2008).

### Take A.C.T.I.O.N.

Speak up when microaggressions occur; doing nothing can do more damage than a less-than-perfect response.

The steps below provide a guide on how to take A.C.T.I.O.N. when you witness a microaggression.

- Ask clarifying questions to help you understand intentions. “I want to make sure that I understand what you were saying. Were you saying that...?”
- Carefully listen.
- Tell others what you observed as a microaggression in a factual manner. “I noticed that...”
- Impact exploration: ask for, or state, the potential impact of such a statement or action on others without putting the target of the microaggression, if someone else, on the spot. “What do you think people think when they hear that type of comment?”
- Own your own thoughts and feelings around the microaggression’s impact. “When I hear your comment, I think/feel...”
- Next steps: Request appropriate action be taken. “Our class is a learning community, and such comments make it difficult for us to focus on learning because people feel offended. So I am going to ask you to refrain from such comments in the future. Can you do that please?”

In this article we examined the ways we can practice forms of microresistance and ally behaviors when we see, or hear of, students targeted, and give them tools to respond as well. This focus on empowerment allows us to take action in our local academic environments, thereby lessening the impact on students when microaggressions occur.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17 ►



## References:

Cook-Sather, Alison, Bovill, Catherine & Felten, Peter (2014). *Engaging students as partners in learning and teaching: a guide for faculty*. Hoboken: Jossey-Bass.

Cuddy, Amy (Jun. 2012). Your body language shapes who you are, TED, [https://www.ted.com/talks/amy\\_cuddy\\_your\\_body\\_language\\_shapes\\_who\\_you\\_are?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are?language=en).

Irey, Sayumi (2013). *How Asian American women perceive and move toward leadership roles in community colleges: a study of insider counter narratives*, PhD Diss., University of Washington.

Lorde, Audre (1988). *A Burst of Light: Essays*. New York: Firebrand.

Madsen, William & Gillespie, Kevin (2014). *Collaborative helping*. Hoboken: Wiley.

Pierce, Chester (1970). Offensive mechanisms in *Black Seventies*, ed. Floyd Barbour, Boston: Porter Sargent.

Rockquomore, Kerry Ann (10 Feb. 2014). When it comes to mentoring, the more the merrier,” Chronicle of Higher Education, <https://chroniclevitae.com/news/326-when-it-comes-to-mentoring-the-more-the-merrier>.

Steele, Claude (2010). *Whistling Vivaldi: how stereotypes affect us and what we can do* New York: Norton.

Wood, Alex M. et al. (2008). The role of gratitude in the development of social support, stress, and depression. *Journal of Research in Personality* 42, 854-871.

Floyd Cheung is an associate professor and director of the Sherrerd Center for Teaching and Learning at Smith College. Cynthia Ganote is an associate professor and the director of faculty development at St. Mary's College of California. Tasha Souza is a professor and the associate director of the Center for Teaching and Learning at Boise State University. ■

# Teaching and Learning ‘Respect’ and ‘Acceptance’ in the Classroom

BY KENTINA R. SMITH, PhD

*“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” —Maya Angelou*

In today’s classroom, some students are very expressive and outspoken. In some cases, they’re respectful and informative; in other cases, offensive or disparaging. When I apply the Maya Angelou quote to student perceptions, I consider that every interaction, discussion, debate, and collaboration has the potential to impact how someone in the class feels. Each person brings to the class his or her own beliefs, experiences, and ways of behaving and interacting.

Diversity in the classrooms could include differences in:

- race;
- ethnicity;
- cultural norms;
- experience;
- age;
- language, dialect;
- socioeconomic status;
- family dynamics;
- educational/career aspirations, backgrounds;
- religious, political affiliations;

- sexual orientation;
- gender;
- physical appearance, attire; and
- physical abilities.

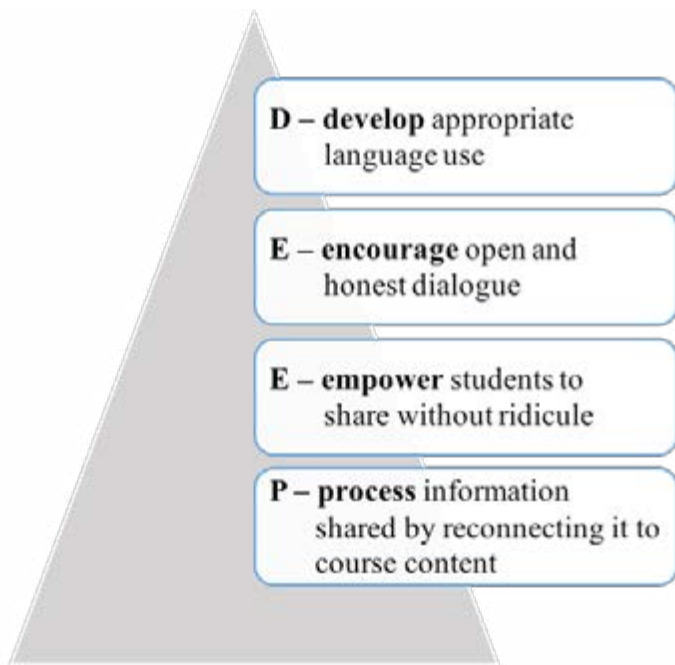
It is important that I reflect on and monitor my own behavior and how I might best model respect and acceptance of others in the classroom. It is also important that students learn how to monitor their actions and words.

## Build rapport

Develop rapport with students and use positive communication to help them connect and understand the ideas of others. In an article titled *Creating Positive Emotional Contexts for Enhancing Teaching and Learning*, William Buskist and Bryan Saville found that developing rapport in the classroom involves a combination of behaviors consistently implemented. To name a few, some of the strategies that I have used are to address students by their names, learn background information about the students and use relevant examples they can relate to, acknowledge student comments and questions with praise, and be respectful.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 ►

Teaching involves much more than the dissemination of course content; it involves interaction. There is always a chance that some topic or comment might spark debate as people share information, personal differences, insights, beliefs, or unique experiences. To encourage awareness and respect of others' viewpoints in the class, I incorporate strategies that I refer to as D.E.E.P. I establish communication expectations and a learning environment that enable students to feel included and valued.



## Think D.E.E.P.

**1. Developing appropriate language use** in the classroom means establishing clear communication expectations and modeling the standards I expect to observe between students.

*Inform* students that the class is a “judge-free zone” by avoiding statements that appear to judge or offend others such as “that’s dumb,” “you’re crazy,” or “you’re stupid if you believe...”

*Instruct* students to refer to others by name, not by labels or physical characteristics, by avoiding statements such as “that person,” “those people,” “the dude with the...” If educators have either a class size that is too large or a bad memory for names, have students take a sheet of paper and create their own name plate to sit on their desk.

*Collaborate* with students in the beginning of the semester to solicit feedback on a list of classroom

communication “dos and don’ts” or words and phrases they find personally offensive. Individuals know themselves better than anyone when it comes to what will offend them or make them feel excluded.

*Model* good listening techniques by not interrupting the speaker, and demonstrate appropriate ways of responding. Statements that help are “what I heard you say was...,” “I interpret that to mean...,” “in my experiences...,” “I hear your point of view, and this is my experience/understanding...”

**2. Encouraging open and honest dialogue** allows students to experience both similarities and differences between one another.

*Plan* opportunities for students to share their viewpoints and experiences using “think-pair-share” moments sharing in pairs, small groups, or large groups. When students have the chance to think independently, then run their ideas and views by a small group of peers first, they may be more likely to dialogue. This is also a good way to help shy students feel more comfortable and have a voice in the classroom.

For sensitive or controversial topics, you can offer opportunities for in-class responses to whole-group questions to be made anonymously. For example, hand out index cards or ask students to tear a sheet of paper in half (they can share the other half with a nearby classmate), and write down their response to your question. Collect, shuffle, and read the anonymous responses to the class.

**3. Empowering students to share without ridicule** means acknowledging that there will be differences in the classroom and that individuals are unique in varying ways.

*Intervene* immediately when students violate respectful communication expectations. Be direct and reiterate institutional expectations, student code of conduct, course policies, and the student self-reports on what they perceive as offensive or disparaging.

**4. Processing information shared by reconnecting it to course content** means making sure student discussions, viewpoints, and ideas are both valued and summarized in the context of a learning outcome or course objective.

