

Mentorship in Higher Education

Compassionate Approaches Supporting Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Thomas A. Lucey & Elizabeth S. White

Introduction

The development of culturally responsive teachers who value their students for their own stories and backgrounds represents a critical pursuit. Unfortunately, new teachers report feeling unprepared for racial and ethnic diversity in the classroom and find that coursework addressing these issues provides little help in classroom practice (Castro, 2010; Public Agenda and National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, 2008).

These concerns signify systemic resistance to existent approaches to fostering justice-oriented dispositions in teachers and teacher candidates, as they may be reluctant to acknowledge the effects of social inequality because it requires them to also accept their own privilege within existing social structures (e.g., Espino & Lee, 2011). Thus, teachers and teacher candidates must experience compassionate educational environments that support the emotional framework to accept responsibility for their personal biases and privilege.

In this article we examine and describe the process of self-reflection and mentorship associated with teaching a graduate course on diversity and culturally responsive pedagogy. During this mentorship, for 16 weeks, the two authors engaged in reflective dialogue through email about teaching the course. The analysis of these emails found evidence of enhancement of professional selves as teacher educators (both the mentor and the mentee) through self-reflection and the mentorship process. Thus, we discuss how self-reflection and mentoring through reflective dialogue can

support the teaching of a course on diversity and culturally responsive teaching.

This research is guided by principles of self-study (Cuenca, 2010; Dinkelman, 2003; Dinkelman, Margolis, & Sikkenga, 2006) involving “intentional and systematic inquiry into one’s own practice. Included in this definition is inquiry conducted by individual teacher educators as well as groups working collaboratively to understand the problems of practice more deeply” (Dinkelman, 2003, p. 8).

In line with self-study, we frame teaching as a fluid and evolving process and seek to improve practice through reflective dialogue (Cuenca, 2010; Dinkelman, 2003). We echo Dinkelman’s assertion that self-study can reveal insights into local contexts and processes, and that these insights may also be useful to other educators (Dinkelman, 2003). Thus, we discuss how self-reflection and mentoring with reflective dialogue among two faculty members can support the teaching of a course on diversity and culturally responsive teaching.

Literature Review

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Despite some progress educating a predominately White teaching force about the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy, significant challenges persist (Castro, 2010). Mills and Ballantyne (2010) developed a typology of three hierarchical stages (self-awareness/self-reflectiveness, openness, and commitment to social justice) that defines candidates’ transition to diversity-responsive dispositions.

Castro (2010) reviewed research on pre-service teachers’ ideas about cultural diversity, and while the studies showed an acceptance of diversity, evidence also indicated simplistic notions of multiculturalism and support of minimal multicultural implementation. Further, teachers and candidates struggled to accept the presence of oppressive experiences and prac-

tices by their dominant culture (Castro, 2010).

Garrett and Segall (2013) attribute White teacher candidates’ resistance to critical multicultural education to avoidance of acknowledging the truth of social accounts provided by those who are oppressed. In other words, excuses of ignorance represent deliberate efforts to avoid responsibility for culturally oppressive conditions. Similarly, resistance represents an attempt to change the focus of classroom conversations to preserve a sense of pride for social accomplishments and blaming the victims for their circumstances.

The current research rests upon the principle that acceptance of responsibility occurs best in nonthreatening environments founded upon trust and acceptance. Safe environments represent necessary conditions for affecting long-term attitudinal change among a population of predominately White teachers and teacher candidates. Narvaez and Gleason (2013) describe the relevance of a secure and nurturing environment for developing children who possess the compassionate inner sense of worth and ability to resist threatening conditions, and they point to the value of safe and trusting settings that allow individuals to express their vulnerabilities and receive attention from caring providers.

We uphold Nodding’s (2008) model for a caring classroom environment, which consists of four elements—(1) modeling, (2) dialogue, (3) practice, and (4) confirmation—as a tool for building teacher education settings that allow teachers and teacher candidates the safety to talk about their victimization, build trust with classroom community members, and develop empathy for the counter narratives that existing social climates obscure.

The first three steps require the instructor’s demonstration of compassion for students’ own views, building trust with each individual. Such trust undergirds dialogue

Thomas A. Lucey is a professor and Elizabeth S. White is an assistant professor, both with the School of Teaching and Learning of the College of Education at Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois.

and practice in which members of the class community learn to build trust based on caring respect for each other. In this setting, students experience the sense of safety such that they may express personal vulnerability about their social views and concerns, and experience care that models for them responsibility to support others.

