



DEVELOPING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

R. JASON LYNCH & CHARMION B. RUSH, EDITORS

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CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES ON ACCESS, EQUITY, & ACHIEVEMENT

Developing Culturally Responsive Learning Environments in Postsecondary Education

A Volume in Contemporary Perspectives on Access,
Equity, & Achievement

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Developing Culturally Responsive Learning Environments in Postsecondary Education

Editors

R. Jason Lynch
Appalachian State University

Charmion B. Rush
Western Carolina University



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CONTENTS

Prologue—How to Use This Book

R. Jason Lynch and Charmion B. Rush xiii

SECTION I: UNPACKING YOUR OWN CULTURAL COMPETENCE

1. What Is Cultural Competence in Postsecondary Education?
Patricia Hilliard and Callie Edwards 3
2. Implicit Bias and the College Classroom
Charmion B. Rush and Cynthia B. Wooten 21
3. Building Cultural Competence
Candy J. Noltensmeyer, Lisa Bloom, and Charmion B. Rush 39
4. The Power of Personal Narratives
Chauntee Thrill 55

SECTION II: LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF THE 21ST CENTURY COLLEGE STUDENT

5. Building Intersectionality-Minded Learning Environments
Jessica Belue Buckley, Olivia Copeland, and David Nguyen 73
6. Culturally and Historically Responsive Pedagogies to Enhance Student Agency in Racialized Learning Environments
Ginny Boss 91

7. Strategies and Perspectives of Individuals With Disabilities in Postsecondary Education
Kelly R. Kelley..... 107

8. Creating Restorative and Affirming Classrooms for LGBTQ+ Students
Kris De Pedro, Holly Shim-Pelayo, and Annmary Abdou 123

9. Beyond Best Practices: Engaging in Culturally Responsive Strategies to Support Trans* Students in Higher Education
Katy Jaekel..... 139

10. Recognizing Class in the Room: Strategies for Teaching and Learning in Social Class-Conscious and Responsive Ways
Sonja Ardoin and Genia M. Bettencourt.....155

11. THERE-FOR-U: Supporting Military and Veteran Student Academic Success
Olivia Boyd, Kimberly Tran, and John W. Brooker 171

12. “You’re Multicultural, But We Can Fix That!”: The Danger of Deficit Thinking in U.S. Postsecondary Education’s Approach to International Students
Charles Allen Brown..... 187

13. Religious, Secular, and Spiritual Identities
B. Ashley Staples 205

SECTION III: CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING AND INSTRUCTION

14. Inclusive Pedagogy: Foundations for Praxis in the Collegiate Classroom
Brandi Nicole Hinnant-Crawford, Shamella Cromartie, Rebecca G. Childs, and Erika L. Lett 227

15. Communication Styles
Karena Cooper-Duffy..... 247

16. Indigenizing College Teaching
Heather Kind-Keppel and Ruth Harper.....271

17. Culturally Responsive Digital Learning in Postsecondary Education
Nancy Luke..... 285

18. Trauma-Informed Teaching in Postsecondary Education
R. Jason Lynch and Chateé Omísadé Richardson 301

**SECTION IV: TRANSFORMING CURRICULUM, CONTENT,
AND ENVIRONMENT**

19. Teaching Out of Bounds: Decolonizing Curricula in Higher Education
Emily Jackson and Emerald Templeton 323

20. An Interdisciplinary Social Justice Minor: How Do You Create University Level Curriculum Change?
Patricia Bricker, Kim Winter, Callie Schultz, Jenny Stewart, and Kelly Tracy 341

21. Embedding Culturally Responsive Learning Strategies in the Classroom
Ashley Carpenter 359

22. Developing Culturally Responsive Learning Environments in STEM Education
Frim Ampaw, Anne M. Hornak, Caitlin Hamstra, and Taylor Nelson 375

