Treading Water:

Faculty of Color Teaching Multicultural Classes during the Pandemic

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Abstract

There has never been a time like this in recent history. In the last year, educators have been building new paradigms as they teach. In this article, we inquire into our experiences in teaching race at a PWI during the times of protests against the killings of Black men and women at the hands of the police and others, COVID-19, an election year, natural disasters, and changes in the Supreme Court. This article will reflect on the strategies, curricular materials, and pedagogies used to support underrepresented and marginalized students enrolled in a diversity class at PWIs and how the authors handled cultural taxation caused by the racial incidents that occurred during the pandemics. The authors use duoethnography, a collaborative and reflective research methodology that engages both researchers in a multi-dialogical process to understand the phenomenon of investigation better. In this article, we focus our reflections on the questions, how do we create supportive virtual and hybrid classrooms in diversity education classes at a PWI that do not re(center) Whiteness? How do you handle racialized experiences and not be overwhelmed by racial battle fatigue?

Keywords: Faculty of Color, Multicultural Education, Racial Battle Fatigue, Diversity

Introduction

In the last year, we have watched the world change. Four global pandemics, COVID-19, anti-Black racism, economic downturn and climate catastrophes (Ladson-Billings, 2020), and a siege on U.S. democracy have impacted everyone's life. Educators have had to navigate their planned Curriculum (Aoki, 1986/1991) while experiencing and making meaning of a loud societal curriculum (Cortes, 1979). Even though in this piece we only focus on the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and anti-Black racism, the events happening week after week have been intense and traumatizing context for teaching and learning. Consider that in only one day, at least three significant moments captured the public's attention and became turning points for the coming months. On May 23, George Floyd and Dion Johnson were killed by police officers. That same day, the world watched a video of Amy Cooper, a white woman walking her dog off-leash in Central Park, NY, calling the police to falsely accuse Christian Cooper, a Black man who was birdwatching, of threatening her safety as a way to menace his life. Two days later, Tony McDade also died at the hands of the police. During that week and in the following months, national and global protests massively reacted to George Floyd's death, in particular in at least 140 cities across the U.S. (Taylor, 2021). The intensity of May's news was no different than other months in 2020. During the same week in September, announcements were made about the non-indictment of white police officers for the killings of Dion Johnson and Breonna Taylor, echoing similar outcomes in Tony McDade's case. In the same week in September, the White House announced an executive order banning Racial Sensitivity Training (Exec. Order No. 13950, 2020). The following week the first presidential debate was broadcasted.

Faculty of Color have had to and continue to navigate their trauma while functioning in a Eurocentric educational system that often marginalizes knowledges, histories, and experiences of

People of Color. Because of the subtracting and contrary nature of PWI environments, Faculty of Color experience personal devaluation, invalidation, shaming, racial stereotypes, uncontested racial comments, and devaluing of racial diversity and from students, peers, and administrators (Bonner & Park, 2020; Curtis-Boles, Chupina, & Okubo, 2020).

The pandemics of COVID-19 and racism have added to these stresses typically felt by Faculty of Color. When one is treading the water, the goal is to keep one's head above the water to breathe. The authors felt that COVID-19 created the Pandemic Ocean in which they felt as if they were treading water. The ocean waves were the events discussed previously that often found the authors struggling just to tread. It has felt as for the last year we have spent treading the Pandemic Ocean while the waves of racial incidents threatened to drown us, and we still teach and advise students.

Faculty of Color need pedagogical strategies and support systems to overcome the pandemics and the everyday issues they face at PWIs, especially in diversity classes. There will be times during unprecedented occurrences (i.e., the pandemic) where Faculty of Color may feel racial battle fatigue. This article will reflect on the strategies, curricular materials, and pedagogies used to support underrepresented and marginalized students enrolled in a diversity class at PWIs and how the authors handled racial battle fatigue caused by the events that occurred during the pandemics. The authors use duoethnography, a collaborative and reflective research methodology, to engage both researchers in a multi-dialogical process to better understand their racialized experiences in the last year (Sawyer & Liggett, 2012). In this article, we focus our reflections on the questions, *how do we create supportive virtual and hybrid classrooms in diversity education classes at a PWI that do not re(center) Whiteness? How do*

you handle racialized experiences and not be overwhelmed by racial battle fatigue? This paper

will serve as a guideline for faculty on how to support students and themselves.

Literature Review

We explored the literature on Faculty of Color's experiences at PWIs, and the role of

Multicultural Education (M.E.), and the role of online teaching and learning in countering deficit

ideologies and antagonizing environments at PWIs.

Faculty of Color in PWIs

In the Fall of 2018, there were 1.5 million faculty serving degree-granting institutions

(NCES, 2020). Having a professor of Color can be disruptive because of the lack of faculty of

Color in higher education. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found that the

faculty (all levels) in degree-granting postsecondary institutions consisted of the following: 40%

White males, 35% White females, 7% Asian/Pacific Islander males; 5% Asian/Pacific Islander

females; and 3 percent each was Black males, Black females, Latinas/os (NCES, 2020). The

educational system continues to teach students society's hierarchical structures by reproducing

social inequalities (Combs, 2017). Students having a professor of Color will be an uncommon

occurrence in higher education and reinforce stereotypes that people of Color do not succeed in

higher education. Therefore, when Faculty of Color enter a classroom, they enter with identifiers

that mediate their interactions in the classroom space. For example, Mendez and Mendez (2018)

argue in their study that students had a racial bias and preferred to be taught by White faculty

based on names and pictures.