*Acknowledge* the value of student contributions, even

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19 ▶

when there is disagreement. Provide research-based information that supports or validates student opinions and refutes misconceptions. Challenge students to reflect on how their beliefs or experiences and the experience of others are relevant to key ideas, themes, or topics in the course. Redirect discussions that veer off topic.

### Model respect

*“An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.” —Martin Luther King, Jr.*

According to Hart Research Associates’ 2015 report detailing employer expectations of college graduates’ skills, 96% of the employers agreed that students from all fields of study “should have experiences in college that teach them how to solve problems with people whose views are different from their own” (p. 4) and gain intercultural skills.

There are challenges in the classroom. I try to anticipate potential challenges to create a classroom culture that values diversity, and implement inclusive practices to build a community of learners that models respect and acceptance of differences.

Bottom line: Develop rapport and think D.E.E.P.

### References and suggested reading:

Buskist, W. & Saville, B. K. (2001). Creating positive emotional contexts for enhancing teaching and learning. *Association for Psychological Science Observer*, 14(3). Retrieved from <http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer/2001/march-01/rapport-build-ing-creating-positive-emotional-contexts-for-enhanc-ing-teaching-and-learning.html>

Hart Research Associates (2015). *Falling short? College learning and career success*. Washington, D.C.

Metropolitan Center for Urban Education (2008). *Culturally responsive classroom management strategies*. New York University: New York, NY. Retrieved from <http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/scmsAdmin/uploads/005/121/Culturally%20Responsive%20Classroom%20Mgmt%20Strat2.pdf>

Rajagopal, K. (2011). *Culturally responsive instruction. Create success!* Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/111022/chapters/Culturally-Responsive-Instruction.aspx>

*Kentina R. Smith is an assistant professor of psychology at Anne Arundel Community College. ■*

## Using Punk Rock to Invite Dialogues on Diversity and Inclusion

BY CARLOS P. HIPOLITO-DELGADO, PhD

Conversations on diversity and inclusion are not naturally occurring phenomena in higher education classrooms. Unfortunately, the American obsession with political correctness and the Eurocentric, depoliticized K-12 American educational system has left many undergraduate and graduate students afraid or incapable of engaging in discussion about difference. Before engaging in dialogue about diversity and inclusion in the college classroom, one must create the appropriate space.

Much has been written lately about the coddling of American undergraduates and their expectations of safety in the college classroom. But there is a big difference between safety and comfort. All students deserve safety in higher education—that is, freedom from being physically or emotionally accosted. No one deserves to be attacked because of their identity or beliefs. Comfort should not be guaranteed though. As we know from various learning and identity development theories, growth comes from

dissonance or times when your beliefs do not match lived experience. To ensure comfort in the classroom is to maintain the status quo. I tell my students that if over the course of the semester I do not make them furious at me or cause them to cry, I have not helped them grow.

The idea of creating space for dialogue around difference cannot be so intimidating that it causes folks to retreat. From the outset of the class, you want to create an environment that welcomes discourse and provides some challenge to the students.

### Deepening the conversation

My teaching style is heavily influenced by the Brazilian educator Paolo Freire. Freire advocated for elimination of the traditional classroom where the teacher is the “banker” or possessor of knowledge and deposits funds of information into the empty minds of students. It is

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20 ▶

hard to break from “the banking method of education” in a lecture hall or when students are stuck in fixed rows. Though these setups may be convenient for viewing a blackboard, they privilege the professor—making the “banker” the sole focus and leading to the expectation that the professor will deposit knowledge. To invite dialogue, try to find a way to ditch the rows and move into a circle or a “U” where students can more easily engage each other.

Further, Freire advocated for dialogue and inspiring critical consciousness in students—particularly those from oppressed groups. To invite dialogue and inspire critical thought, you must resist lecturing—especially on the first day. Once you start students down the path of PowerPoint presentations, it will be tough to engage them in any meaningful discussion. I have found what many might believe to be an unlikely ally in helping to set the tone for difficult conversations around diversity and inclusion: punk rock.

On the first day of class, I will ask students to close their eyes—I might even dim the lights in the classroom. I ask them to relax and listen to the words of the song that will be the metaphor for our class. Then I play “Room Without a Window” by Operation Ivy, the late ’80s punk/ska band from Northern California. Usually, the students are shocked: the song is fast, the lyrics are yelled, and the music is loud. Further, they don’t expect that a Chicano professor would listen to punk.

I ask students for their impression of the song and typically get blank stares. I then lead the class through a line-by-line analysis of the song. You will need to ask questions to guide the conversation and ask follow-up questions for rationale for or implications of students’ interpretations. This sets the tone for the class, the expectation of dialogue, and the importance of critical thought. Students might want to critique entire sections of the song at a time, but it is important to resist this until the line-by-line analysis is complete.

The line-by-line analysis is like a conversation around diversity and inclusion. Too often people become uncomfortable in these types of conversations and look for the quick solution, not taking time to understand the

complexity of thoughts and emotions being put forth. Without some discomfort, students will remain at a surface level in polite conversation, not uncovering the hidden systemic notions or the raw feelings, and not trying to detangle conflicting or seemingly unrelated notions. For dialogue around diversity and inclusion to be meaningful, students require extended time with these topics, insider perspectives into marginalization, understanding of systems of oppression, and time to process their feelings.

“Room Without a Window” is my disclaimer—that students will need to dig beneath the surface to practice critical thinking skills and that discussion is important for understanding diversity and inclusion. The song uses the metaphor of the mind as a “Room Without a Window,” closed to the opinions of others and entrenched in its own beliefs. Operation Ivy calls listeners to break out of their room without a view and to develop a more open and critical perspective. This last piece is particularly important to me, since only by being willing to listen and interact with others will students have successful dialogue on diversity and inclusion.

Numerous students have shared that they enjoyed this activity, that it made them excited about subsequent discussions and let them know that their voice would be valued in the class, and set a tone for deeper considerations of social systems of inequity. After this activity, I find that students are more willing to engage in the type of deep analysis that is required to understand systemic oppression and other important and difficult topics in our course. Additionally, students will begin to question me and each other—making for more rich and authentic dialogue. A student once shared that the song inspired her to examine her beliefs and find her “Room Without a Window” so that she could become a better ally to marginalized populations.

*Carlos P. Hipolito-Delgado is an associate professor in the counseling program at the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Colorado Denver. He is also the past president of the Association for Multicultural Counseling & Development (2014-15). ■*

# Creating an Inclusive and Respectful Classroom Environment

BY ANGELA PROVITERA MCGLYNN

Perhaps Jean Twenge's idea is true (Generation Me, 2006): that Gen Xers and millennials don't care as much about displaying courtesy as their parents and grandparents did when they were young, and perhaps this might increase incivility in the classroom. Or maybe it's the current culture—where prejudices and stereotypes and even overt racist, sexist, and heterosexist language and hate crimes are common—that contributes to lack of respect on many campuses. The causes are undoubtedly complicated and interwoven.

Whatever the causes, many faculty members have seen the rise of incivility on campus and in our college classes—often taking the form of intolerant remarks or culturally ignorant statements that are insensitive to their classmates and instructors at their least, and offensive at their worst. Yes, there are other behaviors that are disruptive to learning, such as student side conversations, use of cellphones in class, and the misuse of laptops, but it is the offensive remark that provides the “hot” moment that challenges us to transfer it into a teachable moment.

What can faculty do to help their students develop more tolerant and culturally sensitive understandings of the world and show respect for their teachers and classmates?

First and foremost, we need to create welcoming and inclusive classroom atmospheres. With diverse, heterogeneous populations of students in our classes, we need to create a sense of belonging and community. A host of studies have shown that a sense of belonging increases student academic success. (See Tinto (1998) and Frost (1999), to name just a couple of the seminal studies that have been followed by further supportive research.)

## Creating an inclusive classroom

This sense of belonging and community can go a long way toward reducing the chances of hot moments in the classroom.

College faculty can create an inclusive atmosphere by

- building rapport with students by talking with them before and after class, and by finding ways to get students to take advantage of office hours;
- getting students to engage with each other from the first day of class by learning a little about each other through culturally sensitive icebreakers; and
- fostering collaborative learning exercises with

small-group interaction of heterogeneous groups of students. (Even large lecture formats can lend themselves to creation of a smaller-group atmosphere with interspersed student-engagement exercises between mini-lectures.)