23. Do I Fit In? Cultivating Belonging, Mattering, and Community
R. Jason Lynch 389

Epilogue—Where Do We Go From Here?
Charmion B. Rush and R. Jason Lynch..... 407

About the Authors..... 409

PROLOGUE

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

R. Jason Lynch
Appalachian State University

Charmion B. Rush
Western Carolina University

By 2043 the majority of the United States' population will consist of individuals from racially minoritized identities (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Currently, nearly 1 in 5 college students identify within the LGBTQ+ community (Boyon, 2021), with 1 in 5 reporting a documented disability (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.), and 2 in 5 entering college as the first in their family to do so (Startz, 2022). These statistics are just the tip of the iceberg as we consider the rapidly diversifying college student population. Unfortunately, students frequently report being taught by faculty who they perceive as lacking cultural competence or appreciation for the diverse backgrounds and identities that students bring to the classroom (Belli, 2022; Erba et al., 2020; Park et al., 2020). In the widely cited book, *How College Affects Students: 21st Century Evidence That Higher Education Works*, higher education experts underscored the importance of good teaching as a critical issue moving forward, stating:

Good teaching is the primary means through which institutions affect students. In addition, high-quality instruction was generally more effective in promoting the learning, cognitive, and educational attainment outcomes of students from historically underserved populations than those from major-

Developing Culturally Responsive Learning Environments in Postsecondary Education, pp. xiii–xvii

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ity groups. Importantly, these practices also promote desired outcomes for all students (Mayhew et al. 2016, p. 592).

A growing body of evidence illustrates that all students, particularly those from marginalized or historically excluded backgrounds, can benefit when faculty are purposely trained and implement practices that take into account the rich differences represented in their classrooms. Booker et al. (2016) provided strong evidence of increases in students' sense of community, personal growth, and conflict resolution when taught by faculty implementing multicultural course design. However, Hutchison and McAlister-Shields (2020) caution that U.S. institutions of higher education do not provide adequate incentives for faculty to learn about culturally responsive learning or implement culturally responsive practices within their courses. They also warn that faculty mindsets towards students, such as deficit framing, can inhibit faculty from adopting culturally responsive practices.

Although several resources exist that serve to educate faculty on culturally responsive teaching practices, the contributors in this book seek to equip faculty and academic administrators with tools to take more comprehensive and holistic approaches to understanding cultural responsiveness (Gay, 2000) and cultural sustainability (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Lindo, 2020) within postsecondary education classrooms. Through this text, we hope to provide a starting point for faculty and higher education leaders who wish to enhance their understanding of culturally responsive practices within the academic environment, as well as best practices to support all students, but particularly those from historically excluded or marginalized groups. Inspired by the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979) and his seminal ecological systems theory, we conceptualize the college learning environment as an ecosystem impacted by space, time, and the inputs and outputs of environmental participants (students, educators, administrators, etc.). To that end, we draw on the collective knowledge of over 40 faculty members across 26 postsecondary institutions who contributed to this book in four sections: Unpacking Your Own Cultural Competence, Learning Experiences of the 21st Century College Student, Culturally Responsive Teaching and Instruction, and Transforming Curriculum, Content, and Environment. Each section asks you to consider the multiple layers of the college learning environment, and how these layers overlap to create, or inhibit, culturally responsive learning experiences for students.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Developing Culturally Responsive Learning Environments in Postsecondary Education was created as a starting point for faculty interested in expanding

their knowledge and skills in supporting historically excluded student groups within the classroom. It is not intended to be a comprehensive compendium of all knowledge related to culturally responsive learning in postsecondary education. Some readers may find that certain chapters reintroduce topics with which they already have familiarity, while other chapters may introduce new concepts or perspectives. However, whether you are just starting your journey or have been engaged with culturally responsive education for years, we believe this book has something to offer all college educators. As you engage with this resource, consider the following ways in which you can engage with the material:

- Talk to yourself as you are reading each chapter. Scribble in the margin. Pose questions. Notice both your immediate thoughts and emotional reactions as you progress and ask yourself why you are experiencing those thoughts and emotions.
- Consider reading this book with another faculty friend. Set regular times to debrief chapters, responses to case scenarios, and key takeaways. Getting multiple perspectives can be an invaluable tool in building cultural competence.
- At the end of each chapter, authors have provided a brief case scenario for you to consider within the context of the chapter's topic. Although the context of the scenario may not match your current institution or discipline, think about how you might reframe the case in light of your own circumstances.
- If you are mentoring students who aim to become faculty, or if you advise future faculty preparation programs, consider using this text as a basis for training and professional development.
- For those connected to centers for teaching and learning, or other faculty support programs, consider adopting this text for a book club, on-boarding for new faculty, or other training opportunities.
- Consider using the chapters as a primer for student groups with which you may be less familiar, and use references as a means to do additional research and explore other perspectives.

We hope you find this book to be a meaningful and engaging learning experience. Through this resource, we hope to inspire you to start conversations with your peers, students, and academic leaders about how your institution can make transformative changes toward cultural responsiveness. As famed civil rights leader, E. D. Nixon reminds us, “Your spark can become a flame and change everything” (The Free Woman, 2017, p. 1).

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SECTION I

UNPACKING YOUR OWN CULTURAL COMPETENCE

CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION?

Patricia Hilliard and Callie Edwards
North Carolina State University

THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Cultural competence is a frequently discussed, yet simultaneously nebulous, term in academic literature (Grant et al., 2013; Isaacson, 2014). The lack of clarity begins with the ambiguous definition. According to the National Center for Cultural Competence (n.d.), no single agreed-upon definition of cultural competence exists in the literature; rather, several definitions have emerged and evolved over time. These definitions include related concepts and parallel monikers such as *cultural humility* (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998), *cultural proficiency* (National Alliance for Hispanic Health, 2001), and *cultural safety* (Main et al., 2006).

While the semantics of the definition have slightly changed with each iteration, two components remain salient. First, the vast majority of published, peer-reviewed scholarship concerning cultural competence derives from the health care sector, particularly the subfields of medicine, nursing, psychology, and social work (Betancourt et al., 2003; Carpenter-Song et al., 2007; Frisby, 2018; Kirmayer, 2012). The origin of the term is not coincidental; cultural competence surfaced as a ubiquitous term within the United

Developing Culturally Responsive Learning Environments in Postsecondary Education, pp. 3–20

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States' (U.S.) health and human services literature due to pervasive care disparities experienced by African American, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, and First Nations people (Cross et al., 1989). With a heightened focus on racism, discrimination, and oppression, fostering equitable health care conditions became, and remains, a key problem of practice with cultural competence materializing as a solution (Krentzman & Townsend, 2008). What's more, growing demographic shifts also exacerbate the urgency for strategies to reduce health inequalities amongst racial and ethnic groups. Economists project that by the year 2045, racial groups once considered "minorities" due to their underrepresentation in the U.S. population (i.e., Hispanics, Asians, and African Americans) will substantially increase while the White population concurrently declines, resulting in America shifting from a majority White country to a majority people-of-color country (Myers & Levy, 2018).

Second, within this body of work, the most widely used definition of cultural competence comes from Cross and colleagues' 1989 report, *Towards a Culturally Competent System of Care, Volume I*. In their report, Cross et al. (1989) defined cultural competence as "a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enable that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations" (p. 13). Central to this definition is the root word *culture* and the term *competence*. The authors expound on their intentional pairing of these words and their vision for a culturally competent system of care. They share:

The word "culture" is used because it implies the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group. [Likewise,] [t]he word competence is used because it implies having the capacity to function effectively. A culturally competent system of care acknowledges and incorporates—at all levels—the importance of culture, the assessment of cross-cultural relations, vigilance towards the dynamics that result from cultural differences, the expansion of cultural knowledge, and the adaptation of services to meet culturally-unique needs. (p. 13)

Importantly, Cross et al. acknowledges cultural competence is a journey and not a destination because no matter how proficient a system, agency, or professional becomes, there is always room for improvement and growth.

