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Bridging the Ivory Tower: Culturally Responsive Education Connects Content to People

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Culturally Responsive Education connects content to people

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ABSTRACT:

Higher education institutions shape the professions which are the conduit for the disciplines' ways of knowing, the worldview or mindset of the professions, and the intellectual frameworks by which problems and policies are defined. The generational, conscious and unconscious agreements between higher education and the professions perpetuate the status quo, resulting in continued disproportional impacts based on race, gender, ethnicity, language, orientation, and differing abilities in every major industry sector; including education, health, employment, housing, finance, technology and the criminal justice system. Cultural responsive pedagogy provides a process of altering these agreements by surfacing the dual consciousness of our multiple social identities and the multidimensional social, political, and economic contexts in our collective co-existence. The connections between culture and mindset, conscious and unconscious, and the social-political context shape teaching and learning. Mindfulness is a pathway for cultivating cultural competency through embodied awareness by building the reflective muscle to recognize, disrupt and transform deep-rooted beliefs, entrenched assumptions, and well-established behaviours. Mindfulness invites both faculty and students to bring their intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual selves to the learning exchange.

KEYWORDS:

1. Culturally responsive pedagogy
2. Culturally responsive competency
3. Higher education
4. Mindfulness
5. Contemplative practice
6. Social Justice

Main Body:

For we have, built into all of us, old blueprints of expectations and response, old structures of oppression, and these must be altered at the same time as we alter the living conditions which are a result of those structures.

Audre Lorde

A discussion of cultural competence in higher education can begin with a focus on the intellectual knowledge, understandings, attitudes, and behaviours that are the prerequisites for cultural competence or proficiency. This approach might begin with a definition of terms; culture and cultural competence; move to an explanation of why cultural competence is important, and then offer a framework that outlines the major components or domains of cultural competence. This approach centre individuals and their interactions with one another is the discussion. What do you know or understand about the topic of culturally responsive education? This is an important and critical component to the conversation on cultural competency in higher education. Another way of exploring culturally responsive education in higher education centres on the very nature of higher education itself, its role but also its influences in the larger society. The author attempts to outline why a culturally responsive lens is important to shaping the very nature of higher education and its influences, especially in the professions.

This chapter explores why culturally responsive education (CRE) is important in higher education, why CRE goes beyond cognitive knowing, and how mindfulness can be a tool for an embodied approach to CRE. Typically, in relationship to issues of diversity in higher education, access and retention are the primary levers for a discussion. These issues are critically important and still remain a major tension. This chapter focuses on another aspect of diversity, mainly how the preparation of professionals in fields must also address issues of diversity. Professional preparation plays an important role in higher education. With the proliferation of knowledge, expanding technologies, rapidly changing industry sectors and tightening global economies, the trajectory of careers and professions as we know them are changing. These factors not only effect the types of work professionals do but also the intellectual frames that shape the why and how of any given problem. This has caused an evolution of new occupations, roles, titles and functions leading to greater specialization and at the same time a need for greater resourcefulness, agility, and capacity to consider and incorporate a wider set of variables, institutional mindsets, intellectual frames and knowledge bases across disciplines, fields and industries (Austin, K., Chu, E. & Liebman, J., March 2017).

Austin, et. al (March 2017) further notes that adding to the complexity of this dynamic especially in the service industry, is the client. Clients are no longer passive recipients of whatever the professional puts forth. The client's perspective of the problem, the abundance of information available to the client directly or even the definition of exactly what is the problem creates a very different relationship between the traditional notion of professional and that of client. Instead of bringing solutions to the client, the professional now works with the client coproducing solutions. The professional acts as a catalyst for what the client already knows, clarifying what they need, and supporting viable actions towards solutions. The professional in this scenario becomes the learning facilitator and co-problem solver.

Another aspect of the change in the professions is the socio-political context in which both the client and the professional must operate. This nation continues to be plagued with

disproportional impacts based on race, gender, ethnicity, language, orientation, and differing abilities. These disproportional impacts are in every major sector including: education, employment, housing, finance, transportation, technology, and criminal justice systems. So along with the changes in technological advancements and the globalization of industries, the interactions and interdependencies across contexts and cultures are increasingly becoming more complex.