Some suggested icebreakers include the family name exercise or Penfield's “What's in a Name?” exercise designed to get classmates and teachers to learn names at the start of the course. Research and anecdotal evidence show that students believe it is very important for teachers to know their names. Social psychological research has shown that students who feel “known” are less likely to experience de-individuation, that is, a sense of feeling anonymous. Feelings of anonymity are correlated with increased incivility and aggression.

Other early semester icebreakers include

- having students interview each other and then introduce their partners to the class;
- asking students to work in groups of four to find commonalities and draw what they found they had in common using pictures and/or symbols, and then having each student tell the larger class one thing he or she found in common within the group;
- walking around the room to meet people;
- student self-disclosure exercises; and
- student written inventories that teachers read to get a better sense of who their students are.

When we see disruptive behavior among students, the cause is often anger, frustration, or insecurity. These students may not fully understand what's expected of them as college students, or feel doubtful about their ability to succeed. So in addition to creating a welcoming and inclusive classroom atmosphere where students feel like they belong to a community, teachers should make their course expectations, both academic and behavioral, crystal clear in their syllabi. This should be communicated in a strong yet nonauthoritarian way. We can even create written guidelines for courtesy and respect in the classroom and on campus. Asking for student input empowers students to take responsibility for their role in class, and thus encourages self-regulated learning.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 ▶

## Managing hot moments

Even with an inclusive classroom climate and clear expectations at the start of the semester with reminders throughout, students may still behave in ways that are insensitive, ignorant, and/or offensive. How should professors respond?

Obviously, how a professor handles a situation depends on what particular behavior is challenging the atmosphere of respect in the classroom. And while there may be many ways to handle classroom incivility, one thing is clear: faculty members cannot simply ignore it. That gives the offender and the rest of the class the impression that the offensive behavior is tolerated. Something must be said or done. However, the tone of response is critical in addressing the issue. It is never appropriate for the teacher, acting as role model, to display disrespect for the offending student. A delicate balancing act is necessary in which the teacher must find ways to address the behavior and have it stop, without the student feeling diminished.

One way to limit the chances of students spouting opinions that are offensive is to model analytical thinking in our teaching and ask students to be aware that when they speak, they should have evidence-based data to support their claims. If we make critical thinking one of the core aspects of our courses, there is less chance of spontaneous offensive remarks.

Despite our best efforts, if a student makes an insensitive or offensive remark, I have found that waiting a

few seconds while I take a deep breath is very helpful in formulating a response, and better still, the time allows other students to step in with their comments in helpful ways. If students' responses are not sufficient to transform the comment, our task is to reframe the statement with sensitivity so as to maintain the openness of class discussion while making it clear that the remark is misguided.

## References:

Frost, W.L. 1999. It takes a community to retain a student: The Trinity Law School model. *Journal of College and Student Retention: Research, Theory, and Practice*, 1(3), 203-224.

Penfield, J. 1998. *Respecting Diversity, Working for Equity: A Handbook for Trainers*. Arlington, MA: Joyce Penfield Associates.

Tinto, V. 1998. Colleges as communities: Taking research on student persistence seriously. *The Review of Higher Education*, 21(2), 167-177.

Twenge, j. 2006. *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled – and More Miserable Than Ever Before*. New York: Free Press.

*Professor Emeritus Angela Provitera McGlynn taught psychology for 35 years. She is currently an international consultant on teaching, learning, and diversity issues. ■*

## Inclusive Assessment: Equal or Equitable?

BY DONNA M. QUALTERS, PhD

**I**nclusive assessment often challenges our notion of fairness by asking us to think in terms of equity rather than equality. Shouldn't we be measuring students in the same manner if we are to be fair? That practice makes the assumption that all students are the same and therefore can be assessed the same way, an assumption we know has never been true. Reframing assessment to be more inclusive takes on greater importance when we hear student voices.

A recent survey of student perceptions conducted by Mark Chesler at the University of Michigan uncovered the following themes:

- **Faculty have low expectations.** Many students of color reported that faculty did not expect them to perform well in class.
- **Faculty do not understand that we are different.** Some students reported that they felt estranged and

even excluded by assumptions made by faculty about students in general that did not apply to them.

- **We are not all alike.** In contrast, some students experience being stereotyped or lumped together when they are not alike.

How can we address these concerns in our assessment practices to feel confident that we have measured all students in an equitable manner, and at the same time have been sensitive to cultural, economic, and social differences?

Here are some general principles to create student-centered inclusive assessment:

1. **Be flexible** by using a range of methods to respond to the diversity in the student body. Inclusive assessment provides opportunities for students to express their

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23 ▶

learning in different modes and modalities.

2. **Be clear** about your learning objectives, and ensure that students understand them and understand how the assessment will measure their progress toward those objectives.
3. **Be creative** and utilize a variety of assessment methods to measure student performance, and where possible use multiple measures.
4. **Be concerned with the collective** as well as with the individual. Inclusive assessments should measure both independent and group assignments.
5. **Be holistic** and remember that inclusive assessment occurs before, during, and after learning, the most important element being frequent targeted feedback.

Below are some suggested techniques and ideas that allow assessment to be a learning tool and give all students the opportunity to demonstrate their learning in ways that reflect differences.

#### **Inclusive assessment utilizes multiple and varied methods of student evaluation.**

- Final paper options
  - o Digital story—reflecting the goal of the course
  - o Short play or dialogue—on course topics
  - o Verbal exam—students record their answers
  - o Projects—students can construct a project that reflects the goal of the course
- Testing/quiz options
  - o Student-generated test questions
  - o Double-entry journals (entry 1, the ideas/entry 2, personal significance of the ideas)
  - o Audio protocol—students record talking through the process of solving a problem or answering a question
- Ongoing class assessment
  - o Background probe—short questionnaire at the beginning of a unit/topic to determine the appropriate level of instruction and student experience with the topic
  - o Minute paper—anonymous end-of-the-class question on unclear points
  - o Concept maps—diagrams the mental connections students are making about the course material

#### **Inclusive assessment holds high expectations for all students.**

- Distribute anonymous copies of students' written work from previous classes that range in quality, and ask students to rank the work and identify their reason for the ranking.
- Provide students with a checklist of criteria (rubric) that will be used to evaluate the quality of their work in whatever modality they choose to demonstrate learning.

#### **Inclusive assessment requires frequent feedback.**

- After feedback, students should be given the opportunity to practice that feedback in a follow-up assignment or activity.
- Feedback on progress should be given early in the term with multiple sources of data before midterm to help students determine their strengths and areas needing attention
  - o Classroom assessment techniques are invaluable tools for frequent feedback

#### **Inclusive assessment often uses a blend of quantitative and qualitative.**

- In mathematical/science-based courses—ask students to describe how they would solve a problem rather than just write the solution.
- In language arts-based classes—include short, objective test questions to understand student comprehension of the basic information that will influence their writing.

In summary, MacKinnon and Manathunga remind us that “culturally responsive assessment demonstrates that flexibility, choice and relevance...enable all students to choose subjects on the basis of desire to engage intellectually in the teaching and learning process.”

#### **Adapted from:**

Angelo, T and Cross KP (1993), *Classroom Assessment Techniques*, Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.

Chesler, Mark, Center for the Research on Learning and Teaching, University of Michigan. Occasional Paper #7.

Cuseo, Joe (2012), *Effective Culturally Inclusive Assessment of Student Learning and Academic Performance* in *Infusing Diversity and Cultural Competence into Teacher Education*. Quincy, MA: Kendall Hunt Publishing.

MacKinnon and C. Manathunga (2003). *Going Global with Assessment: What to do when the dominant culture's literacy drives assessment*. *Journal of Higher Education and Research*. Downloaded at Tufts, September 2015.

UC San Diego: [http://vcsa.ucsd.edu/\\_files/assessment/resources/50\\_cats.pdf](http://vcsa.ucsd.edu/_files/assessment/resources/50_cats.pdf)

Trinity College Dublin: <https://www.tcd.ie/CAPSL/TIC/guidelines/assessments/>

*Donna M. Qualters is the director of the Center for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching and an associate professor of community medicine and public health at Tufts University. ■*

# Creating a Culture of Inclusion in the Online Classroom

BY ANGELA VELEZ-SOLIC, PhD

If you teach in a face-to-face class, you get the benefit of using your eyes and ears to process differences. That is, you can see the nuances of skin color and eye shape; you can hear accents and linguistic variance when students speak. When you teach online, however, a lot of those stimuli are removed, and your students tend to be both faceless and voiceless.