According to Noddings (2008), the fourth step, confirmation, signifies the presence of optimal community because the caring party can articulate the difficulty experienced by the other within the context of conversation without the other's objection or changing of the topic. In the current study, we explore how mentoring among colleagues in higher education helps an instructor establish a trusting classroom community and supports the teaching of a course on diversity and culturally responsive pedagogy.

Mentoring

We frame mentoring as "A dynamic, reciprocal relationship in a work environment between an advanced career incumbent (mentor) and a beginner (protégé) aimed at promoting the career development of both" (Healy & Welchert, 1990, p. 17). While mentoring has various theoretical underpinnings (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2001), we conceptualized mentorship as rooted in social constructivist principles which involve social interaction and the co-construction of knowledge between individuals (Palincsar, 1998).

Mentoring provides benefits to both mentor and mentee, including opportunities for reflection, sharing of ideas, professional growth, and personal satisfaction (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004). Mentoring is used in educational contexts (e.g., K-12 schools, higher education, etc.) to foster the development of effective educators, to provide social support, and to encourage best classroom practices.

A healthy relationship between mentor and mentee represents a critical element for successful outcomes though studies indicate that determinants of that relationship depend on the participants' roles (Allen & Eby, 2008; Lechuga, 2011) and the organization of the mentoring relationship (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). The mentee's sense of mentor commitment and a feeling of "buy-in" of the selection process contributes to satisfaction with the relationship (Allen & Eby, 2008; Bell & Traveleaven, 2011), whereas mentors view the process as an adjustment to their professional process to assist the mentee's acclimation to a new professional climate (Lechuga, 2011).

Mentoring processes may be formal or informal in nature. Formal mentoring involves deliberate (often assigned) pairing of mentor and mentee, well-defined goals, planned outcomes, and structured communication, whereas informal mentoring is less likely to include specific goals or pre-determined outcomes, communication processes are less structured, and pairing may be spontaneous or involve self-selection (Chao, Walz, Gardner, 1992; Lazarus, 2015; Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

Research has shown that mentees in various professions who experience informal mentoring processes report higher levels of career-related support (Chao et al., 1992), social support, and general satisfaction from the mentoring relationship (Ragins & Cotton, 1999), when compared with formal mentoring. Lucey and Giannangelo (2015) further demonstrated the potential for professional growth through informal mentoring in higher education during an undergraduate social studies methods course. They found that genuine, truthful, and positive communications contributed to mentee growth through an affirmed sense of professional identity.

In summary, mentoring fosters healthy mutual development when it involves a supportive environment that affirms the experiences of both participants to generate a trust-based relationship founded in care. Developing culturally responsive teachers necessitates the facilitation of caring and supportive educational environments. The focus of the current study involves the mentoring process and its relation to the teaching of a graduate course on diversity and culturally responsive teaching.

Method

Participants

Study participants included a veteran culturally responsive teaching Associate Professor (the mentor) and a second-year Assistant Professor (the mentee). The mentor, a White male teacher educator, had three years of experience teaching as a substitute and middle school teacher, and seven years as a tenure track professor. The mentee, a White female teacher educator, formerly had four years of teaching experience at the elementary level, one year teaching as adjunct faculty during her graduate studies, and one and a half years teaching as a tenure track faculty member in a college of education. Her primary teaching responsibilities in higher education were courses in child and adolescent development.

Issues regarding power at both the micro (interpersonal) and macro (societal/structural) levels are inherent in mentoring relationships. According to Ragins (1997), power can be conceptualized as "the influence of one person over others, stemming from an individual characteristic, an interpersonal relationship, a position in an organization, or from membership in a societal group" (p. 485).

As a more senior faculty member, and a White male, the mentor experienced both organizational and societal power in the mentoring relationship. The mentor, however, did not have an administrative role in the university so while he was viewed as a superior and more knowledgeable because of his experience and expertise teaching the course, he was not viewed by the mentee as a manager or supervisor who would dominate, restrict, or evaluate the mentee. The mentor also did not perceive himself as being in a position of power or superior position. Coming to the project from varied occupational experiences, he did not possess a full awareness of the mentee's education experience and training, yet appreciated her reputation as a teacher and researcher.