Individual, community and the national well-being of society is currently at-risk. Whether we are talking about the shooting of black and brown people, sexual harassment whether on campuses or as represented via the "me too" movement , the opioid epidemic, the immigration crisis, increase in homelessness, health disparities, global unrest, violence against LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered or questioning) people, etc., we see too many examples of well-educated individuals using their knowledge, and concomitant power at the expense of others. The blatant injustice in Flint, Michigan around lead in the water supply or the over prescription of opioids when having clear information about the likelihood of addiction, are just two examples. The decisionmakers were formally educated individuals. There are a multitude of reasons that foster the conditions for the bypassing of professional ethics, the lack of collective responsibility or the dearth of human empathy and compassion; regardless, higher education must join the pursuit of cultural awareness, competence and sustainability not only in the "what" but also in the "how" of what it means to educate professionals (Rendón, L. 2014; Berila, B. 2016). The cloth of Western culture is woven with threads of "racial domination, subordination, and separation, nuanced in every aspect of our day-to-day lives" (King, R. 2018. p. 2). The very systems that govern industry sectors (education, employment, housing, finance, transportation, technology, and criminal justice systems, just to name a few) are shaped by "generational and often unconscious conditioning" (King, R. 2018. p. 2). The false separation of content and context fosters an appearance as if foundational knowledge in industry sectors operates independent of the historical and present context. There is an ongoing and mutual perpetuation of these societal agreements between higher education and the professions. The societal agreements referred to are the traditions and long-standing way of doing that perpetuate the status quo and the current disproportional impacts that result.

The question arises regarding what are societal agreements in higher education. One agreement is the common practice of accepting or requiring test such as GRE's (Graduate Record Exam) or another standardized assessment for entry into Masters and Doctoral level programs. The not-for-profit creator, ETS (Educational Testing Service) generally acknowledges a loose connection between GRE scores and graduate school success. ETS also acknowledge the GRE underpredicts the success of minority and women over 25 years of age. David Payne, the vice president of ETS and chief operating officer for the Global Education division is quoted The Atlantic "There are a number of factors that contribute to observed differences in scores, such as variation in course-taking patterns, interests, knowledge and skills, or differential educational, economic, and social systems in which everyone does not receive equal opportunity" (Clayton, V. March 1, 2016). Yet, while there is a general acceptance of the complex and multiple competing factors that contribute to differentiation in scores among different groups, admissions offices still look at GRE scores as an important deciding factor in admissions. The title of The Atlantic Magazine article provides offers a perspective that is hard to ignore; "The Problem With the GRE: The exam "is a proxy for asking 'Are you rich?' 'Are you white?' 'Are you male?'"

So as institutions of higher education continue to struggle in responding to what's needed in the preparation of professionals, they also must look at how they are instrumental in perpetuating and reinforcing entrench practices of inequity, and the role they can play in cultivating a collective responsibility for societal well-being. As America's demographic diversity grows, those typically least represented educationally and economically are essential to restoring the American middle class and standing among other developed nations (Association of American Colleges and Universities, April 15, 2015).

Higher education must not only document, report, analyse and contextualize the historically and ongoing inequities of marginalized populations, it must also become attuned to how they mirror entrenched inequitable practices in what is done, how it's done and the contextual experiences that contribute to habitual mindsets, especially in the professions. Higher education must reconsider its calling, educating for an interdependent global world, and the kind of world desired. Professions are particularly important because they are the conduit for shaping the disciplines' ways of knowing, the professional world view or mindset, and the intellectual frameworks by which problems and policies are defined (Austin, et. al., March 2017). Higher education institutions shape the professions and as such are instrumental in shaping the social political context in which the professions operate. A culturally responsive lens is needed to support a more global, inclusive and nuance way of knowing and shaping of a professional world view. This approach to a needed CRE lens in higher education goes beyond access and inclusion, but at the very core and nature of higher education, content.

What does it mean to know?
"The new illiteracy is about more than not knowing how to read the book or the word; it is about not knowing how to read the world."