The racialized experiences people of Color experience in historically White spaces include-

> Hypervigilance, hypervisibility and hyperinvisibility, social withdrawal for colleagues, self-censorship in school settings, loss of self-confidence and question ability or worth, giving up personal goals for professional acknowledgment and advancement, and adopting the dominant paradigm, practices rules, norms, and roles for the Teachers of Color. (Pizarro & Kohli, 2018, p. 7).

W. Smith (2004) termed the impact of these racialized experiences as racial battle fatigue or "the distressing mental/emotional conditions that result from facing racism daily (e.g., racial slights, recurrent indignities and irritations, unfair treatments, including contentious classrooms, and potential threats or dangers under tough to violent and even life-threatening conditions)." (p. 180). Racial battle fatigue as a concept has been used to discuss the stress incurred by African Americans at PWIs. Smith, Yosso, and Solórzano (2006) expanded racial battle fatigue to the following:

> The stress of unavoidable front-line racial battles in historically white spaces leads to people of Color feeling mentally, emotionally, and physically drained. The stress from racial microaggressions can become lethal when the accumulation of physiological symptoms of racial battle fatigue are untreated, unnoticed, misdiagnosed, or personally dismissed. (p. 301).

Examples of racial battle fatigue include facing stereotypes, having abilities and expertise questioned by peers, and being the expert on race (Pizarro & Kohli, 2018). Hartlep and Ball (2020) found that racial battle fatigue was evident in higher education in five areas: hiring

practices, White epistemology and alternative ways of knowing and being, sense of (not) belonging, experiencing microaggressions, and (in)visibility and/or being "ignored."

The cumulative nature of confronting racism in classrooms, on the other hand, tends to harm the Faculty of Color (Solórzano et al., 2000). Racial battle fatigue has significant psychosocial and emotional impacts, including anxiety, frustration, anger and anger-suppression, helplessness, hopelessness, and depression (Pizzaro & Kohli, 2018). These effects can lead to physiological impacts: a loss or increase of appetite, extreme fatigue, hypertension, and sleeplessness (Pizzaro & Kohli, 2018). At the same time, they handle racial battle fatigue, Faculty of Color experience cultural taxation. Padilla (1994) used the term cultural taxation to describe what occurs when the administration asks Faculty of Color to do specific tasks based on race/ethnicity or presumed knowledge of cultural differences. There is often a power differential between the requester and requestee. Cultural taxation is an extra burden placed on the Faculty of Color to do diversity-related work. It can be a burden to their commitment to equity issues based on their race (Reddick et al., 2020). There are several issues with cultural taxation. They include that the tasks are often time-consuming and have little institutional effect (Reddick et al., 2020).

Faculty or Teachers of Color are typically asked to bridge the gap during racial unrest (Combs, 2017). Other typical responsibilities include defending the university and healing students (Combs, 2017). Faculty of Color do this while often carrying their burdens in silence (Pizarro & Kohli, 2020). Arnold, Osanloo, and Newcomb (2021) examine the taxes incurred by Black faculty- credibility, leading-edge, group status, and retaliation. Taxation occurs during a regular semester, but what is the impact when Faculty of Color navigates pandemics? Panchal,

Kamal, Cox, and Garfield (2021) found that 40% of American adults reported anxiety and depressive disorder symptoms. The year before, only 10% reported these same symptoms. They also found that the pandemic disproportionately impacted the mental health of communities of Color (Kamal, Cox, & Garfield, 2021). Mental health is part of the cultural taxation of Faculty of Color especially during the pandemic.

Evaluations

Student evaluation of teaching has been demonstrated to be ineffective in evaluating teaching and learning in fair and effective ways but continues to be important in tenure and promotion decisions (Uttl, White, & Gonzalez, 2017; Hornstein, 2017). In the many institutions where student evaluations have become the sole predictor of a faculty's ability to teach, they truly only measure the students' satisfaction and experience in the course, not their skills or teaching philosophy (Mowatt, 2019). It has been found that student evaluations have racial, gender, and ethnic bias (Merritt, 2012; Mitchell & Martin, 2018). Evaluation of faculty tends to be written to administrators who have the power to remove and not to the instructor to help them improve (Mowatt, 2019). In a meta-analysis of students' evaluations of teachers, it was found that using them as the only evaluation method of teaching effectiveness is unrealistic and untenable (Uttl, White, & Gonzalez, 2017, Hornstein, 2017). Researchers found that the evaluations did not relate to student learning, which is the fundamental evaluative criterion of teaching. Instead, student evaluations show how pleased a student is during the course and are impacted by the instructor's gender, instructor accent, class size, and class time (Uttl, White, & Gonzalez, 2017; Hornstein, 2017). This focus on student enjoyment of the class can impact Faculty of Color who discuss

diversity and multicultural topics that are often uncomfortable. Faculty of Color are often accused of "reverse racism" and only talking about race (Combs, 2017).