That can change. It is possible to celebrate differences even in an online class! Before I move forward with the steps you can take, I'd like to mention an important detail to remember.

*Diversity is more than someone's ethnic background—it includes life experiences, disabilities, religion (or lack thereof), sexual orientation, language, and many more aspects.*

So with that clarification out of the way, if you are excited and enthusiastic about celebrating differences in your online class, start with policy. Create a diversity or inclusion policy, and put it in your syllabus. Make sure your students are aware of and accept it (in a syllabus quiz, for example). Here is my policy, which you are welcome to adapt for your courses.

*In this class I want all of my students to feel accepted for who they are, which includes every aspect of their being. I want you to feel comfortable expressing yourself and sharing your experiences. What makes you different is what makes you special. I will not tolerate hatred or abuse of any type in this course. Please be respectful of others at all times. Remember, you do not have to agree with someone's lifestyle, spirituality, or choices, but you can still respect them and interact with kindness always. Thank you!*

This is an excellent first step to opening that door so students feel more comfortable sharing differences.

Another way is by asking students to share as much about themselves as they feel comfortable doing. I do this in course introductions the first week. There are many ways to go about it, including the four I mention below. I do encourage students to share pictures in their introductions, but I do not require it. Putting names with faces is useful. Here are a few suggestions. Ask them to share

- their favorite holiday tradition,
- a picture of one of their favorite places,
- a special childhood memory, or
- three things about them that most people do not know.

Students will not always reveal difference—but that is up to them. Be sure to participate in the introductions, and ask follow-up questions. The more interest you show in your students as individuals, where they come from, and what life has brought to them at that point, the stronger your connection becomes, and thus you nurture a community of learning and caring. Don't forget, you need to share too—after all, you're a part of the community.

When you design your courses, you can also infuse diversity celebration through the types of questions you ask in asynchronous discussions. For example, when you write your discussion questions, always give students a chance to include personal experience. When students talk about their lives (and most students like to do this), they reveal a great deal of themselves, and in those experiences others can find wisdom. You are not the only teacher; your students are your coteachers, and their shared knowledge becomes an integral part of the learning that happens in the class. Part of your job is to facilitate their sharing with each other.

Let me give you a perfect example. In a professional writing course, I have students discuss diversity and share an experience they had in which there was a cultural difference that was memorable (I simplified the question here). Many times I have students who have served in the military share incidents they had overseas. One memorable post was from a male soldier who was in South Korea for a year. He had no idea what he was doing at first, and while the post was very funny, it also highlighted some of the hard lessons he learned. His willingness to share really helped all of us know him better; his post was a fantastic learning experience for others in the course as well.

## Celebrating differences

Here are a few more ideas on how you can encourage an inclusive classroom that celebrates diversity:

1. *Create assignments that focus on global issues.* The more students learn about other places and cultures, the more “normal” difference becomes.
2. *Allow students to choose assignment/paper/project topics.* Encourage them to pick topics that are close to their own hearts.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25 ▶



3. *Give students opportunities to work together.* I am not a fan of large-group projects, but small-group discussions? Absolutely.
4. *Utilize technologies* that allow students to see and hear each other. VoiceThread is a fantastic tool to make discussions a bit more interesting. If your LMS has the functionality to enable it, encourage students to create video and/or audio posts for discussions.
5. *Give students choices about how to present what they have learned.* Some students might be comfortable with a typical paper, but other students might prefer being creative.

All of these suggestions should help you start off your online class with a good foundation of recognition and

appreciation of diversity. Some of these are easier than others to implement, so give yourself time if you want to do a complete overhaul. Remember, you are the model of tolerance and acceptance, so be keenly aware of your language and tone. Finally, interact with your students! Ask questions; show interest in who they are and what they've done. That type of care goes a long way toward making students feel connected to you and comfortable showing everyone in the class what makes them unique individuals.

*Angela Velez-Solic is the associate director of the Center for Innovation & Scholarship in Teaching and Learning (CISTL) at Indiana University Northwest. ■*

## Three Ways to Create a Safe and Supportive Learning Environment

BY JOANNE TOMPKINS, EdD

Students don't generally learn well, if at all, in stressful situations. Neuroscience tells us that the cortisol released during stress makes learning extremely difficult. Setting up a safe and positive learning environment is therefore essential if we are to create classrooms where all students feel like they belong and can take the risks inherent in learning. In this article I share three strategies that have served me well as a public school educator and teacher educator.

### Connecting with the class

A wise colleague taught me that we cannot create a safe learning space until we address students' fears. During the first class, I ask students to anonymously write on Post-it notes their fears or concerns about the course. One idea per Post-it note. Students then stick their notes on chart paper set up around the room. I quickly sort the notes, clumping the expressed fears and worries into themes. We go over these themes together. Some students have been out of school for several years and are worried about not knowing how to navigate new technologies. Others are working part-time jobs and tell me they would really appreciate clear course expectations and deadlines. Some ELLs say they worry about writing papers in English. Some commute from a distance or are parents who wonder about juggling parental responsibilities with school work.

I share the themes publicly with the class, which helps students see they are not alone in their fears. Work/life/school balance emerges as a resounding theme. Once it's identified, we can talk about it openly. This activity lowers students' anxiety levels and makes me more aware as an instructor who is in my class. We talk together about strategies for living well with these multiple responsibilities. It reassures them to see that others share their fears. They begin to feel that they could belong to this class, for Jensen (2009) reminds us, every learner needs to feel that s/he belongs and is significant.

### Connecting with the individuals

The Post-it note activity described above allows me to begin to see the whole class. However, I also need to see who the individuals are in my class; Tomlinson (1999), a scholar in the area of differentiated instruction, says our job as teachers is to become "students of our students" (p. 4). I need to try to know who the individuals are so that I can find ways to make connections between them and the content I am teaching. To do this, I build learner profiles on my students (see below). I invite the students to fill out these cards with as much information as they are willing to share with me. I have found this to be a simple yet highly efficient teaching strategy.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26 ▶

## Learner profile cards

Using learner profile cards is another way I get to know my students. These are simply index cards that I create and distribute to students at the start of the term. On the front and back of the cards are such questions as:

- How do you learn best?
- Your goal for taking this course?
- What are your responsibilities outside of class?
- What are your interests outside of class?
- What prevents you from learning?

The information shared on these cards can be used in many ways to better reach and teach my students. Perhaps the most helpful piece of information I learn comes from how students respond to the question, “Something important you should know about me this term ...” This is where I hear the really important information about their lives. I learn that some students are battling illness, working three jobs, have just endured deep loss, have a sick family member, have just come out as LGBTQ, or are commuting to university. I begin to see the diversity that is beneath the surface. I can make adjustments or reach out to students with whom I need to connect.

## Rules of engagement

Issues of power difference abound in our classrooms (Battiste, 2014; Freire, 1970; Lee, Menkart, & Okazawa-Rey, 2007). Ground rules are a way of explicitly talking about those power differences and setting the guidelines that will create a democratic classroom. Often students are not skilled at having respectful conversations about race, class, gender, sexual orientation, or ability, topics that are typically part of my curriculum. Creating a list of ground rules is one way of trying to level the playing field in the classroom and supporting them in these conversations.

Together we cogenerate guidelines about how we will talk and be with each other. One common guideline is to

remind students that when we speak, we do so from our own experiences. Our own experiences are valid, but I remind students that we need to be careful not to universalize our experiences and assume that everyone has experienced what we have. This avoids the problem of statements like “Everyone feels safe on campus.” Another ground rule is that we really try to listen attentively in our conversations with each other. Dan Gilfooy, a former graduate student, summed this up well when he asked, “Are you really listening, or are you just waiting to talk?” In each class, we review the ground rules and add our own rules to the chart if we need to. This simple strategy reminds us that when we are mindful of our behavior, we can be more inclusive.

Palmer (2007) reminds us that we need to make our classrooms comfortable places to do the sometimes “uncomfortable work” of learning. I have found these three strategies to be highly effective in creating safe and positive communities where all students can engage in learning.