~ Henry Giroux

Laura I. Rendón (2014), researcher at the University of Texas at San Antonio outlines the trajectory of learning pedagogy that is instrumental to situating cultural competency in higher education. She reminds us of learning pedagogical lens like critical pedagogy, engaged pedagogy, holistic education, integrative learning, and transdisciplinary studies that are both influenced by the socio-political context, but also shapes the current socio-political context. These viewpoints on learning pedagogy were informed by a yearning for individual knowing and self-empowerment but also framed by a societal context of "exclusion, trivialization, marginalization, and denial" (p. 1-5). Rendón (2014) tells us poignantly that even as those lens offer wider perspectives they still omitted other ways of knowing that are not framed by "rational knowing and linear developmental schemes, the notion of objectivity, the divide between theory and practice, and the exclusion of the contributions of women, indigenous people and people of color" (p. 16). We are reminded of the interrelationship of knowledge and literary expression, framed by intersectionality theory. In Chung, L. C. & Rendón, L. I. (Winter 2018, par. 2), intersectionality theory is defined as the individual experiences of "multiple, intersecting social identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, indigeneity, ancestry, gender, class, sexuality, geography, age, disability/ability, immigration status, religion, political affiliation, and worldview)" in interaction with society's overlapping systems of power and privilege. Our social identities and lived experiences in multidimensional social political and economic contexts can inform and be informed by what and how we come to know. This makes culturally responsive competency both individually, as well as collectively, a journey that is constantly changing.

Education as represented in the formal schooling process, is typically defined as what we know or what we should know. Traditional rational or sensory ways of knowing appeals to the brains constructive and dispositional tendencies (Dickmann, M.H. & Stanford-Blair, N, 2009). Hart (2004) states; "The rational involves calculation, explanation, and analysis; the sensory lives off of observation and measurement. Together, these form the rational-empirical approach that has set the standard for knowledge across most disciplines" (pp. 28). Contemplation is a third way of knowing that complements rational and sensory knowing. Rather than addressing what we know or should know, contemplative knowing addresses *how* we know. Beyond academic and professional education, this third way of knowing develops interpersonal awareness, intentional actions, and authentic connections to others.

This chapter explores how to build cultural competence in higher education through the development of compassion, gratitude, empathy and other emotional intelligence practices through mindfulness and other contemplative practices (Barbezat, D. & Bush, M. 2014; Hart, T. 2004; Cobb, V. 2017; King, R. 2018) in how we frame "what it means to know". The chapter draws from what we are beginning to understand about the neuroplasticity of connecting behaviour to how we think, learn and achieve (Dickmann, M.H. & Stanford-Blair, N, 2009; Hammond, Z. 2015). A fuse frame of what it means to know shapes higher education practice, rather than an objectivist model of knowing that separates the knower from the known, content and pedagogy, and knowledge as distanced from the knower, content and . Rendón's (2014) description of knowledge and wisdom highlights this traditional separation. For her, knowledge is situated in rationality, experienced outside of oneself as a detached observer, focused on the facts and information of learning and not necessarily on the application of the learning to life. Wisdom, Rendón says is more personal, "based on intuition and feelings", focused on "inner experience and self-reflexivity", and learning "is to develop self-awareness, sense of purpose" that is connected to "everyday life" and comes with social responsibility (p. 90). Knowledge holds content external, while wisdom is internal and brings the content into the very being of the learner. Knowledge is cognitive and wisdom goes beyond the cognitive to the emotional, physical, and spiritual connection. Higher education privileges cognitive knowledge; however, understanding and the ability to be culturally competent requires an emotional, physical and spiritual awareness and connection to self and others.

The connections between culture and mindset, conscious and unconscious, and the socio-political context shape teaching and learning (Gay, G. 2010). The traditional separation that is common in higher education and the professions are false dichotomies that foster a continued distinction between who we are and what we do. This distinction perpetuates a focus on the individual at the expense of the collective. The personal and professional comes together in cultural competence by shaping a stance of what Sheryl Petty and April Dean (2017) call deep equity. The false dichotomy of who we are and what we teach is fused into the acknowledgement of our wholeness of "being" and "doing". In turn, higher education, holds the space to enable the students who come through our doors the opportunity to see and be who they are and to bear witness to the connection of beliefs and values in alignment with actions. The higher education experience can invite awareness of self and context, opportunities for connection and curiosity; and cultivate the seeds for individual and collective possibilities. In higher education, as well as in places of work, we separate and objectify content or what we do from who we are; claiming a distinction in our professional and personal lives. The system or bureaucracy is often blamed as the culprit. "Something in the very word 'system' or 'systemic' consistently leads us astray—seeking some magical change 'out there' when the most intransigent aspects of the 'out there' are inseparable from

our habits of thought and action 'in here'" (Scheetz and Senge, 2016 p. 24). They refer to this as "the inner nature of inequity" (p.24). Cultural competency in higher education must not aim for the political correctness of equity, rather higher education has the opportunity and the responsibility for deep equity or the inner nature of equity. Higher education shapes the dialogues and mindsets of the disciplines which in turn lay the foundation for policies and practices. Higher education holds the promise to help those coming through its doors to develop this inner knowing of deep equity. The author contends it is this connection between what is known, the content and the knower that bridges the ivory tower. The bridge of knowledge to wisdom. Mindfulness and other contemplative practices offers tools to access this more personal, inner culturally responsive development.