Supports

Pizarro & Kohli (2020) discuss resilience and resistance mechanisms for Teachers of Color to overcome the psychological and physiological problems caused by racial battle fatigue and cultural taxation. One analyzed their racialization through language and conceptual frameworks along with counterstorytelling (Acuff, 2018; Pizzaro & Kohli, 2020). This support allows for the disruption of racial battle fatigue in daily practices. A second mechanism was a community that was committed to the same ideologies they were. The community support helped with feelings of alienation and isolation. Faculty of Color often feel isolated in academia (Settles et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2020). By creating communities of support, sanctuary spaces, or affinity groups, Faculty of Color have spaces where they can affirm each other, able to collaborate, and develop strategies to confront racism in healthy ways (Acuff, 2018; Pizarro & Kohli, 2020; Smith et al., 2020; Writer & Watson, 2019). One issue with these solutions is that they leave people of Color responsible for solving the problems.

Acuff (2018) gives another way of practicing resilience when experiencing racial battle fatigue.   The goal is not to allow exhaustion, helplessness, anger, resentment, and anxiety take over the classroom (Acuff, 2018). Instead, she discusses using teaching as a healing process while honoring the students' learning process (Acuff, 2018). She teaches using courage from reality pedagogy and the pedagogy of vulnerability. This strategy alleviated some of the racial battle fatigue but didn't remove it.

Educators of Color Teaching Multicultural/Diversity Classes

Often, students at PWIs experience resistance to the Curriculum, pedagogy, and epistemologies in Multicultural Education courses. The role of educators in Multicultural Education courses is to prepare future educators as agents of change that are ready to act against oppression (Gorski, 2009). For many students at PWIs, this may be an early experience in learning about racism and other systematic oppression forms. While depending on the institution and the instructor M.E. and diversity courses can have different approaches (see Gorski, 2009), no matter the approach, instructors of M.E./diversity/ social justice and anti-bias/racism education classes, particularly women of Color, often experience resistance to the concepts being taught (Berchini, 2017; Ohito, 2016; Dunn et al., 2014; Evans-Winters & Hoff, 2011). Goodman (2011) describes White resistance as the inability some individuals may face engaging with perspectives that challenge dominant ideology or towards "the idea that oppression or systemic inequalities are real" (p. 51). This resistance can be implicit or explicit. They include silence, challenges to instructor's credibility and authority, support of colorblind ideology, and denial of racial bias and privilege (Diggles, 2014; Dunn et al., 2014; Martinez, 2014; Rodriguez, 2009). Having an educator of Color can increase the resistance or issues experienced in the classroom (Santellano, Higuera, & Arriga, 2020), especially when teaching diversity issues (Ladson-Billings, 1996, Norris, 2016).

When teaching about race or racism, faculty must account for uncomfortable feelings, emotions, and reactions from students and have dual roles as teacher and counselor (Truong et al., 2014). Educators of Color are often anxious when teaching, wondering if we responded appropriately, if there was an appropriate way to respond to students' discussions, or have

ignored the comment (Dunn et al., 2014; Palmer, 2020). There are four significant resistance

areas: race, language, sexuality, and intersectionality (Dunn et al., 2014). The role of faculty

teaching these foundations courses is to introduce students to sociopolitical contexts influencing

the education of students of different backgrounds. Frequently students in these courses expect

that they will get a toolkit to teach students of Color. This toolkit will consist of a prepackaged

set of strategies to teach essentialized versions of minoritized groups instead of a preparation that

equips them with tools to recognize oppressive structures and act to counter them (Evans-

Winters, 2011). In response, faculty face evaluations that question their expertise, that positions

them as incompetent, racist, or hindered by their racial/ethnic identities (Evans-Winters, 2011).

The stereotypes, the lack of faculty of Color, and student resistance require educators of

Color to be intentional about how the class is designed. Castillo-Montoya (2019) found three

key points for professor teaching diversity. One was having interim points to connect student's

lives with the academic content. Two was using a variety of strategies to complete this goal.

Lastly, students can learn about each other and the class content (Castillo-Montoya, 2019). For

this reason, thoughtful planning and enactment of pedagogies that invite students' active

learning, participation, co-construction of knowledge are essential to multicultural education, as

we will explore in the following sections.

Distance Education: Virtual & Hybrid

Teaching in higher education is often focused on neoliberal education, Western canons of

thought, the dominant Curriculum of privilege, bodies, and ways of thinking that effectively

oppress the histories, awareness, and experiences of non-dominant backgrounds (Valcarlos et al.,

2020). With COVID-19, many adaptations to teaching were made and particularly moving face-

to-face teaching and learning to virtual and online environments actualizing the conversation about educational equity and educational technologies. This section discusses the historical connections between online learning, constructivist approaches to teaching and learning, and education for equity.