## References:

- Battiste, M. (2014). *Decolonizing education. Nourishing the learning spirit*. Saskatoon, SK: Purich Publishing.
- Freire, P. (1970). *The pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Jensen, E. (2009). *Teaching poverty mind brains school*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Lee, E., Menkart, D., & Okazawa-Rey, M. (2007). *Beyond Heroes and Holidays: A Practical Guide to K 12 Anti Racist, Multicultural Education and Staff Development*. Washington, DC: Teaching for a Change.
- Palmer, P. (2007). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

*Joanne Tompkins is a teacher educator at St. Francis Xavier University. She teaches in the areas of equity, diversity, inclusion, and leadership. ■*

# Set-Create-Reflect: An Approach for Culturally Responsive Teaching

BY VIVIAN E. OTT, PhD, RN

Over the years, my teaching philosophy has gradually embraced the belief that students learn best when they clearly understand what is expected of them, when they feel safe to make mistakes, and when they have time to process thoughts and feelings associated with a classroom exercise. Integrating student differences (including values, beliefs, disabilities, learning preferences, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status) into a curricular strategy or intervention reinforced my belief that certain learning principles are universal despite individual and group differences. That is, adults want to contribute, set goals, see the relevancy, and be respected. So my first question is, “How do I structure a learning environment in which all students can, to some extent, participate comfortably?”

As a nurse educator, I also know that these future nurses will soon need to confront patient/client situations outside their comfort zones. They will be required to respectfully manage the diverse needs of all clients in their care. My philosophy is shaped not only by the expectations of area employers, but by the profession’s “Code of Ethics” and LEAP’s “personal and social responsibility” essential learning outcome for undergraduate learning (AACU, 2008). So my second question is, “What classroom exercises will introduce, confront, and shape students’ cultural sensitivity skill sets?”

To answer these questions, I developed what I call my “set-create-reflect” intervention.

## Set the tone

Excitement mounting, I look across the expectant faces of 50 incoming nursing students. Scanning the classroom, I note that the group again this year is primarily Caucasian and female. Overt differences are primarily those of hair color, body shape, and clothing style. Again I look about the room; here and there, rarely more than 12-14% (PNC, 2011), I see persons of color and/or males.

The eager babble coming at me from all corners of the room jolts my curricular daydream, and I begin the semester with “Welcome ladies and gentlemen. You have a coveted seat in NUR22210, where we will discuss important foundational concepts...”

My supporting a learning milieu begins on the first day of class as I introduce students to course requirements and the questions they can expect to answer at the

semester’s end.

“Time for a pop quiz,” I announce at the 30-minute mark; they shuffle school supplies to procure paper and pen. I request that they individually define the word “civility” using a personal example. Next, they discuss their definitions with a single classmate, and follow that with small-group discussions. The groups’ scribes are asked to write down their agreed-upon definitions.

About 20 minutes later, we regroup and read aloud the University’s definition of civility and the expected behaviors:

*Purdue University Calumet places a priority on student learning. We value the inherent worth and dignity of every person, thereby fostering a community of mutual respect. We believe that in order to achieve these ideals, all Purdue University Calumet students are expected, while in the role as student or representative of the university, to exhibit and practice civil behaviors, defined as behaviors that:*

- *Respect faculty, staff, fellow students, guests, and all university property, policies, rules, and regulations;*
- *Take responsibility for their choices and actions;*
- *Accept the consequences of their inappropriate choices and actions; and*
- *Communicate in a professional and courteous manner in all forms, and at all times, whether verbal, nonverbal or written.*

I ask students to identify elements missing from the University’s definition; usually the ensuing discussion touches on the “who-what-when-where-and how” of classroom civility. As the discussion winds down, I ask that they journal about how practicing classroom civility will help them become better employees, and what behaviors they may find most difficult to embrace.

## Create the difference

A challenge, when a group looks, acts, and thinks in concert, is creating an awareness of differences outside and even within the group. A technique that works well for me is that of using published case studies (ACOG, 2011). These case studies depict clients with diverse

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 ►

values and beliefs that often perplex and frustrate health care providers working in the United States. Difficult exchanges with clients arise because of ethnic, age, nationality, sexual orientation, disability, and socioeconomic status differences.

The students, in small groups, select a case study from the reading and develop a plan of care for the client described in the case study. The assignment requires (a) identifying client differences known to impact health care delivery, (b) selecting a remedy to improve provider-client understanding, and (c) presenting the group's solution to the dilemma in the case study.

Invariably, students self-select case studies depicting clients most unlike themselves. Students actively Google information specific to their client; discussions turn lively, and the classroom din becomes deafening! The Q&A session following group presentations allows for further exploration of how to adhere to professional expectations that every client be treated with dignity and compassion. This session also ends with the instruction to journal about feelings experienced, ways to overcome negative stereotypes, and how to provide client-centered care regardless of how similar or different that client is from us.

Note: curricular interventions include more than case studies; e.g., Swalwell (2012) describes techniques of "bursting the bubble" or "disturbing the comfortable." Guild (2001) provides additional thoughts on how to address diversity in the curriculum.

## Reflect on the experience

Throughout the semester, students are asked, at the conclusion of a classroom activity, to journal. Journaling allows students to process discomfort encountered during the classroom exercise either as an in-depth exploration of their feelings or as a way to verbalize thoughts they felt unable to communicate to the larger group. Students may also journal regarding their success with a particular classroom activity.

I believe journaling helps students, particularly the more introverted, participate in the discussion. Journaling also provides them with a safe way to make mistakes and gives me those coachable moments to help guide students to new thoughts and behaviors. I use my comments in these journals to help students find resources for further

understanding or to encourage their tentative steps toward deeper self-awareness.

In closing, this culturally responsive teaching and learning intervention is designed to (a) address the individual differences of students in an effort to increase classroom participation, and (b) provide students an opportunity to identify anticipated challenges to providing respectful client care. As I reflect on this classroom intervention, I plan to formally evaluate student outcomes this semester and determine whether I have adequately answered my own questions.

## References:

- AACU (Association of American Colleges and Universities). (2008). *Essential Learning Outcomes*. Retrieved from <https://www.aacu.org/leap/essential-learning-outcomes>
- ACOG (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists). (2011). Cultural sensitivity and awareness in the delivery of health care. Committee Opinion No. 493. *Obstet Gynecol*, 117, 1258-1261.
- ANA (American Nurses Association). (2015). *Code of ethics for nurses with interpretive statements*. Silver Spring, MD: Author.
- Guild, P. (2001). Diversity, learning style and culture. *New Horizons for Learning*. Johns Hopkins University. Retrieved from <http://education.jhu.edu/PD/newhorizons/strategies/topics/Learning%20Styles/diversity.html>
- PNC (Purdue North Central). (2011). *Re-accreditation Self-Study Report for the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools*. Retrieved from <http://www.pnc.edu/accreditation/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2013/05/2011-Self-Study-Report.pdf>
- PUC (Purdue University Calumet). (n.d.). Student conduct. Retrieved from <http://webs.purduecal.edu/nursing/2015/05/18/civility-code/>
- Swalwell, K. (2012). Confronting white privilege. *Teaching Tolerance*. A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, 42, 23-26. Retrieved from <http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-42-fall-2012/feature/confronting-white-privilege>
- Vivian E. Ott, PhD, RN, NE-BC, is an assistant professor in the Department of Nursing and Health Studies at Purdue University, North Central. ■

# Introducing Computer Science Majors to (the Lack of) Diversity and Inclusivity

By DAVID L. LARGENT

I suspect the computer science (CS) department at Ball State University is like most CS departments; we have few females, few African-Americans, and the non-whites enrolled in the program are primarily international students from just a few countries. In response, I recently introduced pedagogical components that have students research the historical reasons for, and develop suggestions to address, this issue. The assignments and activities utilized in this initiative, which are described below, can easily be modified for use in any discipline, with many of them requiring no adaptation before use.

I undertook this initiative to challenge our CS students and faculty with respect to diversity and inclusivity issues. The problem begins long before students arrive at college; changes need to occur so that grade-school-age children are exposed to CS concepts. But if we are to recruit and retain students as CS majors, we must provide an environment where all students feel welcome and included, especially women and underrepresented minorities (by whatever definition) who often feel they are on the fringe.

I introduced the topics of diversity and inclusivity into a one-credit course where we explore social and professional issues in the context of CS. I added a variety of pedagogical components into the course, with the following goals in mind:

- Students and faculty members will recognize the benefits of a diverse CS student body and profession.
- Students and faculty members will understand our CS student body and profession are not currently diverse.
- Students will identify and develop
  - o potential reasons why our CS student body and profession are not diverse, and
  - o potential actions that can be taken to make our CS student body more diverse.