Inner and Outer Knowing

Together, the thinking mind and the feeling body are a powerful combination.
Maria Gonzalez, Mindful Leadership, 2012. P. 42

The emerging acknowledgement of inner and outer knowing is recognition of the interdependence of mind, body and spirit. Research and literature in neuroplasticity provides an important framework for connecting behaviour to how we naturally think, learn, and achieve (Bradford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Dickmann & Standford-Blair, 2009; Goleman, 2011; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002; Ratey, 2008; Restak, 2006). The capacity of the brain for analysis, conjecture, and imagination are the unique qualities of the brain that enables humans to have choice (Dickmann et al, 2009). Today's rapidly changing social, economic, political, environmental and technological challenges invites a deeper reflection on the notion of choice that is "neurally inspired", borrowing Davidson, et al (2012) terminology. This means tapping into other ways of knowing beyond the rational and analytical. Cultural competence necessitates this deeper dive into culture and emotions so that existing mindsets and cognitive incongruences can be surfaced and challenged.

There is a considerable amount of research that speaks to a mind-body connection (Dickmann & Standford-Blair, 2009; Siegel, 2011; Marturano, 2014). Dickmann et al states "the brain is the body and the body is the brain. … What affects one affect the other" (p. 29). What we experience shapes our mind, and our mind shapes how we see and experience the world. With survival as its focus, the brain is constantly monitoring and adjusting how we shape and define our experiences. Emotions operate at the subconscious survival level, and are biological processes that regulate mind and body responses to internal and external information of what to attend to, evaluate, and act on. Emotions are physiological experiences. At the conscious level emotions can trigger feelings, which with awareness and management, allows us to evaluate incoming information, including considering alternative explanations and possibilities. Feelings are the psychological responses to the physiological emotions we experience. This ability to evaluate an array of information inputs enables rational thought. Without emotion, the component of the brain governing the evaluation process, there can be no rational thought (Davidson, et al 2012). The emotional dimension of the brain enables decision making and prioritizing. The very nature of emotions dictates an act-first, think-later response to informational input. The brain is emotionally attentive, judgmental, motivated, and manageable. Emotional intelligence is the degree to which we can recognize and mediate emotional responses. Assessment of ones' emotional state creates greater options for better productive responses.

In that our emotions are both judge and monitor of what is worth knowing we can miss or ignore new informational inputs quickly relying on existing patterns of knowing rather than being open to new possibilities. Dickmann, et al calls this ability of the brain a "double bind" (2009, p 31). The nature of the brain to interpret informational patterns enables us to respond quickly, and yet we can be swayed by this habitual pattern of knowing and ignore new informational nuances that can help us in seeing things in a new and unique way. We are limited in what's possible in our choices by our assumptions, judgments, and existing perspectives.

Culturally responsive pedagogy is a mechanism for unlearning the conditioned responses perpetuated by systems of oppression and contemplative practices like mindfulness cultivate emotional intelligence that enables the ability to "sit with difficult emotions, recognize deeply entrenched narratives…used to interpret the world, cultivate compassion for other people, and become more intentional about how they respond in any given moment" (Berila, 2016, p. 14).

Why culturally responsive pedagogy is a movement to being?

"Cultural responsiveness in teaching is always in the process becoming, rather than a fixed destination or set of finished skills."

Geneva Gay, 2010. P. 236

Many culturally responsive training focus on identifying and unearthing the implicit biases that are embedded in the assumptions, mindsets, and beliefs that are reflected in the behaviours and practices that playout the inequities. However; few trainings are intentional in focusing on approaches that give participants the tools to sharpen and intervene in the thinking patterns and sit with the difficult emotions that foster greater awareness, deep listening, presence, and self-management. Workshops name the neuroscience behind the patterns of behaviour, the cultural influences that shape our worldview, and the social political contexts that reinforce and reward the status quo.