The origin of online learning is correspondence education (Saba, 2011; Simonson & Seepersaud, 2018). Distance education could be seen as an early attempt for equity for historically underserved and disproportionately represented students (Saba, 2011; Saykili, 2018). When students were unable to access the physical building for formal education, correspondence education filled this gap. However, distance education shifted from providing quality education for everyone (Saykili, 2018) to learning and technological developments (Bozkurt et al., 2015). This focus on the method rather than the content or intent of education risks making the political, economic, social, and cultural elements of online education invisible (Valcarlos et al., 2020). Most definitions and theorizations of online education do not include social justice's viewpoints or objectives (Castañeda & Selwyn, 2018). However, research has shown that educational technologies can be used for critical pedagogical purposes and promise emancipatory goals (Selwyn et al., 2019; Sims, 2017). In the duoethnographic narratives shared later in the paper, we discuss how the two pandemics have brought back this initial focus on equity to online learning.

Constructivist Learning Environment and Online Environments

Since the 1980s, constructivism has been the dominant education theory and educational initiative that focuses on the learner (Gordon et al., 2020). A constructivist learning environment can be understood as a technology-based space where students "explore, experiment, construct,

converse and reflect" (Jonassen, Peck, & Wilson, 1999, p. 194). In constructivism, the learner

constructs knowledge by making sense of experience (Gordon et al., 2020). Foundational to

constructivism is the idea that education is transactional and not just transmitting/receiving

information or knowledge (Kritt, 2018). According to the constructivist view of learning,

knowledge is a mechanism structured through conversation and interaction with other learners,

accomplished by experiencing the world together (Alt, 2014). Constructivist learning

environments are based on pedagogical, social, and technological (Wang, 2009). The social

perspective focuses on providing and maintaining a fun and engaging atmosphere in which

students feel secure, relaxed, and connected (Wang, 2009). This social perspective includes

asynchronous (discussion boards) and synchronous (chat rooms, Zooms, Google Meets)

communication tools in an online environment. These communication tools need to be

moderated for productive online discussions and knowledge construction (Wang, 2009). The

technological perspective focuses on a learning environment easily accessible and easily usable

(Wang, 2009).

Multicultural Education (M.E.)

For over fifty years, multicultural education has been present in the United States.

Multicultural education has been contentious because it has challenged the Eurocentric focus and

Curriculum in education (Nieto, 2017). Since its origins in the 1970s, multicultural education

has become a serious scholarly endeavor with a sound theoretical foundation and solid research

base (Banks, 2009; Banks & Banks, 1995, 2004; Nieto, 2017). M.E. has grown from focusing on

race and ethnicity to include gender, social class, language, religion, and ability. Nieto (2017)

synthesizes what the core of this field-

Multicultural education was an attempt to change the educational outcomes of African

American and other children long denied an equal education. In order to do so, it had to

challenge the deficit discourses that rendered communities of Color – especially African

American, Latino/a, American Indian, and some Asian American groups – as lacking in

culture, devaluing education, and as completely responsible for the educational failure of

its children. (p.2)

There are three ideological stances to teaching M.E. classes: conservative, liberal, and

critical (Gorski & Parekh, 2020). Professors tend to teach M.E. courses from a conservative or

liberal approach (Gorksi, 2009). When teaching from only conservative or liberal policies, there

is a lack of understanding of equity and justice (DiAngelo & Sensoy 2010; Nieto & Bode 2018).

These approaches concentrate on assimilating and celebrating diversity, but not on training

educators to respond to inequality in education and society (Gorski & Swalwell 2015; May &

Sleeter 2010; Nieto 2017). The inability to respond to the inequities can lead the students to

replicate the system and center Whiteness. A critical stance has transformative implications and

helps the students recognize inequities and understand education's sociopolitical context (Gorski,

2009; Nieto & Bode, 2018). The critical stance can assist students in decentering Whiteness in

their educational contexts

Multicultural/Diversity Classes Online

Valcarlos et al., 2020 did a critical review of anti-oppressive pedagogies in online

learning. They found that there were four ways that educators executed anti-oppressive

pedagogies in online learning: legitimating students' epistemologies (personal narratives,

emotions, and culture), requiring reflection and discussion, establishing expectations of critical awareness, and democratizing educator and student roles (Valcarlos et al., 2020)

> Both reflection and dialogue are at the heart of anti-oppressive pedagogies as means to analyze the power dynamics embedded in education and society and to democratize the construction of knowledge within the classroom (Freire, 1970/2000; hooks, 1994). It follows that the educators in the articles invited or required students to write reflective assignments and mandated participation in asynchronous online discussion. The majority of the educators in the studies (7) required students to write reflection journals or essays. For instance, one of Ukpokodu's (2010) assignments was a reading response paper in which the students needed to provide a critical reflection "by discussing the extent to which the materials resonated with them, personally and professionally, and new insights and thinking they constructed" (p. 235)

Online classes have been critiqued for not supporting group work and the lack of communication between the instructors and students. Technology has evolved to the extent that teachers can provide opportunities for students enrolled in online courses to communicate with each other and be seen and heard in real life (Woodley et al., 2017). Research has shown that online reflection is influenced by the complex interactions between the teacher, student, task, and technology factors (Mumford & Dikilitas, 2020). The pandemics generated essential questions about using technology to create deep reflection, community building, and challenging Whiteness in our courses.