Data Sources

Data consisted of a semester-long series of email communications between the mentor and mentee while the mentee taught a graduate course on student diversity and culturally responsive teaching at a large Midwestern university. The class met one night a week for approximately three hours. Nineteen students were enrolled and all were in-service or pre-service teachers.

Throughout the course, students learned about patterns of institutional and interpersonal discrimination through various readings, activities, documentaries, and student-led discussions. Discussions were based on assigned readings from two textbooks: Koppelman's (2014) *Understanding Human Differences: Multicultural Education for a Diverse America* (4th Ed.) and Oakes, Lipton, Anderson, and Stillman's (2013) *Teaching to Change the World* (4th Ed.).

Activities implemented in class were also related to course readings; examples included an inclusion/exclusion reflection activity and a class session during which students practiced responding to homophobic remarks such as "That's so gay." Documentaries (e.g., *Two Towns of Jasper*) shown in class also addressed issues presented in the reading such as racial tension.

The mentor, the usual instructor for the course, was on sabbatical and the mentee expressed interest in teaching the course during his absence. The mentor suggested that the two colleagues engage in an email correspondence to reflect on the process of teaching a graduate level course on culturally responsive teaching, and the mentee agreed. During the semester, each professor composed eight email reflections; each participant wrote emails on alternative weeks. Consistent with informal mentoring as described by Lazarus (2015) and Ragins and Cotton (1999), there was little structure guiding the email communications, and goals or intended outcomes of the reflections were not specified. Aside from several emails that related to another research project, the participants did not have any additional contact during the semester of the email exchanges.

Analysis

Coding of the email communications was an iterative and inductive process using methods described by Merriam (2009) to identify meaning and patterns in each professor's reflections. First, the participants independently read the email communications numerous times and identified three conceptual themes related to comments and observations made by both professors. Specifically, the conceptual themes related to: (1) the mentee's perceptions of the course; (2) the mentee's perceptions of students' ideas about diversity and culturally responsive teaching; and (3) the mentor's perception of his role in a mentoring relationship.

Once themes were established, the participants independently sorted segments of the emails into one of the three theme categories. Disagreement was resolved by discussion, and conversation segments were double-coded when appropriate. Each participant read through and examined the conversation segments within each conceptual theme to identify more specific patterns.

Analysis revealed an overarching pattern within each theme ranging from attitudes of control to those of openness and compassion. Specifically, the attitudes of mentee and mentor proceeded from more controlling to more compassionate states through the progression of the course. A similar progression was evident for the students (as perceived by the mentee) though there was variability in student attitudes at the end of the course.

Results

The organization of results relates to the themed topics of conversation between the two corresponding professors (i.e., mentor and mentee). For each theme, we describe and depict the timing of the developmental progression using examples from the correspondences.

Mentee Perceptions of the Course

Analysis revealed that the mentee's perceptions of the course changed over the semester. These changes occurred at two levels. First, her perspective of course procedures transitioned from a focus on technical aspects of the course (e.g., grading, assignments) and internal conflict regarding her role in this process to greater comfort with the student-centered approach and relinquishing control of these course processes. Second, she developed a deeper compassion for the students and the ways in which their experiences affected their receptivity (or lack thereof) to culturally responsive teaching.

At the outset of the course, the mentee expressed worries about technical aspects of the course, noting concerns about standards and content. These concerns included expectations for assignments and opportunities for imparting knowledge of research. She wrote,

I do question how to effectively evaluate students in their approach to diversity issues or their sensitivity to difference. I think we all are continuously developing in these areas and identifying someone as "meeting" or "exceeding expectations" feels inappropriate. (January 14, 2014)

As the course progressed, the mentee continued to express uncertainty regarding the level of control she should implement during course discussions, as she commented that she "should have pushed for...connections," but also did not want to "be too heavy handed" (February 14, 2014). She also continued to experience internal conflicts negotiating her role in the course with grading practices, noting that:

I am the instructor but I've situated myself as an equal and a facilitator so I still struggle with giving or withholding points as this process feels philosophically incompatible with my role. (February 14, 2014)

By the fourth mentor/mentee self-reflection correspondence, the mentee appeared to release some need to control the course procedures as she wrote, "I need to be more flexible in my approach and responsive to their in-the-moment ideas and

understandings" (February 27, 2014). She developed a more fluid view of the course and its content, noting that she was working to "view this course as a process, rather than content to be handed over" (March 10, 2014).