Three decades following the establishment of these definitions, Jowsey (2019) enriched the scholarly dialogue on cultural competence by likening its application to the ocean with three depth zones: (1) the surface competency zone, (2) the bias twilight zone, and (3) the confronting midnight zone. Each cultural competence zone mirrors the characteristics of an oceanic zone. This analogy is a noteworthy contribution to the literature

because it comprehensively illustrates how approaches to cultural competence vary in depth and efficacy and underscore how sustained efforts are needed for lasting change. The section that follows provides a high-level overview of each of the three zones.

Summary of Jowsey's Three Zones of Cultural Competency

The first zone—surface competency—is characterized by increasing and deploying culturally-specific knowledge. Jowsey (2019) asserts that this zone is “where many of us have started our journeys towards cultural competence” (p. 4). The surface competency zone is analogous to the surface of the ocean, which accounts for the first 200 meters of water depth and consists of a rich heterogeneity of aquatic plants and animals. In the same way, there are multiplicative approaches to increasing and deploying culturally specific knowledge, such as a variety of educational and training programs that introduce cultural concepts and assess learning. While helpful for increasing awareness, these efforts can be overly simplistic, and limited evidence suggests that these efforts produce improved care outcomes over time. As such, efficacy is a paramount concern within this zone.

Whereas the first zone constructed a broad, universal paradigm of understanding cultural diversity, the next zone—bias twilight—shifts the focus inward and requires a deeper level of self-awareness and reflection. This zone corresponds to the twilight zone of the ocean where it's more difficult to see aquatic plants and animals. Relatedly, in this zone individuals illuminate and reflect on “difficult to see” attributes of themselves such as their inherent and unconscious biases. In their examination of the literature, Jowsey (2019) found that education and support efforts in this zone were more efficacious in leading to reductions in health disparities than those in the surface competency zone.

The deepest zone—confronting midnight—represents the lowest level of the ocean closest to the sea floor. This zone requires the deepest level of critical consciousness and self-awareness. Jowsey (2019) maintains that the individuals' journey to this zone is often fraught with resistance. Within confronting midnight, individuals interrogate their positionality, including their worldview, agency, and power dynamics. For many White people, this process necessitates that they come to terms with “the realiti[es] of their own positionality as individuals for whom entire western social systems are geared towards centering and supporting” (p. 5). Sitting with these uncomfortable truths may result in “White fragility” when Whites become angry or withdraw from the process of learning and self-discovery; however, unearthing White-centered ideals is key to establishing equity. Furthermore, in confronting midnight, individuals demonstrate prolonged

commitment and active engagement to social justice efforts within their sphere of influence.

THE EVOLUTION OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN EDUCATION

The concept of cultural competence in education has been studied in various forms dating back to early 20th century scholars and activists like W.E.B. DuBois and Carter G. Woodson who challenged deficit ideologies about African Americans prominent in literature and media. Among others, they represent the pioneers of an early movement that advocated for ethnic studies programs, that is, courses that promoted positive images and cultures from around the world (Nieto, 2017; Sultanova, 2016). The evolution of ethnic studies programs gained momentum during the Civil Rights Movement when various racial and ethnic groups (e.g., Black Panthers, United Mexican American Students, American Indian Movement, etc.) were fighting for their culture and language to be respected, valued, and represented in mainstream scholarship. One major framework that evolved from this movement was multicultural education (Rios, 2018).