Methodology & Researchers' Positionality

Duoethnography

Duoethnography, a dialogic form of autoethnographic research, places "two or more researchers of difference juxtapose their life histories to provide multiple understandings of the world" (Norris et al., 2012, p.9). One principle of duoethnographic research is its dialogic nature, allowing the researchers to generate a critical reflection about the historical time and place as part of their learning experiences (Norris et al., 2012). This duoethnography allowed us to collectively study how the sociopolitical events in 2020 became part of our learning experiences as teachers of color teaching courses in M.E. at a PWI in Texas.

Duoethnography makes it necessary for researchers to describe their positionalities to foreground differences in the study of experience. For example, even though we both share experiences and forms of identification as women of Color, we also experience marginalization and privilege differently. Author 1 identifies as an African American female. I grew up in the rural South and attended a Historically Black College and University for undergraduate and graduate. Also, I attended PWIs to graduate in the Southwestern United States. I am currently a lecturer at a public Southwestern university where I have taught multicultural and urban education classes for over five years. Author 2 identifies as a Latina/Colombian/Mestiza woman. I have lived most of my life in Bogota, Colombia, and arrived in the U.S. more than eight years ago as a doctoral student at a public PWI in the Northeastern part of the U.S. I am currently an international clinical faculty at a public Southwestern university where I have taught multicultural and urban education courses for the past one and a half years. Before the Spring

semester of 2020, I had no experience teaching online courses, and three out of the four classes I taught last year were new for me.

Data collection and analysis vary in duoethnographic research. Throughout the last year, we held conversations regularly, journaled, and kept notes of our experiences in response to the research questions.

Researchers' Narratives of Multicultural/Diversity Classes Online

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, the authors were in spring break of the Spring semester. The university extended spring break to allow instructors time to bring all classes online. In the fall, the university had online and hybrid courses. Hybrid courses allowed students to attend class via Zoom as the instructor taught face to face. Author 1 had four hybrid courses. During the Fall of 2020, I taught less than ten students in the classroom and had many students attending class via Zoom. Author 2 had three courses that were taught remotely for the rest of the semester. I had a doctoral-level seminar, social studies senior methods course for preservice teachers, and multicultural foundations course for first- and second-year students from different majors.

Author 1

Racialized Experiences

I have selected three moments that represent my racialized experiences in the twin pandemics. The first was the beginning of the COVID-19 quarantine. It started for me right after Spring Break. My family includes my spouse, five children, and my grandmother had just returned from a trip celebrating my grandmother's ninetieth birthday. It was the beginning, and we were

unsure of what to do. During these months, we became very secluded. One was because of my grandmother's age, and as we learned more about it. We were all high risk because we were African American. I had four children who were now in virtual school while I was teaching virtually at home.

The second moment began as we moved closer to summer, where we began to see waves of racial violence. The deaths of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Ahmaud Arbery reached national attention with arrests, trials, and acquittals. As an African American, I could not help to see my family and self and their stories. I worried about safety from the pandemics of COVID-19 and racism. It seemed that almost everyone who was dying looked like me. How do I keep my family safe? How do I handle the questions asked by the children? For the older children, they should attend the protests as they want to do? Would they be safe? All during these times, I was teaching multicultural education classes. I could tell the pandemics were taking a toll because I saw my anxiety levels increasing. I began to limit the amount of news I would take in and practiced relaxation techniques.

Some of the resistance wasn't shown in the class but in the submitted evaluations after the class ended. However, during the summer, I chose not to read my evaluations at that time. One reason is that I needed to prepare for the fall, and I knew we had covered the civil unrest, and the negative responses would be taxing and most likely impact me. I was already experiencing racial battle fatigue and chose not to add more.

The third moment continued from the summer into the fall because I used current events during both semesters. During the twin pandemics of racism and COVID-19, I found myself often trying to decide what recent event discussions to bring into the classroom and if I did bring them

how to navigate the topic. I usually list current events/topics for students to select from and present as a group on one of their three choices. I wanted the students to have some choice. In my classes, I use current events to apply the class content. It helps students apply what they learned and ask critical questions. I decided to give students the option to discuss the protests and the election. When current events such as statues, elections, racial injustices were brought into the classroom, there were serious discussions and some resistance. When I experienced resistance in my virtual or hybrid classes, I often checked in with other multicultural educators for their perspectives.

I have taught multicultural courses for almost ten years. I had taught during the previous election, but it felt different in 2020. It was almost as if I was under a microscope and needed to make sure nothing was too controversial. I also understand that I was teaching from a place of treading water- survival. This stance wasn't the best or healthiest place to teach from during the semesters. Each week or month, it seemed as new waves were hitting me when I was barely keeping my head above the Pandemic Ocean.

Community Building for Students

Creating a community of respect is foundational to building supportive diversity classrooms. Before the pandemic, I was able to make this community during the first weeks of school. I often used interactive learning strategies to build rapport and community. These included icebreakers related to education, fishbowls, think-pair-shares, etc. For online classes, I use introduction presentations and create randomized permanent groups for the semester.