Later in the semester, this increased flexibility manifested itself. The mentee noted that students "have expressed confusion about how to address culturally responsive teaching in the classroom" so she decided to make a spontaneous change during a class session.

Although I was going to show another [video clip] last week for the activity, I decided in the moment to have students share their multicultural lessons with other students which I think was a great activity. (March 29, 2014)

An increasingly flexible and student-centered view of the course helped her better accommodate the learning needs of the students.

The mentee also became more understanding of students' perceived discomfort discussing issues related to social justice and with the open nature of the course. Initially, she focused on their resistance to the course organization, as she commented, "Student comfort level with the somewhat open structure of the assignments and their development of rubrics continues to be an issue" (February 14, 2014). She also expressed exasperation after noting their avoidance of social justice issues in the class discussion:

I was honestly just frustrated after the discussion last night and am trying to figure out how I can better probe and get students thinking more critically about these ideas. (February 14, 2014)

Approximately halfway through the semester, however, she realized the complexity of the course content and the challenge of prompting students' realization of this sophistication.

As I teach this class, I'm noticing that there are multiple layers—there's the overall context of discrimination and oppression (interpersonal and institutional), but there's also a classroom and community action piece that I would like to highlight more that focuses on social justice education and pluralism in the classroom. (February 27, 2014)

The mentee began to recognize that teaching a course on diversity and culturally responsive pedagogy exposes the students to a myriad of intersecting content and appreciated the complexity of this process.

Late in the course, she began to consider

why in-service teachers would express resistance to a flexible and student-centered course:

It must be difficult for education majors as we're on the one hand having them watch cooperating teachers to copy them, giving them standards to meet (both for their licensure and for their own students) while on the other hand we're asking them to take ownership of what they're doing and feel confident in the classroom and challenge those rules we've helped train them to follow. (April 14, 2014)

Consideration of the students' experiences in teacher training programs helped the mentee better understand students' perceived discomfort with the structure of the course and their desire for clear, detailed lessons to support culturally responsive teaching. In other words, reflective dialogue with the mentor helped the mentee develop compassion and cultivated a greater understanding of students in their learning process.

Mentee Perceptions of Student Responses to Course Content

The mentee interpreted the students as expressing varying degrees of resistance to course processes and content. Students came to the course with differing understandings of *diversity* as

... numerous students in both discussion groups commented on how the text made them rethink their definition of diversity and broaden their ideas to include categories such as ability status. (February 14, 2014)

While the students were open to these new ideas, they also questioned how to address issues such as religion or sexuality in K-12 classrooms and demonstrated various degrees of receptivity to the applicability of course content to their teaching practices. The mentee noted multiple times that some students were resistant to the open nature of culturally responsive teaching and wanted specific directives or lessons to address diversity in the classroom:

I still feel that many of the students want an easy answer or a quick fix to these issues and it just doesn't exist. Plus, any social justice approach is going to be shaped by the context or community you're in and the children and families you're working with so there's no one size fits all solution... they still want an easy answer to "so what do I do in my classroom?" and I can't give that to them. (February 27, 2014)

At the same time, evidence of student consideration for course content became

evident a little more than halfway through the course. Students spoke privately to the mentee: "Two students stayed after class...to share recent experiences of interpersonal discrimination (observed and experienced) and how they spoke out against it" (March 10, 2014). One of these students revealed that the course readings and discussions were "making her more aware of these kinds of situations...and she asked herself, 'well, if I don't say something, who will?'" (March 10, 2014).

Yet the mentee also found that students expressed resistance to activities such as protesting or challenging authority figures. The mentee reported similar student resistance to a conversation about a Black community challenging a school board's decision in Jasper, Texas, not to observe the Martin Luther King Holiday after viewing the documentary *Two Towns of Jasper* (Dow & Williams, 2003). The video contained interviews with members of the Black community contrasting the relevance of Martin Luther King holiday with a Rodeo Day celebration, which the White community favored. The mentee observed:

A number of students did try to steer the conversation more towards social class and while I do think social class is important, sometimes I feel as though it's used as code (like ghetto or urban) to avoid explicitly mentioning race. I can't imagine having this conversation earlier in the course as we're almost finished and they're still somewhat apprehensive. (April 08, 2014)

However, the mentee also observed some students connecting their developing awareness of discrimination to their own lives.