Dr. James A. Banks is often credited with being the father of multicultural education for his early and continued scholarly contributions to the field (Gorski, 1999). After decades of research and practice, Banks (1995) introduced five dimensions of multicultural education: (1) content integration, (2) knowledge construction, (3) prejudice reduction, (4) equity pedagogy, and (5) empowering school culture and social structures. *Content integration* involves presenting students with key concepts, ideas, and examples that demonstrate the values of different cultures. Multicultural education also involves teaching students to determine how the bias, assumptions, and frames of reference presented in curricular materials influence how they *construct knowledge*. The third dimension, *prejudice reduction*, encourages teachers to support students in developing positive racial, ethnic, and culturally affirming identities. Next, an *equity pedagogy* elevates the importance of academic excellence by encouraging teachers to use a variety of approaches to teaching and learning (e.g., project-based learning, direct instruction, station rotations, and graphic organizers). The purpose of the last dimension is to ensure educational equality for all students. *Empowering school culture and social structures* equates to complete and total reform of school policies, practices, and processes including but not limited to hiring and promotion procedures, identification of academically gifted students, discipline policies, selection of curricular materials, participation on school-wide committees, and attitudes towards students and their families. Though each dimension is presented separately, they

are all interconnected with the purpose of promoting multiple cultures and educational reform.

While multicultural education was intended to promote cultural competence, engage students in critical discourse, and encourage systemic change, antiracist and decolonization scholars claim that the implementation of the framework was frequently misinterpreted (Hargraves, n.d.; McCarthy, 1998), resulting in one-and-done heavily diluted and disconnected learning experiences (Rios, 2018). In practice, multicultural education was often demonstrated by students engaging in short celebrations of culture on a particular holiday, for example, Día de los Muertos or Juneteenth, by eating ethnic foods, performing ritual dances, and reading literature written by authors from a particular country. This “drive-by tourist” approach impedes students from learning the true customs and traditions of a culture and the interconnectedness of cultures (Jennings & Smith, 2002). Furthermore, the misconceptualization of multicultural education minimizes opportunities for students to build the knowledge and competence to engage in deeper conversations about power, racism, and oppression; thus, ignoring the history and lived experiences of the Black or Brown students sitting in the multicultural classroom.

The limitations of multicultural education gave rise to new pedagogical frameworks that elevated the needs of marginalized students; culturally relevant teaching emerged as one such new revolutionary approach to teaching and learning. At this time, Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) sought to shift prevailing rhetoric away from examining the deficits of Black children and devising solutions to “fix” them to analyzing the strengths of Black children and highlighting the effective practices and mindsets. In the book, *Dreamkeepers*, she employed an Afrocentric feminist epistemology methodology to uncover the common instructional practices of five Black and three White teachers who all possess various personal and professional backgrounds, but experienced great success teaching Black children. Through analysis of her interviews, classroom observations, and video recordings with the teachers, Ladson-Billings created culturally relevant teaching which she defines as a “pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 17).

Three pedagogical practices emerged from the analysis; thus, all teachers consistently designed learning experiences for students that promoted their: (1) academic success, (2) sociopolitical consciousness, and (3) cultural competence. They treated students as active, not passive, learners with endless possibilities for intellectual growth and less emphasis on controlling and managing student behavior. Additionally, the teachers designed lessons that “extended beyond the confines of the classroom using school knowledge and skills to identify, analyze, and solve real-world problems”

(Ladson-Billings, 2014a, p. 75); the author referred to this practice as sociopolitical consciousness. Students were not required to learn for the sake of learning with little application to relevant situations. These teachers encouraged students to identify, discuss, and present solutions to issues impacting their families and communities, e.g., incarceration, poverty, and unemployment (Murray & Milner, 2015). Lastly, and most relevant to this discourse, the teachers promoted cultural competence. They all designed opportunities for students to build an understanding and appreciation of their own culture while gaining knowledge and fluency in at least one other culture. Their classrooms were full of *mirrors* and *windows*, that is, students had experiences that both reflected their culture (mirror) and allowed them to see the cultures of others (window) (Escudero, 2019). Their culturally competent teachers debunked common ideals of cultural assimilation and provided students with a means to maintain their language, histories, beliefs, customs, and traditions.