The premise is that in naming the implicit biases, building the knowledge base on culturally responsive pedagogy, and acknowledging the socio-political landscape, workshop participants will "do better" because they "know better". So, we provide people with the knowledge and evidence of what is happening cognitively but leave them to their own devices to put that knowledge into action. As the earlier discussion on neuroplasticity indicated, the brains natural response is to use existing patterns of knowing. This response is especially true when feelings and emotions arise that are uncomfortable. This chapter's approach of integrating mindfulness into the development of culturally responsive education offers practical tools to pass a cognitive understanding to that of an embodied practice.

The brain has a natural tendency toward flight or fight when faced with perceived unsafe conditions. The physical embodiments of strong emotions quickly construct the psychological feelings or storylines that shape our perceptions about what is happening. The defense mechanism of fight or flight can shut down the prefrontal cortex. "Our racial conditioning and reactivity are intimately woven in our beliefs and intertwined with our nervous system. When our mental capacity to reason is hijacked by the amygdala into hysteria or righteousness, the brain's executive functions is offline, and we react on old fears and beliefs, instead of responding to the present moment" (King, 2018 p. 61).

Mindfulness and other contemplative practices offer tools and practices to assist in training the mind, interrupting thinking, and giving us greater presence to align who we want to be with actions we choose to take. This does not mean that mindfulness or other contemplative practices enable one to overcome racial ignorance or ill will, eliminate anger or despair, or change discrimination, bias or stereotyping. Mindfulness and other contemplative practices provide the tools to create the space to slow down the hijacking so that we can be more self-aware and bear "witness to our racial distress and conditioning without distortion, elaboration, or judgement" (King, 2018 p. 73). Mindfulness practices enable the mental ease and wear-with-all to be. "Knowing and being are intimately entwined. Knowledge is embedded in and created by a constellation of human intelligences, and such intelligences exist within a universe of inner experience, of the experience of being" (Kane, 1994 p.4). Becoming culturally competent is not just about knowing but also being.

Vivian Stith-Williams and Phyllis Haynes (2007) define cultural competence as a set of congruent attitudes, practices, policies, and structures that come together in a system or agency to enable professionals to work more effectively with members of culturally distinct groups in a manner that values and respects the culture and worldview of those groups. The four major components of cultural competence are awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills. Each component builds off the other and must be mastered in succession. Additionally, this work involves not only cognitive understanding, but also an integration and transformation of the heart, spirit, and mindset for what it means to hold deep equity. Though there are varying entry points for work towards culturally competency, deep equity will require work in all four areas. The ability to go inward, to cultivate deep culturally responsiveness requires the inner work mindfulness provides because racial and cultural divides are so complex, so ingrained, and so pervasive in our racial and social conditioning. King (2018, 0. 24) describe the magnitude of this depth in the following way:

> We could say that the nervous system, the heart of relational well-being, is literally the skin that shapes and defines what we typically refer to as a self, hardwired with cellular memory. The very fibers of our being were passed down from our ancestors. In this sense, the regulation of bodily functions or impulses is, to some degree, preconditioned. Given the sensitive membrane that defines us, this gift from our ancestors, we can perhaps comprehend how intimately woven our nervous system are to past and present conditioning, including racial conditioning.

Unlearning existing patterns of thought, language and behaviours is as much a part of the work of becoming culturally responsive as being open to new patterns of thoughts, language and behaviours.

It is important to bring this kind of knowing, this openness to viewpoints and perspectives to the content offered in higher education. Imagine how research questions might be different or the opportunities for students to enter content via a culturally responsive lens. How might the professional disciplines be reframed with a culturally responsive lens?

Culturally Responsive Competency as "Intersectional Consciousness"
"Seeing is not believing; believing is seeing! You see things, not as they are, but as you are."
Eric Butterworth, Spiritual Economics

Chung & Rendón's (Winter, 2018. Par. 2) term, "intersectional consciousness", references multiple social identities and the multidimensional social, political and economic contexts, speaks to the everchanging dynamics required for culturally responsive competency. The term embraces the complexity of the internal and external nature of culturally responsive competency. The view of consciousness in this chapter is the wear-with-all to be with the dialectical tensions of various elements within ones life coexisting, without the need to choose or judge and the agility to shift and balance complex individual social identities and group belonging in interaction with the context and environment in which one find themselves, moment by moment.