Spring 2020

In Spring 2020, we had already built this community through various activities. Therefore, the community had already been established in both my online and face-to-face classes. We did a small check-in where students shared about what was occurring during our first online meeting after the beginning of the pandemic for the face-to-face course. The check-in was done verbally and allowed me to know how everyone was doing. Reflecting, I would have done a more anonymous check-in. I also have journals in all my classes. I continued this during the pandemic. I have always stated one reason for the journal is my conversational time with the student. Therefore, students were also able to check in and share in their journals.

I also revisited the syllabus. We were about to start group projects, and I decided to replace them with individual assignments for the classes that had to switch online. I went over the changes and discussed them with the class so they could have input. I finalized the changes and modified the syllabus. For the class that was already online, I kept the group assignments. I did that because of the consistency the online was used to communicating virtually. They had been in the same group since the beginning of the semester. I felt for the classes that switched to being virtual, this was an added stress, so I created individual assignments. I also lengthened the time to complete the assignments. Also, for the virtual switch classes, I gave the option of taking exams or completing projects. Lastly, we went from meeting twice a week in-person to meeting once a week online for this class. One of my goals was not to address stress to the students but to still have rigor in the class. The issues of diversity were discussed because the sense of community had already been created at the beginning of the semester for both types of classes. I began to ask equity and diversity questions around COVID-19 because I wanted to know how to apply what they had learned.

Fall 2020

      However, I found myself struggling in Fall 2020. I was assigned all face-to-face classes, but students had the option of attending the course via Zoom. I struggled at the beginning of the semester, teaching a class face to face and via Zoom. At times, it felt as if I was teaching to separate classes at the same time. Often, I interacted with the students present in the classroom and talked to the online student intermittently. I also struggled to create a sense of community that would help the class have difficult conversations that often occur when discussing diversity issues. Usually, I would teach the seven to ten students in the classroom and check the Zoom chat for virtual students' dialog. I felt I was teaching two classes at once, and I knew that I needed to create one course. About four weeks in, I decided to take a risk and try something different. I learned about Pear Deck and decided to do one week of class in it. In Pear Deck, all the students were in the same presentation. We could answer the questions anonymously in class, and everyone could see them simultaneously and discuss them. It helped create a sense of community and that we were in one course in Pear Deck. After using Pear Deck, I continued to use it for the remainder of the semester.

      In diversity classes, I often use groups to discuss diversity issues in current events/topics. In the spring semester, my online course began the semester and groups, and that helped when all classes went online because nothing changed for this class. We continued group discussions and projects that allowed them to discuss issues and give different perspectives critically. During Fall 2020, I continued this process with the hybrid diversity classes. Students moved between Zoom and in person, so I wanted to wait to place them in groups. They were placed in groups about six weeks before the end of the semester. However, I wish I had created the groups earlier, probably after I started using Pear Deck.

Most of the students in my class were freshmen and had trouble building general support systems in college. Implementing Pear Deck and creating the groups would have helped lessen the students' sense of isolation as freshmen. I needed to be more aware of how the students felt. The journals assisted me in hearing their needs, but I wish I had modified this earlier.

Many feel communities cannot be built without having the cameras on in Zoom. By seeing faces, it creates a sense of being in the classroom. For the students in the class, both in the spring and fall, cameras were optional. I did not want to intrude into their homes and have them share something they did not want to share.   Students could be helping younger siblings or be in etc. Some use cameras as a way of monitoring participation. I used technology to monitor participation.   For my Zoom students, I took attendance via the Zoom chat feature. They were responsible for answering the questions posed in the class on the chat feature. When I switched to Pear Deck, I took attendance from engagement in the Pear Deck. Throughout the Pear Deck presentation, I asked questions and downloaded the students' Pear Deck participation at the end of the class.

Decentering Whiteness

One way to support Students of Color is to decenter Whiteness and provide a caring environment. We have to have a respectful environment and have set guidelines on the way we will communicate. Because I am a person of Color discussing diversity issues, I try to create a climate conducive to have engaging critical discussions. In the beginning, I try to disrupt the stories students create of me. I make sure that the content presented is diverse and gives a variety of perspectives. I also include current events in the classes, but the students present and discuss the events. I ask them to provide different perspectives and relate the topic to class

content. Having the students present allows them to hear other views from their peers that may

challenge students' beliefs. The assignment requires to give multiple perspectives and a

One way of decentering Whiteness is by including stories of people of Color. These

stories can consist of articles, videos, textbooks, podcasts, etc. I use these stories to give

different perspectives of the predominantly White female students in education classes. In the

fall, I included case studies that focused on equity and social justice. I have a variety of materials

to allow Students of Color to see themselves in the Curriculum. I do not require my Students of

Color to share but want to create an environment that is safe for them to share. Often, they share

their stories in their journals with me. I have found some Students of Color share their stories

during the weekly discussions once a community is developed in my online classes.

As I think about the two semesters, decentering Whiteness happened through discussion

in class and online. The online courses discussed current events. The virtual switch class did not

do the current events because of the group project. However, I created projects that discussed

COVID19 and equity. During the Fall semester, one of the groups discussed the Dallas teacher

listed Kyle Rittenhouse and the misspellings that were on the list. The class discussed the

different perspectives and the impact of the teacher's decision.