## Activities for promoting diversity

I have grouped the various components I added to the course into categories, and discuss each below. More details are available in the resources section at the end of the article. The students themselves researched and presented most of the material. Besides gathering and developing content and the pedagogical approaches, my role was to serve as a coordinator, quality checker, cheerleader, and promoter. I also became an evaluator, as

I considered whether the process could be generalizable to, and useful for, others departments and disciplines.

*Discussion:* I provided some background at the start of the semester by sharing data and thoughts about (the lack of) diversity and inclusivity in CS, leaving the students with unanswered questions to generate more interest in the topic.

*Classroom activities:* I added three simple activities that provide opportunities to recognize issues of diversity and inclusivity. **Likes** (*resource 1*) is an activity in which two participants who do not know each other are matched up and asked to record things they think the other person likes, and why, but without talking with one another first. This highlights how we all make assumptions—often unfounded—about others. In another activity, **What Do You Bring?** (*resource 2*), the students added words to a shared Google document that described themselves. As a class we reviewed the resulting document, “discovering” there are things that make each of us unique and that we also have a lot in common. The third activity, **Paper Toss** (*resource 3*), has each participant attempt to—from his or her desk—throw a piece of paper into a recycle bin placed at the front of the room. Obviously the participants closer to the bin are generally more successful, i.e., they are more privileged because of their position in the room. This then led to a discussion of privilege.

*Research and presentations:* **Diversity Position** is an assignment intended to help students consider what their position on diversity actually is (*resource 4*). They choose one of three scenarios, write about why they chose it, and discuss research they found to support their chosen position. Since a regular class activity is for small groups of students to present topics from the textbook, it was easy to include a requirement of sharing diversity material related to their assigned topic (*resource 5*). Additionally, they were to present information about an organization that strives to increase diversity in CS.

*Reflective writing:* For a reflective writing exercise, the students wrote a short essay describing how they had changed relative to three different course topics during the semester (*resource 6*). They could choose any two topics from the course, plus diversity.

*Department colloquium and report:* The students’ finalgroup project was to create a five-minute presentation

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30 ►

(and accompanying report) for an assigned section of a CS department colloquium, which included the following sections (*resource 7*):

- Introduction and attention-getter.
- Discuss benefits of diversity in general, and in CS in particular.
- Present the current and historical state of diversity in CS.
- Present potential reasons why CS is not currently diverse.
- Propose actions that can be taken to make our CS student body more diverse.
- Discuss organizations that promote increased diversity in CS.

Having students prepare and deliver a public presentation was an important piece of the process because it both challenged the students to come up with something worth saying and helped educate the presentation attendees.

**Outcomes:** The addition of these pedagogical components provided a variety of positive outcomes. Among them were working toward solutions to the identified diversity and inclusivity issues, becoming immersed in the search for data and solutions to circumstances similar to those they may experience as they enter the job market, and learning to appreciate diversity of opinions as they work together toward a solution. Most importantly, the students have become (more) aware of

the lack of diversity in CS and, in some cases, to seriously consider what they can do to cause positive change to occur in their classes, the department, the community, and the profession.

**Resources:** More details and example documents for most of the items discussed above can be found at <http://www.cs.bsu.edu/homepages/dllargen/IntroducingCSDiversity/Resources>. All of the materials can be shared freely and are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

At the time of this writing, the following items are available.

*Classroom activities:*

1. Things the other person likes
2. What do you bring to the discussion?
3. Privileged paper toss

*Research and presentations:*

4. Diversity position paper
5. Group chapter presentation

*Reflective writing:*

6. How I've changed

*Department colloquium and report:*

7. Diversity group project/colloquium

*David L. Largent is an instructor of computer science at Ball State University. ■*

## Diversity Is a Foundational Value, Not an Added Value

BY MELISSA VANDEN BOUT, PhD

It is one thing to adapt an existing syllabus and nudge it toward more diversity by adding a minority voice or two to the required readings. It is a rather different matter to take diversity as a pedagogical goal in itself, and to take as your creed the expectation that reality is diverse, and that this diversity is a positive value. Like many of my colleagues, I took the first tack in a conscientious effort to make my syllabi more representative, less heavily weighted to what some of my students called “old dead white men.” Simply making room in the lineup for a woman and a nonwhite author or two felt like progress, but it was still deeply dissatisfying. It seemed important to include underrepresented voices, but it was unclear to me if that ought to make a difference beyond encouraging students by helping them identify with the authors we

studied.

My discipline has helped me escape this tokenism. In philosophy courses such as the ones I teach, we often ask ourselves questions about the basic nature of reality. As I understand it, reality is rich, varied, multivocal. This diversity is a distinct and powerful good (evidence from areas as widely varying as microbiology, economics, and political science readily spring to mind). Teaching philosophy with the expectation that reality is diverse and that diversity is a demonstrable good has begun to allow me to move past treating diversity as a matter of added value—a sort of bonus added to “normal”—by recognizing it as a foundational value already operating in reality. This shift in approach is ongoing but currently

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31 ▶

most evident in changes in syllabi, in pedagogical habits, and in a new appreciation for the way diverse experiences may become important classroom resources.

To take one introductory class as an example, earlier amendments to the syllabus meant that among the more expected, Western canon choices, students were also reading major texts by a woman, a South African man, and an African-American man. With the realization that my understanding of diversity should shape my pedagogy beyond this straightforward change, I began to understand that one of the most important insights students could gain from our class is the discovery that texts and traditions may artificially exclude certain kinds of diversity. Thus, while that first set of changes was important, more recent alterations to the syllabus have tended to be aimed at helping students notice the artificial absence of diversity in a key text. For example, to complicate the picture of the lone thinker celebrated at the end of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, students read a short account of the role support individuals have played in Stephen Hawking's work. Suddenly, the people who are invisible to Aristotle are no longer invisible to students. When you expect reality to be diverse, texts that depict reality as inhabited only by certain kinds of people are revealed as unreal in that respect. More importantly, if students learn to notice such omissions in a text, they are that much closer to recognizing the problem in other contexts outside the classroom.

If my syllabi have seen some changes, so has my pedagogy. Expecting that reality reveals itself to be diverse has not only changed what we read, but how we discuss it. In practical terms, this has demanded attention to opportunities that student questions pose, and more emphasis on facilitating talk between students across the classroom. When a student asks why we are still reading Plato nearly 2,500 years later, that is not merely a complaint but also a hidden question about why certain people are included in the canon and others are not. Thinking of diversity as a foundational rather than an additional value makes it more likely that I can recognize this as an important question rather than a distraction, and seize the opportunity.

This improved attention is supported by ongoing

self-education. As I learn more about classism, sexism, and racism in my discipline and in the world at large, I am better equipped to recognize and respond to such learning opportunities for my students. Alternately, seizing an opportunity can sometimes mean leaving space for students to respond to each other. Though it entails some risk to allow a student to counter a fellow student's offensive or ignorant comment before weighing in myself, when I have taken that risk, students have tended to thoughtfully consider the criticism of their ideas rather than simply shutting down in response to an authority figure. This practice should only be used in the context of a class with established habits of respectful engagement and absent larger concerns, but it can be very effective.

Perhaps the most important difference this perspective shift has made for me is in the way that appropriately valuing diversity renders visible a number of otherwise invisible resources. Early this semester, I found myself concerned by the demographics of a particular class, afraid that I would not be able to unite a group that bridged so many extremes of age and interests around a common project. It occurred to me that, rather than expecting such differences to pose a threat to unity, we could begin by thinking of our distinctive experiences as so many supplies to sustain us on a journey: because we are so different, we each have something to offer that no one else can.

But it is not only students who should value their experiences. As a white woman, I have no immediate experience of racism. Experience of sexism was the door for me to discover racism as a systemic problem. When I share my experience with sexism, and the way thinking about systemic sexism opened my eyes not only to systemic racism but also my own subtle racial bias, students who might otherwise become defensive tend to allow themselves to consider those possibilities for themselves. In general, being transparent about my own learning process makes space for students to make similar discoveries.

*Melissa Vanden Bout is an assistant professor of philosophy at Trinity Christian College. ■*

# Building a Collegial Classroom Across Cultures

BY RONDA MACLEOD, PhD

**A**n Iraqi student, a Kuwaiti student, a student who is an American veteran who served in Desert Storm, and a Chinese student all walk into the same classroom. What do they have in common?