According to Chung & Rendón (Winter, 2018. Par. 29), intersectional consciousness can be developed by;
- adopting a pluralistic worldview that moves beyond binaries to embrace contradictory systems of meaning;
- avoiding essentializing human beings;
- becoming attuned to how societal structures and systems of power objectify and oppress those whose group memberships are devalued;
- being aware of one's own social identities and ability to change oppressive situations both for individual benefit and for the benefit of the collective;
- embracing the paradox that the *we* is about the *other*—our struggles and pain are intertwined.

Berila (2016) characterizes this ability to recognize ones positionality in a particular moment, in a particular context as "dual consciousness". Cultural responsiveness is dynamic and changes much like the myriad of possible positional roles and contextual situations in which one find themselves. Additionally, the contextual situation of the current experience and the many lived background experiences as an individual and in collective with others frames the meaning ascribed to any experience. Depending on the particular contextual situation and current collective interactions of those present shifts the power dynamics at play and therefore the cultural responsiveness required. The awareness of one's own social identities; openness for a pluralistic, non-binary stance; attunement of social structures, and the paradox of the "other" as "we", addresses the need to be conscious, in the moment, for cultural responsiveness. The rational or cognitve knowing of culturally responsive pedagogy is not enough. This brings us back to the other ways of knowing discussed earlier. Berila (2016) talks about "embodied awareness".

Mentioned earlier in this chapter was the connection of the body and brain and the ways of knowing beyond the cognitive. Much like King (2018) speaks of race being wired within us at the cellular level, Berila (2106, p. 34) tells us "oppression is held in our bodies, our hearts, our psyches, our spirits, and our minds". Her work is a reminder that the unlearning of oppressive language, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours, and the creation of new liberatory language, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours are both "embodied processes". "Embodiment…refers to the imprints and manifestations of power, ideology, and socialization on our very bodies" (p.36). Our body reflect and shapes our consciousness. "Othering requires dehumanization which entrails disconnecting ourselves from our embodied experiences" (p. 36). Embodied awareness speaks to not just recognizing the unconscious bias, micro-aggressions on an analytical intellectual level, but an awareness in the body that enables embodied learning from an introspection of self and inner experiences, consciously and with curiosity, not judgement. The inquiry into self for deep equity forces a look at the body's experience of race, gender, orientation, abilities, etc., or any time we have

been "othered". Again, this inner look isn't about making a distinction of good or bad, but a recognition of the power dynamics of our experiences and the ways in which our habits of mind or automaticity of our unconscious responses shape how we show up. Culturally responsive practices requires this deep embodied awareness and learning internally so that we can build culturally responsive practices and able to put them into practice moment to moment regardless of our positional expression and context. This is not a fixed place but rather a process and journey that is ongoing.

Chung & Rendón (Winter, 2018. Par. 30) identify six (6) competencies needed by faculty to nurture the same competencies in students.

- **deep self-knowledge:** recognition of all that we are, our intersecting identities, personal strengths, and areas where we need to make fundamental changes
- **empathy:** the ability to step into the world of "the other" with respect and dignity
- **transdisciplinarity:** the ability to employ diverse knowledge systems to analyze social issues critically
- **pluriversality:** the ability to function from a pluralistic space, holding competing and contradictory systems of meaning in tension rather than engaging in either/or thinking
- **presence:** the ability to be fully aware of the present moment
- **self-care, healing, and well-being:** attention to physical and psychological health and overall well-being, focus on personal growth, development of compassion, work toward social justice, and liberation from self-limiting views

These competencies encompass the four components of cultural competence defined by Stith-Williams and Haynes (2007) cited earlier (awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills) but incorporates an inner and outer lens to marry the cognitive, emotional, social, spiritual and physical nature of what it means to be culturally responsive. Again, rather than cultural competence being a stationary place for which you arrive to, Chung & Rendón's characterization implies a dynamic process of inquiry revisited time and time again, in the present moment of what's before us, asking "What is call for in this moment?" Their language of "transdisciplinarity" addresses the interdisciplinary approach needed in the professions discussed at the onset of this chapter. "Pluriversality" addresses the stance of letting go of viewpoints that interprets what happening via a binary lens.

Mindfulness as a pathway to cultural competency
Without inner change, there can be not outer change, without collective change, no change matters.