Author 2

Racialized experiences

As I think back into how I experienced the twin pandemics, I can think of three central

moments. One first moment happened when COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic in mid-

March. I was living on my own and had lived for less than nine months in Texas. Of course, my

first concern was that I was in a different country and was away from my family. I tried to keep

up with the news here and in my home, country witnessing very different global realities unfold.

During this first moment, I was also concerned about making sure that my students would make

it through the rest of the semester now that we were not going to meet face-to-face and that they

were experiencing drastic changes. I elaborate on these adaptations in the following two sections.

At the time, I was also waiting for my visa to be extended for another year. I had two months left

before I would have to pack everything and return to my country. COVID-19 delayed all

processes with visas, and the government announced that many of these processes would freeze

for months. Because I did not know if I could stay another year, I could also not secure housing,

and my lease expired in the middle of May. I packed and stored most of my belongings and

moved to a temporary rental, hoping to get a visa extension soon. I was also receiving calls from

Colombia asking me whether I wanted to be repatriated.

A second moment came in the summer. Things had changed since the end of the

semester. The events happening in May (see introduction) had people tired and angry. I remained

in contact with other Faculty of Color, especially Black friends and colleagues. At the time, we

witnessed colleagues and the institution's realizations about racism and inequities that we

constantly teach, research, and talk about among Faculty of Color. Email exchanges made it felt

as if there was an implicit expectation that Faculty of Color would release statements and share

resources with students and colleagues. However, after watching many statements from the

institution and academic organizations outside of the university, it remained uncertain if these

would be backed up with policy and real structural changes. It was also a moment when I started

to feel tired. I particularly remember calling a Black colleague about a deadline I had missed.

This call ended up with both of us crying on the phone because of how sad, enraging, and unfair

everything was. This moment of vulnerability made me empathize with the heaviness of her

experience. I was walking multiple times a day to try to maintain an emotional balance. In June, protests continue to happen in different parts of the U.S. and the world.

On our campus, students publicly shared their experiences with racism on campus using a hashtag that was trending nationally on Twitter. Earlier debates and manifestations to remove confederate statues across campuses in the U.S. and public spaces were reignited, including our campus. That same month the White House made public an executive order to establish a 1776 commission to instill "Patriotic Education" (Exec. Order No. 13958, 2020). In the background of it all, I had to move multiple times during the summer. The visa documents took a lot longer, and because of COVID-19, many temporary rentals were unavailable for long periods in the summer. I was also trying to get a work visa that would allow me to stay for multiple years in my job. The same day I received all the necessary documents for the university to submit my application for the work visa, the White House published an executive order freezing all work visas for the rest of the year (Exec. order 13940, 2020). These circumstances made it even more stressful to teach and to work. I was able to move to a new place for the coming academic year.

A third moment came with the semester when the election day was getting closer. It had become harder to teach about oppression and inequity as social realities. The environment for open conversation was very polarized and so tense in one of my classes that I decided to include a week on patriotism even though it was not one of the topics in the syllabus. I wanted to make sure that week we used a written platform to discuss ideas on what patriotism means and give each student an option to engage with texts that would inform their own positioning. The discussion board's responses were primarily thoughtful and respectful, even though the room mainly became quiet when given the option to share orally.

Community building

 Spring 2020

Throughout the first part of the semester, we focused on dialogue and building trust. We frequently used concentric circles as a conversation strategy that allowed students to introduce themselves to their peers, articulate their thoughts, and listen to different thoughts and experiences related to race, gender, and ability. I could also listen to the kind of questions my students had, the experiences present in the room, and the tensions we needed to explore. Once the quarantine was declared, I sent students anonymous surveys that checked their emotional situation, their access to technology, their new commitments in terms of work and family dynamics.

Communication was one of the main aspects I focused on in the transition. We kept our regular schedules because I decided the way I would navigate this crisis was by keeping students engaged and maintaining a routine in the middle of chaos. That would also help me stay in touch with them, checking on them frequently. Students created a GroupMe to keep in touch with each other and to be able to ask questions regarding changes and technology. On Zoom, I recreated the learning communities in the breakout rooms because they had already established a trust relationship for small group discussion and had been working together in cultural plunge projects. Taking up my colleague's (Author 1) idea, I created an alternative assignment on current events that would help students make sense of what was happening outside our class. I recorded every course until the end of the semester to make sure those who had limited access to technology knew what to do if they could not connect sometimes.

Fall 2020

I attempted to reproduce some of the strategies I used to build community in person

settings using Zoom and Canvas. For example, I used to play music before class started in the

classroom. Now I joined the zoom class 15 mins before starting time and posted a question on

the first slide about their plans for the weekend, strategies to release stress, etc., trying to have

that chatting time before class begins. Students replied to the chatbox question as soon as they

joined the call as I played music in the background. Sometimes students took this time to

message me to ask questions privately. I also adapted conversation strategies that would help us

create a sense of community online. I used a fishbowl conversation adapted for the virtual space

(I asked 3- 5 students to volunteer to discuss previously shared questions while the rest of us

listened to their discussion). In the past I had used the fishbowl for in-depth conversations about

a difficult topic. However, this adaptation generated a sense of being together in dialogue.