For instance, one student commented that both the movie and the reading for that week made him think about his own friends, his neighbors, and his children's friends/classmates and how few people of color he really had in his life and how he would like to change that. (April 08, 2014)

Students also questioned the appropriateness of diversity discussions when the basis for conversation was not represented in the classroom. As noted by the mentee:

They [the students] were mixed in terms of how important they felt it was to discuss these issues [gender identity and homosexuality]—it was more like if children bring up an issue or if someone has two dads or if a student comes out as gay then it's something to discuss, but it wasn't something to discuss otherwise I did try to emphasize that a message

of acceptance is critical and that kids are likely aware of these issues so it's okay to discuss them- I think easier said than done though. (April 24, 2014)

At this point in the course, the students debated each other in small group discussions regarding acceptance versus tolerance of LGBTQ youth. Specifically, two students maintained that "their schools acknowledged homosexuality but the message was to suppress it and not to act on those feelings" (April 24, 2014). However, "another teacher explained to them, this wasn't really acceptance—this seemed like tolerance but not acceptance" (April 24, 2014). After continuing in the debate and discussing various religions and the Bible, "another student framed the struggle of LGBTQ students as a civil rights issue and related it to racial inequality" (April 24, 2014).

Although students expressed divergent views about these issues, they showed comfort expressing those ideas during class sessions, as they communicated "very calmly and respectfully" (April 24, 2014). The participants interpreted the environment as one in which the mentee's resistance to interjection led to an environment in which the students experienced respect for each other based on trust and safety. They had a sense of compassion for each other that developed through a setting that valued their ideas and experiences. Overall, through conversation and peer-support and challenge, the mentee perceived some students as becoming more comfortable with discussion of diversity topics and engaging in self-reflection though there was still variability among students at the end of the semester.

The Mentorship Process

During the semester, the mentor transitioned from a mode of supportive control to one of more compassion and acceptance. In his initial reflection, the mentor expressed both compassionate and controlling tendencies. He expressed a theoretically compassionate perspective of the course processes and content; however, his patterns of mentorship exhibited controlling tendencies. In the early emails, the mentor provided directives and suggested activities that he had used in the past. The mentor's email communications showed development from mentoring as providing feedback and guidance based on knowledge and past experience (control) to developing receptivity to the needs of mentee (compassion).

Early semester examples illustrated

the mentor's theoretical compassion: "By telling the high and low points of my life story, I create a safe classroom environment for students to build a trusting community" (January 19, 2014). Evidence of the potential for controlling mentorship also appeared, as the mentor used directives and advised the mentee to, "Think about this process from a kindergartener's view," "Think of this from a psychological/sociological perspective," and "Point out to students that reason and emotion are not inseparable" (February 2, 2014).

By the third reflection (February 19, 2014), these tendencies for theoretical compassion and controlling mentorship synthesized themselves into directives for class activities. For example, the mentor observed that students related the readings to their practice and encouraged the mentee to "Tease out their feelings of helplessness and frustration." In response to the professional helplessness expressed by students, the mentor noted, "It may be helpful to stop the discussion (or use the middle hour) to guide a discussion that prompts their thinking about alternative forms of response to these conditions."

Beginning with this mentor's fourth reflection response, the two participants experienced an element of contestation over the mentor's recommendation of a Devil's Advocate activity:

The guest speaker poses as a member of the Department of Education who is proposing a new curriculum that is extremely conservative and does not allow for deviation of thought. The presenter is very polite and deflects student questions by complimenting them on their intelligence and twisting the question into advocacy for the proposal. The goal of the activity is to prompt students to challenge the speaker and interpret the extent to which they might challenge his authority based on their learning in the course. The debriefing process involves asking the students to discuss their feelings during the presentation and their motivations for challenging the speaker. (March 2, 2014)

While the mentee initially expressed little resistance to the activity, she did share new activities that she had discovered or developed and then discussed their varying effectiveness. Later in the course, however, the mentee expressed open resistance to the suggested activity:

I'm not sure I'm comfortable having the person come in as devil's advocate for their efforts to change things—I feel like it's a delicate process to begin to question the state of education and then feeling empowered enough to do it—I'm a bit

concerned that if they face this opposition in the classroom, they won't feel as comfortable trying it in the real world. I'm concerned that it would undermine [their] empowerment which in my mind is critical when they leave this course. (March 10, 2014)

The mentor initially pushed back and tried to convince her of the merit of the activity by pointing out that "the simulation gives students the opportunity to challenge in a safe setting" and noting that "this is very important" (March 18, 2014). He also felt she was taking a protectionist stance with her students that would hinder their learning and progress. The mentee continued to express resistance by asserting ownership of the course and its processes as well as care for her students:

My hesitation also stems from it not being my activity—it's something that you use and you like...it almost feels like an authority figure telling me that I need to use it.... Although I've used the same readings that you do, I think I have used somewhat different activities and I wonder if that speaks to somewhat different goals in our approach to the course... I want to make sure that they're leaving the course with determination to at least do some things differently in their classrooms and we're not there yet. (March 27, 2014)

The mentee acknowledged the mentor's position, while noting multiple reasons to justify the activity's exclusion. In his reply, the mentor began to show greater responsiveness to the mentee and her somewhat different approach to the course:

Your thoughts about my recent reply prompted me to reflect on the Devil's Advocate (DA) activity in this regard. The reason being that this semester, I've encouraged implementation of practices and reflections that teach students about compassion; yet, I am now thinking that the DA activity—as previously applied—may not fall within this approach...the activity forces the students to decide whether or not to challenge authority; however, the approach for challenging may not be compassionate, but argumentative. (March 29, 2014)

The exchange over the Devil's Advocate activity represented a defining communication in the mentoring processes. For the mentee, the exchange established her ownership of the course. She built from the curricular framework provided by the mentor, yet honed it in response to the needs of her students in a manner consistent with her interpretation of multicultural literature and teaching. For the mentor, the

exchange illuminated the reciprocal nature of a mentoring process. He came to realize mentoring as a process of providing professional support by offering the mentee general direction with which to embark on a journey and providing encouraging feedback to guide negotiation of challenges.

Discussion

This study facilitated an online mentoring process between two higher education professionals. The mentoring processes advocated care principles (Noddings, 2008) within a course that concerned culturally responsive teaching, encouraging the mentee's facilitation of class experiences that both challenged and valued students. Study findings are discussed below in relation to literature that concerns mentoring and culturally responsive teaching.

Compassion in the Mentoring Process

The study found that a compassionate mentoring process, reflective dialogue, and the opportunity to engage in critical self-reflection supported the teaching of a graduate course on diversity and culturally responsive teaching. This supportive process and the opportunity to self-reflect in a safe, non-threatening context empowered the mentee to continue in her exercise of compassionate principles and resist resorting to controlling processes. We perceive the mentoring and reflection process as helpful in facilitating a classroom environment founded on principles of care (Noddings, 2008) and to address resistance towards diversity concerns that students may express (Garrett & Segall, 2013).

The mentee also experienced an "identity transformation" as discussed by Healy and Welchert (1990). By refusing to implement an activity repeatedly prescribed by the mentor and articulating her different approach to the course, the mentee achieved an identity separate from the mentor and established her own practices as a self-directing colleague.

Over time, the mentor also lessened his self-preoccupation; instead of providing directives, he became more encouraging of the new activities the mentee was using in the course. Thus, as the mentor relinquished control over the course and the mentee's practices, there was a shift in power in the mentoring relationship by the end of the semester. As noted by Inzer and Crawford (2005), the mentor and mentee should have an "equal partnership," and in the current study, the mentor and mentee established a greater balance of power over time.

These findings are also consistent with those of Lucey and Giannangelo (2015) in which both participants proceeded through stages of professional reflection, as described by O'Malley (2007). This progression occurred through a process of mutually respecting openness in which the mentee assumed ownership of the course while establishing her professional identity. Her interaction with her mentor also prompted his self-reflection about his professional stances. Overall, we found that mentorship is indeed a reciprocal process that results in professional growth for both mentor and mentee.