Similar to multicultural education, culturally relevant teaching was both widely accepted and misinterpreted by practitioners (Ladson-Billings, 2014a). In a subsequent publication of the 2.0 version of culturally relevant teaching, Ladson-Billings (2014b) clarified common misconceptions about cultural competence, which she labeled as the “misunderstood” competent of culturally relevant teaching. First, the author expanded her original definition of culture to specify that it is more than the tangible (e.g., food, clothing, artifacts), and intangible (e.g., customs, history, rituals) aspects of a community; rather, culture encompasses every part of our lived experiences including our thoughts, feelings, attitudes, worldviews, ethics, epistemological stances, and ways of being. Second, the culture of a group of people cannot be encapsulated by participating in a single event or celebration; rather it is fluid, complex, and ever-changing (Ladson-Billings 2014a). To truly learn and appreciate another culture takes dedication and time. Lastly, everyone is part of a culture, if not multiple cultures. Throughout her time as a professor, Ladson-Billings frequently heard her White students and colleagues state that they had no culture. Upon hearing such declarations, the former professor explained that “social power dynamics define whiteness as the unmarked, invisible norm, they are like fish who have trouble seeing the water that they swim in” (Ladson-Billings, 2014a, p. 145). Thus, it may be difficult for those who are born into dominant cultures to comprehend that their lived experiences do not represent everyone’s thoughts, feelings, attitudes, worldviews, and so on. Finally, educators need to take the aforementioned components of cultural competence to reconceptualize learning and place culture at the center. Specifically, the acquisition of new knowledge, concepts, and ideas should be connected to students’ prior knowledge. This requires educators to know and value the cultural background of each and every student in their classroom; and

then design engaging and challenging learning experiences based on that knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 2014b).

Scholars have continued to build upon the tenets of multicultural education and culturally relevant teaching to create subsequent frameworks that present practical strategies to design learning through culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000), incorporate elements of hip-hop music and culture into teaching science (Emdin, 2010), promote the academic rigor and engagement for diverse students through brain-based culturally responsive teaching practices (Hammond, 2015), and “perpetuate and foster linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of school for positive social transformation with culturally sustaining pedagogies” (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 1). Although cultural competence is not centrally or explicitly prominent in these contemporary frameworks, they all necessitate the development of cultural awareness, both of self and others, and the application of these skills to facilitate positive social change in one’s personal space and the larger educational system.

THE PREVALENCE OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Much of the literature on cultural competence specific to higher education focuses on the importance of *students* developing cultural competence as a critical skill required for success in citizenship and careers in a global economy (Chun & Evans, 2016). Student affairs professionals have designed a multitude of programs and initiatives that encourage cultural self-study (e.g., Black Action Society, Asian Student Alliance, LGBTQ+ Center, and Latin American Student Association) and increase knowledge of other cultures (e.g., study abroad, campus-wide cultural events and festivals, lunch-and-learn, community-based service learning, ethnic studies courses, and diversity training). While student affairs continue to design opportunities to foster an inclusive campus culture, an even greater shift towards inclusivity could occur through the collective effort of faculty to build cultural competence; however, most universities have neglected to address the cultural competence within their classrooms and with their faculty (Chun & Evans, 2016). This negligence hinders progress towards campus-wide diversity, equity, inclusion, and antiracism as “this work starts with each of us [educators] reflecting on our roles as individuals in perpetuating these systems and building our own cultural competence” (Lindo, 2020, p. 10).

Though efforts to increase the cultural competence of faculty are scarce, a few researchers have presented instructional models to build skill and efficacy in this crucial area. Kruse et al. (2018) outlined both the characteristics

and conditions that support the effective implementation of a professional learning program on cultural competence for faculty. Based on a literature review, the characteristics of this program include an agenda that allows participants to develop a shared language and understanding of cultural competence. Next, the professional learning program should be designed for *all* faculty and staff including hourly employees, adjunct faculty, and senior-level administrators. The design of professional learning needs to follow the principles of adult learning with flexibility in where, when, and how learning takes place. The program should offer equal opportunities for participants to engage in surface-level general conversations related to cultural competence and deeper, more specific discussions on the challenges of historically marginalized groups (e.g., racism, ableism, homophobia, sexism, etc.). All of the above-mentioned characteristics are aligned to specific institutional goals and other campus-wide diversity, inclusion, and equity initiatives. Kruse et al. (2018) stress that these characteristics need to be cultivated with six conditions that foster cultural competence; thus, faculty need: (1) time afforded to learn with and from one another, (2) time to reconnect and evaluate their learning, (3) opportunities to exchange ideas within and across their institutions, (4) climate of trust, openness and continuous improvement, (5) supportive and committed leaders, and (6) access to experts to increase their individual and collective knowledge.