Angel kyodo Williams, Radical Dharma

Cultural competency calls for the agility to hold a deep internal awareness of one's own assumptions, beliefs, and values and also the ability to transform this awareness into a "new perspective or level of consciousness" (Lennard, D. 2010, p. 31) through critical reflection, and simultaneously, "(1) view a situation from several perspectives, 2) see information presented in the situation as novel, 3) attend to the context in which we are perceiving the information, and eventually 4) create new categories through which this information may be understood." (Langer, 1997, p. 111). A deep awareness to unlearn existing patterns unconscious bias and oppression and the strength to be open to learning new ways of being individually and collectively, recognize the current social political context and the ways the

past has shaped the present; and finally the way to act and move forward that embraces culture and reduces harm.

"Mindfulness is both a process (mindfulness practice) and an outcome (mindful awareness). It begins with the simple act of paying attention with care and respect" (Barbezat & Bush, 2014 p. 95). Our thoughts and feelings are not who we are, rather they are indicators of our experiences, both past and present, and offer entry points to assumptions, beliefs and values. "Race is not who we are. Race is a social construction that points out the nature of diversity. In and of itself, race is not personal, nor is it a problem. The problem of race is how we perceive race, socially project onto race, and relate to race…" (King, 2018, p. 75). Mindfulness can be used as a tool, a mental exercise, to sharpen both internal and external awareness of ones understandings and actions beyond habitual patterns of knowing. Mindfulness fosters connection and insight, critical elements for deepening cultural awareness.

Culturally competency support the relational connections required to connect the foundational disciplinary and institutional knowledge with learning competencies across fields with real people as family, co-workers, clients, and the larger society within a social political context that is interdependent. Content is not separate from the knower, from historical or current contexts, from the interdependence of disciplines, or actions and inactions (an action).

Mindfulness is a pathway. A pathway to seeing what is in the moment, with clarity, with curiosity, with compassion. "Mindfulness supports us in withdrawing emotional energy from automatic responses and instead invites us to pause, know, and choose to respond. …we are quite literally reprogramming our minds, rewiring our brains towards more stability, well-being, and confidence" (King, 2018 p. 127). The practice, interrupts the stories or perceptions imprinted in mind base on backgrounds, experiences and the context of the situation and asks us to "weather the inner storm of racial discomfort and distress --- whether numbness, confusion, aversion (p. 127)" and be curious about the structures of oppression on ourselves as individuals, those around us and the world. Mindfulness opens the space to go beyond the cognitive awareness of the issues of race, unconscious bias, and oppression to the embodied awareness and positionality in context moment by moment.

There are many, many practices of mindfulness that can serve as pathways to confront the discomfort that comes with becoming cultural competent. One practice that King (2018) highlights in her book, *Mindful of Race*, is called RAIN (p. 109), a mnemonic that stands for *R*ecognize, *A*llow, *I*nvestigate, and *N*urture. The practice does not mean resolution of unconscious bias, rather it supports an exploration. The practice is an inquiry to "understand and tame our habitual impulse to fight what is happening, avoid what is happening, or distort what is happening" (p. 110). This embodied awareness allows for an intentional, purposeful decision to act in ways that support development of the six competencies outlined by Chung & Rendón (Winter, 2018). The practice of RAIN incorporates the following:

Recognizing addresses "What's happening", the ability to *see* what is going on, without "identifying with" what's going on. It is the recognition of thoughts and emotions emerging in the moment, by shifting attention through actively noticing and naming.

Allowing is "being with" and taking the time, pausing in the moment. To bear witness to the emotions, body sensations and tensions, the discomfort arising out of racial or cultural

distress in the situation. Allowing does not mean condoning the experience, but being with what is happening "without interference; without judgement, interpretations, preferences, or resistance; without trying to make it other than it naturally is in this moment" (King, 2018 p. 112). The allowing softens us and creates space to the unlearning of what has been a perspective, a pattern, a much used story of what is, in order for us to be open for the learning of new perspectives and possibilities.

The pause caused by allowing gives us the time to *investigate* our relationship to what is happening...assumptions, expectations, and scripts. That curiosity invites us to move beyond a cognitive understanding to a more embedded discernment. "Discernment allows us to identify those mind states we want to support and those we want to let go. Nonjudgmental awareness, kindness, and curiosity are qualities that support investigation of racial distress and shift us toward release" (King, 2018, 117).