Compassion in Diversity Education

A compassionate approach to teaching diversity courses offers a basis for undermining the resistance that in-service and pre-service teachers bring to the classroom. The mentee perceived some students as beginning to accept ideas about diversity-based practice about halfway through the course and engaging in critical discussions and debates by the end of the semester. The mentee perceived herself as creating a trusting environment that respected all views brought to the classroom and built solidarity through open, respectful, shared discussion in class and the co-construction of knowledge (Palincsar, 1998) among students. The classroom experienced Noddings' (2008) notions of care such that students engaged in processes of discovery. As students developed trust in this environment, some were perceived as becoming more accepting of the conceptions presented.

This course allowed students to accept content on their own terms, rather than creating the appearance of an agenda by forcing them to accept views that contradicted their own. In other words, students were able to develop critical perspectives by reflecting on the material, interacting with peers, and constructing meaning for themselves. This process reflects O'Loughlin's (1992) and Goodman's (1992) notions of emancipatory constructivism in which teachers help students engage in critical pedagogy by first asking critical questions regarding their own educational contexts and engaging in critical reflection themselves. While patterns of resistance were evident, the compassionate environment accepted these points of view and worked with them to develop understandings on their own terms in their own times.

While the mentee perceived some students as showing evidence of Mills and Ballantyne's (2010) highest dispositional

stage though a commitment to social justice, others were still in the process of developing openness to diversity issues or becoming more self-reflective regarding issues such as privilege. These findings speak to the importance of incorporating culturally responsive pedagogy and social justice throughout teacher education programs and in multiple courses. As noted by Mills and Ballantyne (2010), a semester-long stand-alone course may not be sufficient to achieve true attitudinal change.

Limitations

These study findings must be interpreted in light of certain limitations. First, data were taken entirely from the email communication between the mentor and mentee. Descriptions of course processes and students' experiences are entirely based on the mentee's perceptions. Future work should consider incorporating student interviews or surveys to better interpret students' ideas, course experiences, and changes in both over time.

Second, purposeful selection processes occurred for this study. Because the two participants deliberately worked together to organize this study, patterns of communication may be different from those that might occur between participants who might be assigned to collaborate. Patterns of communication might also differ between mentoring partners housed at different institutions.

Third, the patterns of communication between the two participants are based on their personal experiences and histories. They might not extend to the general population of education academics. Additional studies that use larger samples might yield patterns of communications that differ from those presented herein.

Conclusions

This self-study found that a compassionate approach to mentoring the instructor of a graduate teacher education course on culturally responsive pedagogy contributed to the development of a classroom community founded on solidarity through collaboration and mutual respect. It provided evidence to support mentoring processes in higher education, particularly when facilitating a course on diversity and culturally responsive teaching.

We encourage additional studies that employ compassionate approaches to teaching and mentorship that include the use of attitudinal surveys to interpret levels and trends in student dispositions

during these course experiences. The adaption of compassionate policies and practices in teacher education represents a viable pursuit in the creation of socially just teaching and learning environments.

This study provides evidence that compassionate approaches to mentoring and teaching provide for safe settings that, with time, allow for critical dialogue. These conditions also allow for challenging of authority when it may pose a threat to those most vulnerable, which is what culturally responsive pedagogy is all about.

References

- Allen, T. D., & Eby, L. T. (2008). Mentor commitment in formal mentoring relationships. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 72*, 309-316. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2007.10.016.
- Bell, A., & Treleaven, L. (2011). Looking for Professor Right: Mentee selection of mentors in a formal mentoring program. *Higher Education, 61*, 545-561. doi: 10.1007/s10734-010-9348-0.
- Castro, A. J. (2010). Themes in research on preservice teachers' views of cultural diversity: Implications for researching millennial preservice teachers. *Educational Researcher, 39*(3), 198-210. doi: 10.3102/0013189X10363819.
- Chao, G., Walz, P., & Gardner, P. (1992). Formal and informal mentorships: A comparison on mentoring functions and contrast with nonmentored counterparts. *Personnel Psychology, 45*, 619-636.
- Cuenca, A. (2010). Self-study research: Surfacing the art of pedagogy in teacher education. *Journal of Inquiry and Action in Education, 3*(2), 15-29.
- Dinkelman, T. (2003). Self-study in teacher education: A means and end tool for promoting reflective teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education, 54*(1), 6-18. doi: 10.1177/0022487102238654.
- Dinkelman, T., Margolis, J., & Sikkenga, K. (2006). From teacher to teacher educator: Experiences, expectations, and expatriation. *Studying Teacher Education, 2*(1), 5-23. doi: 10.1080/17425960600557447.
- Dow, W., & Williams, W. (2003). *Two towns of Jasper* (DVD). Washington, DC: PBS.
- Ehrich, L. C., Hansford, B. C., & Tennent, L. (2001, December). *Closing the divide: Theory and practice in mentoring*. Paper for Australia and New Zealand Academy of Management (ANZAM) 2001 Conference, Auckland, New Zealand.
- Ehrich, L. C., Hansford, B. C., & Tennent, L. (2004). Formal mentoring programs in education and other professions: A review of the literature. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 40*, 518-540. doi: 10.1177/0013161X04267118.
- Espino, M., & Lee, J. (2011). Understanding resistance: Reflections on race and privilege through service-learning. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 44*, 136-152. doi: 10.1080/10665684.2011.558424.