The Universities Australia (UA), the governing body for Australian universities, set forth recommendations to increase cultural competence at all of its campuses (Frawley et al., 2020). The UA believes that universities should act as change agents to improve educational opportunities for Indigenous Australians and build capacity within Indigenous communities to access and participate within these institutions. This requires the support and commitment of leadership and one that is all-encompassing, that is, cultural competence should inform their employment and promotion policies, research agendas, and pedagogical practices (Kruse et al., 2018). The UA recommended that all students should be culturally competent upon graduation; this would be accomplished through faculty completing high-quality, inclusive professional learning on cultural competence. Building cultural competence is a continuous process with no final destination and the recommendations set forth by the UA provide universities with a map of possible routes that lead to competence in one or more areas (Frawley et al., 2020).

THE APPLICATION OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Jowsey's (2019) three zones of cultural competency provide an insightful lens for assessing the rigor and depth of cultural competence efforts

in higher education. Aptly named surface competency, higher education efforts in this first zone are often the easiest initiatives to identify on a college campus. These initiatives answer the question, “*How will we increase our knowledge of the cultural perspectives of students & staff?*” Surface competency initiatives are what many faculty and administrators first think of when they hear the phrase “cultural competence” because they are both varied and in abundance, including innumerable educational training and development resources such as cultural festivals, workshops, blog posts, video series, podcast episodes, infographics, flyers, and websites. However, what distinguishes this zone as opposed to the deeper levels is that it is possible to be a passive consumer of information in the surface zone and not act on the knowledge gained. For example, on the surface, many people can be introduced to the topic of cultural competence through a one-time event, training mini-series, or even certificate program; however, enrollment and completion rates alone only capture part of the story. They do not divulge how many participants continue to engage in a deeper analysis of cultural understanding, or how their behaviors were changed, and continue to change, following completion of the educational experience.

To further elucidate, consider the analogy of a house. Surface zone efforts are excellent as introductions similar to the foyer of a house. Once visitors cross the threshold of the house, they enter the foyer which connects the home entrance to other rooms within the residence. In the same way, initiatives in the surface zone welcome participants to the topic of cultural competence and connect them to additional areas for further investigation. Efforts in the surface zone can be an important *first* step toward peeling back the layers of cultural competence on an individual level; contrarily these efforts do not serve participants well as the *only* step in becoming more culturally competent. When surface competency efforts are the only action towards cultural competency, the acts are merely performative and are a disservice to students, faculty, and administrators alike. For example, the development of well-crafted diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) statements are a critical *first* step to identifying the type of environment an institution strives to create (Ely, 2021; Wilson et al., 2012). DEI statements articulate institutional values and commitments as well as clarify the institution’s vision for a shared future among its constituents. Yet, if that statement is the only activity in pursuit of the desired environment or shared future and not coupled with tangible policy or practice changes to initiate and sustain the work of creating that environment or future, the statement alone is only performative (Ballard et al., 2020; Casellas & McCoy, 2022). In their examination of organizational communication, Ballard and colleagues (2020) expressed this phenomena as follows:

Universities, colleges, and departments regularly make statements and form committees about DEI to symbolically position themselves. [...] Each of these Rhetorical moves can be valuable in helping to effect larger cultural and structural shifts. Yet, alone, a variety of evidence suggests that these forms of communication fail to offer anything more than the equivalent of a good cocktail conversation—full of variety and interest but largely without value after one arrives home for the evening. (p. 591)

Similarly, scholars have criticized land acknowledgments and racial solidarity events (e.g., Black Out Tuesday) as “empty gestures” when they maintain the status quo (Blair, 2021). In isolation, surface competency zone initiatives only build individuals’ superficial knowledge. In order to facilitate deeper individual change or systems change, efforts must move beyond this zone.