It might sound like a joke, but it's an accurate snapshot of my class one year. Teaching on a predominantly international university campus at the time, I was no stranger to classroom diversity. But when faced with this situation for the first time, I considered the possibility that some of their commonalities might be as problematic as their differences.

Regardless of my classroom cohort, I always take specific steps to build collegiality into my classroom management plan because it opens dialogue and promotes trust. Collegial classrooms develop and grow somewhat organically—united in the common goal of education—but I have found that if I take the time to ensure student-to-student relationships are purposely built around respect, belonging, trust, and having some fun, students begin interacting with each other on a whole different level. As educators we naturally spend time building relationships with our students, but we sometimes overlook the need for students to build relationships with their peers, particularly students from diverse backgrounds who appear on the surface to have very little in common.

## Matching cards

In the case mentioned above, I went even further than usual to facilitate collegial student-student relationships right from the inception of class. It worked so well that I now use a variation of this practice for all my classes and believe it is worth sharing.

For the first day of class, I made small cards (I did this using PowerPoint; six cards per sheet). Each card had a picture on it and a number in the bottom right corner where you would normally see a page number. The pictures on each card were different, but each card had one other card with a matching number (i.e., two cards both had the number 1 in the bottom right corner). When the students arrived, each one was handed a card; once all the students arrived, they were told this was an icebreaker activity in which they needed to find the person with the matching card and introduce themselves. After much discussion and little progress, one brave student finally came to me to confess that none of their cards matched.

In response, I told the class that we needed to solve this dilemma as a team, and we rearranged the room from classroom style to boardroom style. During this exercise I did not sit in any position of power; the power in the classroom was already mine, and I wanted to show that I was also part of the team and the solution. I then engaged the students in discussion concerning:

- How long it took each of them to decide their card had no match (average time 10-15 minutes depending on the size of the class).
- Why it took them so long to approach me about the cards, the point being they should always approach me when they have a question or concern.
- How it felt for them to tell me I might be wrong about something or that they had failed, the point being as equals we can have these tough discussions.
- I then asked again if they were happy with their conclusion that none of the cards matched (they were).
- I directed them to the numbers in the corners of their cards to show how each one had a match. That prompted a further discussion on
  - how our thought processes or worldview can cause us to miss things that are right in front of us; and
  - how we might come to incorrect conclusions because of how we view things based on our past experience(s).
- The students then spent some time introducing themselves based on the prompts of:
  - where they grew up;
  - if they could have a conversation with any historical person, who would it be and why;
  - their expectations of their classmates; and
  - their expectations of me as their facilitator.
- The rest of this class was spent discussing my ideals of classroom etiquette, respect, work expectations, and learning materials/assessments (aka the rules).

Because this course was set up with a group project in each tutorial to assess learning outcomes, other things I did during that semester, which I had not done before, were: 1. designate the project group members, and 2. devote the first 10 minutes of project time to informal conversation. Accommodating small talk might seem like a waste of time on the surface, but it was surprising how quickly students settled into productive work afterward. What was more interesting was how these conversations

CONTINUED ON PAGE 33 ▶



began around what students had in common, such as favorite sporting teams and TV shows, and later grew into discussion about differences. One conversation that sticks out in my mind was a gentleman from Iraq and a Chinese lady discussing the different roles of women, marriage, and careers in their respective cultures. I am also happy to report I have never had to address any inappropriate or overly sensitive conversations.

So, what are the commonalities and differences between the Iraqi, Kuwaiti, American, and Chinese

students? It really does not matter once they are communicating in a collegial learning climate. Building collegial classrooms has helped me bring people together who might think they have little or nothing in common, or who tend to avoid each other due to religious beliefs, customs, dress, history, and whatever else we use to build cultural divides.

*Ronda MacLeod is an adjunct in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Grand Canyon University. ■*

## Facilitating Spiritual Competence through Culturally Responsive Teaching

BY ANN CALLAHAN, PHD, KALEA BENNER, PHD, AND LEEANN HELTON

Diversity can be conceptualized as understanding the strengths and challenges that differences, as well as similarities, can create. Facilitating an awareness of diversity and developing an appreciation of the influence of diversity on someone's life are essential in achieving cultural competence. Although seldom discussed relative to cultural competence, spirituality and religion are both expressions of culture. Spiritual competence requires an understanding of how spirituality shapes human behavior as a source of strength or challenge, how spiritual diversity manifests in society and can enhance risk for discrimination, and how to build relationships that are spiritually sensitive (National Association of Social Workers, 2008). Educators across disciplines have worked to help students understand themselves and others spiritually (Barker & Floersch, 2010; Johnston, Mamier, Bahjri, Anton, & Petersen, 2008); however, more research is needed to determine how to facilitate spiritual competence (Hodge & Derezotes, 2008; Schafer, Handal, Brawer, & Ubinger, 2011; Raskinsku, Kalad, Yoon, & Curlin, 2011).

In the field of social work, spiritual competence has been considered a more distinct form of cultural competence. This article examines the experiences of 37 multidisciplinary students who took an asynchronous online elective social work course on spirituality and health care that was intended to facilitate spiritual competence. Course content addressed the importance of spirituality in client care, influences of spirituality on self and clients, the role of spiritual sensitivity in developing spiritual competence, the assessment of spiritual competence, and how to further develop spiritual

competence (Hodge & Bushfield, 2006).

After course completion, students were asked to rate 13 course assignments based on degree of being experienced as meaningful. "Meaningful course work" was defined as course work that had significance, value, or purpose. Students identified the most meaningful activity as a final self-reflection paper in which they developed their own conceptual framework for spiritually sensitive and competent practice. The first two authors independently generated codes and themes from the final self-reflection paper based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) methodological approach to thematic analysis.

A number of themes emerged regarding spiritual competence, with the most common being the importance of spiritual sensitivity for spiritual competence. Every student described a number of personal and relational qualities as being characteristic of spiritual sensitivity. Students also reflected on how intrinsic spiritual awareness and their own spiritual well-being had the potential to influence and be influenced by clients. Students emphasized the need for self-preparation, including personal growth, to internalize particular qualities of spiritual sensitivity, such as being understanding, compassionate, and accepting of different spiritual and religious views.

The importance of spiritual diversity was another common theme reported by students. Students also indicated that this course helped them understand the potential for spirituality and religion to be experienced differently, whereas previously they had considered them to be one and the same. Quality, holistic, and client-centered care was believed to require sensitivity to the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 34 ▶

spiritual concerns of all clients, including those different from themselves. Although some students admitted discomfort with spiritual diversity, most expressed awareness of the need to overcome discomfort in order to help clients address spiritual concerns and reduce spiritual distress.

A final theme related to developing spiritual competence was the importance of self-efficacy. Spiritual and religious assets and issues were said to be challenging to assess in others, primarily due to fear of offending. One way students said they gained confidence was to be intentional about being spiritually sensitive. For example, students often linked spiritual sensitivity to self-awareness; the more aware students were of their own thoughts and feelings related to spirituality and religion, the more confidence they said they had in their ability to address spirituality with clients. Students expressed a desire for education, observation, practice, and supervision to continue building spiritual competence.

This course was designed to help students reflect on their own spirituality and consider how they might respond to the spirituality of others. Therefore, course activities were expected to enhance spiritual sensitivity necessary for spiritual competence. The results suggested that students gained new insights about spirituality through the process of self-reflection. This heightened spiritual awareness demonstrates how spiritual competence begins. Given the importance of spiritual competence, other educators might help students develop spiritual awareness through self-reflection, particularly when training students for direct client care.

These results further suggest the need to help students develop their capacity to communicate spiritual sensitivity while also helping them recognize the importance of spirituality as both a means of support and a source of distress for clients. Students acknowledged their responsibility to overcome barriers to address spirituality as a standard component of client care. Spirituality was recognized as an intrinsic, rather than an overlooked, dimension of diversity. Likewise, educators can demonstrate such spiritual awareness by addressing the implications of spirituality for different professions, settings, and positions.

While one of the goals of this course was to help students learn to assess client spirituality, this still appears to be a difficult task. There are many potential reasons for such discomfort. Spiritual sensitivity may have alerted students to their need to build spiritual competence beyond that which they accomplished during the semester. Hence, educators can assure students that the building of spiritual competence is a lifelong process

(Hodge & Bushfield, 2006; Blaschke, 2012). Educators may further contribute by conducting and disseminating research on methods that facilitate spiritual competence.