- Garrett, H. J., & Segall, A. (2013). (Re)Consideration of ignorance and resistance in teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 64*, 294-304. doi: 10.1177/0022487113487752.
- Goodman, J. (1992, April). *Working in schools: Emancipatory theorizing and educational reform*. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.
- Healy, C. C., & Welchert, A. J. (1990). Mentoring relations: A definition to advance research and practice. *Educational Researcher, 19*(9), 17-21.
- Inzer, L. D., & Crawford, C. B. (2005). A review of formal and informal mentoring: Processes, problems, and designs. *Journal of Leadership Education, 4*(1), 31-50.
- Koppelman, K. L. (2014). *Understanding human differences: Multicultural education for a diverse America* (4th Ed). Boston, MA: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.
- Lazarus, A. (2015). The anatomy of a mentor-mentee relationship. *Physician Leadership Journal, 2*(6), 68-72.
- Lechuga, V. M. (2011). Faculty-graduate student mentoring relationships: Mentors' perceived roles and responsibilities. *Higher Education, 62*, 757-771. doi: 10.1007/s10734-011-9416-0.
- Lucey, T. A., & Giannangelo, D. M. (2015). Looking forward into the past. *Citizenship, Social, and Economic Education, 14*, 120-132. doi: 10.1177/2047173415600596.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mills, C., & Ballantyne, J. (2010). Pre-service teachers' dispositions towards diversity. Arguing for developmental hierarchy of change. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 26*, 447-454. doi: 0.1016/j.tate.2009.05.012.
- Narvaez, D., & Gleason, T. R. (2013). Developmental optimization. In D. Narvaez, J. Panksepp, A. N. Schore, & T. R. Gleason (Eds.), *Evolution, early experience, and human development. From research to practice and policy* (pp. 307-325). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Noddings, N. (2008). Caring and moral education. In L. P. Nucci & D. Narvaez (Eds.), *Handbook of moral and character education* (pp. 161-174). New York, NY: Routledge.
- O'Loughlin, M. O. (1992). Engaging teachers in emancipatory knowledge construction. *Journal of Teacher Education, 43*, 336-346. doi: 10.1177/0022487192043005003.
- O'Malley, G. S. (2007) Letters to Gracia: Learning about teaching and writing instruction. *Teachers College Record*. ID Number: 14482. Retrieved from: <http://www.tcrecord.org>.
- Oakes, J., Lipton, M., Anderson, L., & Stillman, J. (2013). *Teaching to change the world* (4th Ed). Boulder, CO: Paradigm.
- Palincsar, A. S. (1998). Social constructivist perspectives on teaching and learning. *Annual Review of Psychology, 49*, 345-375. doi: 10.1146/annurev.psych.49.1.345.
- Public Agenda and National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality. (2008). *Lessons learned: New teachers talk about their jobs, challenges, and long-range plans. Issue No. 3: Teaching in changing times*. Washington, DC: National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality and Public Agenda.
- Ragins, B. R. (1997). Diversified mentoring relationships in organizations: A power perspective. *The Academy of Management Review, 22*, 482-521.
- Ragins, B. R., & Cotton, J. L. (1999). Mentor functions and outcomes: A comparison of men and women in formal and informal mentoring relationships. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 84*, 529-550.