I found the Fall semester of 2020 far more challenging to teach because the world outside

was loud, students were tired, polarization was a dominant public discourse in the social/living

Curriculum.

Decentering Whiteness

Because Whiteness affects Students of Color, sense of belonging, sense of safety, and

sense of identity. A way to decenter Whiteness is to acknowledge the reality of multiple forms of

systemic racism. I purposefully centered the contributions, voices of and experiences of different

groups of people that experience marginalization. For example, every semester in the M.E.

undergraduate course I teach, we have a week dedicated to crucial court cases that changed the

history of education in the U.S. It is essential to make explicit the labor, collective struggle, and

contributions of groups of people who continue to be antagonized in the U.S. In a week

dedicated to microaggressions in K-12 and higher education settings, we listened to audios and

read the transcripts of Students and families of Color's intergenerational schooling experiences.

We discussed what colorblind attitudes, microaggressions, and Eurocentric curricula look like in

different educational settings. During this week, the focus is on listening. Instead of comparing

or centering their own experiences, students are asked to listen to what they say about how they

feel and navigate different spaces and situations. Other weeks we analyze statistical information

and reports that help make explicit connections between personal experiences and inequities in

education. As a teacher of Color, decisions to decenter Whiteness might come at the cost of

having low participation, resistance, and denial. I have found that providing the space for

students to do their own research and create presentations helps the whole group process

emotions and new information more easily.

Recommendations

1. *Be aware of where you are.* As the instructor, you have to be mindful of where you are.

   We often forget that the teacher's emotional state and mind influences the students'

   learning (Acuff, 2018). On an airplane, we are told to "put your oxygen mask on first

   before assisting others." The same applies when teaching during a pandemic. We have to

   be aware of what we need and practice self-care as needed. If not, we found ourselves

   experiencing racial battle fatigue's physical and physiological impact (Pizarro & Kohli,

   2018; Smith, Yosso, and Solórzano, 2006).

2. *Be aware of where your students are.* As an instructor, you must be mindful of where

   your students are academically and socially. I, [Author 1], did not understand one issue

   until later in the Fall semester because I had a freshmen class. That semester was their

first semester away from home, and they were having problems with building friendships.

Some of the students came to face-to-face class for this reason and made friends. I would

have created groups at the beginning of the semester, as I usually do in my online courses

for the hybrid classes.

Often multicultural/diversity classes in undergraduate education are the first-time

students' beliefs are challenged. They have grown up with their familial views and may

have a non-questioning stance. But multicultural/diversity classes, especially classes

taught from a critical perspective, will question those beliefs and the Eurocentric

Curriculum they learned. Another aspect of this understanding you may be their first

teacher of Color. It is essential to disrupt any stereotypes and assist the students in seeing

me as an individual.

3. *Don't be afraid to do check-ins*. When COVID19 first hit in March I, [Author 2]

   introduced anonymous surveys that included emotional, technological, and

   responsibilities check-ins, following up on absences and missing submissions on

   assignments became important. By checking with students who had more than two

   absences missing more than two submissions, I learned about new living arrangements,

   limited access to internet or technology, and changes in working schedules. I also

   realized how the sociopolitical events were affecting my students emotionally. These

   virtual check-ins also allowed me to learn the kind of powerful conversations students

   held with their communities.

4. *Take risks.* As a teacher, you have to be willing to take risks and be vulnerable. The

   pandemics created semesters that were unprecedented. Educators were building strategies

   as they went. When educators realize their methods are not working, they have to be

willing to try new techniques and technology. The vulnerability is sharing this with the students. When Author 1 started using Pear Deck, she let the students know. They were advised this was a trial, and as a class, they would discuss how it was working. Another way of being vulnerable is by sharing your experiences to a certain point. Acuff (2018) discusses the impact of using courage and vulnerability in the classroom. However, the instructor has to be comfortable with this, or it may be experienced as being inauthentic.

5. *Don't take things personally.* Setting up different forms of whole group participation is necessary to respond as an instructor in the form of questions challenging assumptions, provide concrete examples to avoid generalizations, or even offer sentence stems to further their analysis. Having rubrics helps hold students accountable for using definitions, evidence, readings and prevents avoidance, resistance, or denial. It also helps the instructor and graders hold students to a standard and provide helpful feedback. These strategies are beneficial to disrupt microaggressions, and that can help the instructor avoid taking statements personally. They will lessen the racial battle fatigue the instructor may feel.

6. Have/build/create a support system outside and inside academia. Faculty of Color had to navigate the waves of racial unrest, Executive Orders, and other traumatic experiences while treading in the Pandemic Ocean. Having relationships and rapport with other Faculty of Color helped share experiences, strategies on responding to resistance and denial, and making meaning of these experiences together. Each time a wave hit the authors, they still had to teach about diversity and support their students while still trying to stay afloat. With each wave, the authors learned how to support their students and themselves. They tried to find healing in their teaching (Acuff, 2018). For each other it

looked different, but they found hope and routines that allowed for the success of their

students and themselves.

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