This study was intended to explore how course activities may facilitate spiritual competence. Students were able to describe how to communicate spiritual sensitivity, based on personal and relational qualities as well as the need for intrinsic growth related to insights into one's own spiritual experiences and values. However, students seemed to struggle with assessing spirituality and the implications of spiritual diversity. Discomfort, both with the possibility and the actuality of client spiritual distress, was identified as a primary barrier. Educators can respond by helping students recognize the importance of spirituality relative to professional practice in the broader cultural context.

## References:

- Barker, S. L., & Floersch, J. E. (2010). Practitioners' understandings of spirituality: Implications for social work education. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 46(3), 357-370. DOI: 10.5175/JSWE.2010.200900033
- Blaschke, L. M. (2012). Heutagogy and lifelong learning: A review of heutagogical practice and self-determined learning. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*. 13(1), 56-71.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
- Hodge, D. R., & Bushfield, S. (2006). Developing spiritual competence in practice. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 15(3-4), 101-127. DOI: 10.1300/J051v15n03\_05
- Hodge, D. R., & Derezotes, D. S. (2008). Postmodernism and spirituality: Some pedagogical implications for teaching content on spirituality. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 44(1), 103-123.
- Johnston, E. T., Mamier, I., Bahjri, K., Anton, T., & Petersen, F. (2008). Efficacy of a self-study programme to teach spiritual care. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 18, 1131-1140. DOI: 10.1111/j.1365-2702.2008.02526.x
- National Association of Social Workers, (2008). *Code of ethics of the national association of social workers*. Retrieved from <https://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>
- Rasinski, K. A., Kalad, Y. G., Yoon, J. D., & Curlin, F. A. (2011). As assessment of US physicians' training in religion, spirituality, and medicine. *Medical Teacher*, 33, 944-945. DOI: 10.3109/0142159X.2011.588976

CONTINUED ON PAGE 35 ►

Schafer, R. M., Handal, P. J., Brawer, P. A., & Ubinger, M. (2011). Training and education in religion/spirituality within APA-accredited clinical psychology programs: 8 years later. *Journal of Religion & Health*, 50, 232-239. DOI: DOI 10.1007/s10943-009-9272-8

*Ann Callahan is a lecturer at the University of Kentucky College of Social Work. Kalea Benner is the director of Undergraduate Studies for the College of Social Work at the University of Kentucky. LeeAnn Helton is a student affairs officer with the University of Kentucky Center of Excellence in Rural Health. ■*

## Establishing a Classroom Culture of Diversity and Inclusivity: One Instructor's Viewpoint

BY ANDREA CHUTE

Is establishing a classroom culture of diversity and inclusivity on your to-do list the first day of class? Do you consider this to be a faculty responsibility? For me, the answers are yes. But my principal challenge was how I would promote, foster, and sustain this culture throughout a first-term, first-year health studies course. Was I up for this challenge? You bet I was.

To guide and facilitate the establishment of a diverse and inclusive classroom, I reflected on my values and teaching philosophy that I wrote nearly nine years ago. The values inherent in my teaching philosophy are humor, respect, reflection, self-awareness, self-directedness, collaboration, community, accountability, and responsibility, all of which underpin establishing and sustaining a classroom culture of diversity and inclusivity.

Creating a learning environment that endorses and fosters inclusiveness requires me to set the climate for the class on the first day, and, as such, I do my best to make each student feel visible, feel heard, feel safe, feel respected, and feel connected (Armstrong, 2011). However, students are not merely recipients of this process. They participate in a Graffiti Wall activity, where they get the opportunity to define the behaviors, expectations, and classroom climate that will promote and sustain an inclusive and diverse learning environment throughout the term. As a teaching strategy, Graffiti Wall is an inclusive brainstorming activity that can be facilitated as an independent exercise or one involving small groups. Students rotate around the room, writing or drawing their ideas/thoughts/questions on large sheets of paper on which the professor has posed a specific topic/statement or question. This type of exposure to multiple experiences and perspectives often fuels a rich discussion.

Because diversity is fluid, I approach each class with that famous line from *Forrest Gump* in my head: "My Momma always said, 'Life is like a box of chocolates.

You never know what you're gonna get.'" While I am not guaranteed ethnic, racial, or gender diversity in the student body, I know that by using various platforms and strategies, I can safely uncover diversity in students' ways of thinking, knowing, and being. Furthermore, I instill the importance of students identifying and discussing their own values, beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, and judgments about health issues pertaining to themselves, their peers, and individuals belonging to groups stigmatized within our society.

When discussing the influences of health from diverse perspectives, it is essential that I model, foster, and support student engagement in the process of inquiry and understanding of:

- the individual as a person,
- what influences the individual's health,
- how society may perceive/pass judgement and treat the individual,
- why the individual thinks the way he or she does,
- what the individual believes and why, and
- what the individual values and why.

### Assignments to foster inclusivity

Some strategies I have success with that foster inclusivity, promote discussions surrounding diversity, and empower students to express their thoughts, ideas, opinions, beliefs, and values are:

1. Graffiti Wall
2. Small and large discussion/group activities (interpersonal interactions/cooperative learning environment)
3. Multimedia, such as videos and the use of interactive computer and board games that address health influences from diverse perspectives
4. Presentation of multiple perspectives by me and students when discussing class content
5. Recognition that students learn from one another

CONTINUED ON PAGE 36 ►

As students are often uncomfortable discussing their personal viewpoints related to diversity, I often tell them it is important that they learn to be comfortable being uncomfortable, as they cannot truly achieve personal and/or professional transformation in seeing, thinking, doing, and feeling by remaining in their comfort zone. Therefore, to challenge student assumptions, judgments, and stereotypes, I utilize the following two assignment tools in my course:

**1. Blogging:** I use small-group (randomly assigned) blogging assignments and pose thoughtful and relevant questions to assist students in:

- having their voices heard and acknowledged;
- presenting, questioning, challenging, and appreciating multiple perspectives when discussing diversity issues related to health and the influences of health (income, education, employment, gender, culture etc.);
- telling their story and sharing their experiences; and
- creating a cooperative learning environment (Dalsgaard & Paulsen, 2009).

Some students were initially fearful of being judged by their peers, but reminding them about the climate of the class and the importance of honoring diverse thinking alleviated their fears and allowed for authentic expression and ownership of ideas/thoughts/opinions.

**2. Digital storytelling:** This assignment requires students to assume the persona of an individual within a stigmatized or marginalized group (homeless, pregnant teen, immigrant, obese, disabled, LGBTQ, etc.) and incorporate evidence-based knowledge, best-practice guidelines, health promotion initiatives, and community resources to support and/or refute their knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes, assumptions, and judgments that influence the individual's health status. Additionally, students completed a written reflective paper pertaining to their digital story. The question posed was:

*“What did you learn about the individual you portrayed and the factors that influence that individual's health that you did not know prior to this assignment?”*

Many students wrote about how they learned to approach individuals from a place of inquiry, understanding, and compassion rather than from a place of judgment. Through this assignment I feel students learned to truly embrace differences, break down barriers, challenge stereotypes, explore what health means and the many influences of health, thus transforming their own beliefs, values, and attitudes toward others.

I know that supporting, creating, and sustaining a diverse and inclusive classroom is my responsibility as an educator, and I do my best to model, mentor, and facilitate feelings of inclusion. I will continue to create diverse learning environments for my students, as research demonstrates students are more motivated to learn, achieve, socialize, and appreciate varying perspectives when educators realize the benefits of diverse learning environments.

## References:

- Armstrong, M. A. (2011). Small world: Crafting an inclusive classroom (No Matter What You Teach). *Thought & Action*, 51.
- Wilson, J. L. (2011). Blogging about diversity: the academy sounds off in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. *Multicultural Education & Technology Journal*, 5(2), 106-115.
- Finerman, W., Tisch, S., Starkey, S. (Producers), & Zemeckis, R. (Director). (1994). *Forrest Gump*. US: Paramount Pictures

*Andrea Chute is an assistant professor of health and community studies at MacEwan University. ■*



**MAGNA**

**©2016**

**Magna Publications, Inc.  
2718 Dryden Drive  
Madison, Wisconsin 53704  
USA**

*[www.magnapubs.com](http://www.magnapubs.com)*