Recognizing, allowing and investigating patterns, beliefs, and assumptions we hold about race, culture, and differences of any kind can be a painful process. America has not dealt with the racial discomfort and distress of the past and continues to ignore what is currently happening in large measure. Increasingly we are aware of the connection between culture and climate on student academic performance. Culturally responsive pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, culturally responsive sustainability is offered in many districts. Currently every administrator in New York City public schools is being trained on implicit bias. Similarly, training on diversity and inclusion is becoming a mainstay at the corporate level. In 2018, Starbucks closed 8,000 company-owned stores for a half day to offer training on unconscious bias for approximately 175,000 employees as a result of an incident at a store in which law enforcement was called in and two African American males were arrested waiting for a friend (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/on-leadership/wp/2018/04/17/starbucks-is-turning-to-a-type-of-workplace-training-that-really-took-off-after-ferguson/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.dae624fe4d21). On college campuses, there have been incidences of bias, from white students calling campus police for students of color being in dorms, and almost annually hurtful and culturally insensitive costumes for Halloween events.

Nurture, is the final component of RAIN. When face with the racial distress and discomfort that arises when fully recognizing, allowing and investigating what is present in a situation comes nurturing the inner harm to self and the role we play in the harm to others. Nurture also addresses the ongoing nature of the practice, meaning returning again and again to the practice to sharpen the muscle of embodied cultural awareness.

Mindful practices such as RAIN provide a pathway for intentionally creating the space for learning a new ways of being. RAIN is a practice because the learning is an ongoing process, as we must continually check our positional presence with power, privilege and purpose in each situation individually and collectively with others. This mindfulness practice, and many others, enables faculty to reflect on their assumptions, mindsets and beliefs as they choose content, design instruction and engage with students, which is at the heart of culturally responsive pedagogy. It also marries the inner and outer knowing, while recognizing the historical and current socio-political context of the institutions and systems in which both faculty and students are functioning.

Cultural Responsive Pedagogy as Individual and Systems Transformation

*We cannot change social systems without transforming people and the way we are with each
other, but neither can we wait for individuals to become their better selves without
transforming the social systems that shape us.*

Gass, 2014 p. 43

This chapter has laid the foundation for culturally responsive competency as an integral part
of higher education in general and professional preparation in particular, because it
challenges the mindsets, assumptions, and beliefs that shape higher education. Culturally
responsive competency is not a fixed body of knowledge and skills but rather an embodied
awareness, a pedagogical approach that offers for both faculty and students "wholeness,
harmony, social justice and liberation" (Rendón, 2009 p. 132). Rendón (2009) calls this
pedagogical approach *"Sentipensante"*, the unity of sensing and thinking that holds inner and
outer knowing as equally valued. The knowing guided by intuition, the internal sensing and
feeling; and rationality or outer knowing operate in 'dynamic and complementary opposition"
(Rendón, 2009 p. 131). This integrative pedagogical approach introduces a nondual
consciousness of opposites working in reality synergistically, multidimensional, multi-
perspectives co-existing. She uses integrative learning in two ways; first, across disciplines
and the knowledge and skills from various sources and across experiences. Second,
recognition of the multi-faceted ways of knowing in mind, body and spirit and the connection
between professional or collective responsibility and individual purpose and meaning. "In
this epistemological stance, the learner is actively connected to what is being learned, and the
diverse forms of contemplative practice become conduits to elicit deep awareness, focus,
compassion, social change, transformation, creativity, and inspiration, as well as intellectual
understanding" (Rendón, 2009 p. 134/5). Culturally responsive pedagogy, like sentipensate,
asks faculty to bring their whole selves to the learning exchange and for faculty to cultivate
and foster students' whole selves --- "intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual" (Rendón,
2009 p. 135).

Culturally responsive pedagogy is not just an approach to teaching and learning. It isn't a
group of strategies or knowledge and set of skills to be acquired, to be culturally responsive is
a way of being in relationship with self and others. Mindfulness is a pathway in cultivating
culturally responsiveness because it builds the reflective muscle to recognize, disrupt and
transform an deep-rooted belief system, entrenched assumptions, and well-established
behaviours. It fuses knowledge and wisdom. Finally, it instills in learners a commitment to
the well-being and healing of the individual and the collective, and preserves the nature of
what it means to be in relationship, and maintains the rights of all people (Rendón, 2009).
That is culturally responsive competency in today's world.

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