A smaller collection of educational training and development initiatives inhabit the second zone, bias twilight. In this zone, postsecondary educators and administrators are not only informed about cultural issues (e.g., answering the question “*How will we increase our knowledge of the cultural perspectives of students & staff?*”), but they are also required to act (e.g., *How are we unknowingly inhibiting an equitable learning environment for all learners?*). The onus is put on the faculty and administrators to not only grapple with their own ubiquitous and yet hidden cultural bias that undergirds their actions but also re-tool themselves. Time, vulnerability, and action are the three key components that distinguish efforts in this zone from those in the surface zone. Time is required because it takes time to unravel a lifetime of unconscious learning. Vulnerability is essential because it is counterintuitive to expose the most unflattering attributes about oneself; however, only with vulnerability can individuals truly see themselves and their need for growth. Finally, action is imperative because, unlike in the first zone, individuals are expected to apply what they learn.

The emerging higher education practice of decolonizing syllabi is one example of what action might look like in the bias twilight zone. When faculty decolonize their syllabi, they actively monitor the scholarship they include in their syllabi to ensure students learn from scholars that reflect global cultural diversity and not just scholars who are “white, male, and U.S.-American or European” (Zidani, 2021, p. 970). Decolonizing syllabi provokes faculty to face how they might be inadvertently marginalizing scholars of color and reverse the underrepresentation of scholars of color cited in their syllabi. This reflection coupled with action toward cultural competence reflects the core of the bias twilight zone.

Because of the level of time, vulnerability, and action required in this zone, safe spaces built on authenticity and trust must be fostered for faculty and administrators to expose and grow from their blind spots. Race-based caucuses for white-identified individuals (Blitz & Kohl, 2012; Varghese et

al., 2019) and counterspaces for individuals of color (Vaccaro et al., 2019; Yosso & Lopez, 2010) are two compelling models to unpack this kind of uncomfortable, jarring, and necessary work in higher education. These organized gatherings allow similarly situated individuals (i.e., White people and people of color, representatively) to relate to one another while unveiling deeply personal experiences concerning race, racism, and cultural competence. Such spaces have the potential to provide deep, long-term, and intimate engagement with one's own bias, and when a critical mass of peers within an organization is reached, they can also lead to a thorough examination of organizational practices and policies. Research has even found that these spaces can be particularly effective for White-identified staff in addressing cultural responsiveness (Blitz & Kohl, 2012). The chapter authors are both employed at a research institute that recently launched a caucus for White-identified people to teach each other about issues of racial equity. Though too preliminary to report on its outcomes, this initiative and similar ones at institutions nationwide are promising practices because they demonstrate a willingness of individuals and organizations to push past understanding to action. By sitting with the uncomfortable truths about one's self (as an individual or organization), enlightenment, as well as behavior and policy change, can occur. Simultaneously, it is essential to note that the mere existence of a race-based caucus or counterspace does not equate to individuals being in the bias twilight zone. Facilitators of race-based caucuses and counterspaces may utilize some of the training materials described in the surface competency zone to frame and guide conversations, but if their focus is simply passive information sharing, group participants will remain in that zone. Conversely, if the engagement extends beyond passivity to intentional reflection, discussion, and application of navigating cultural realities, including fears and missteps along the way and areas for further support, the work of these groups can transition to the bias twilight zone.

Diving into the deepest cultural competence zone of the metaphor, confronting midnight, higher education efforts focus on societal positioning and how it impacts "research, teaching, leading, and policymaking, as well as common interactions" (Pollock, 2021). Within this zone, efforts are designed to answer the central question: "*How will we redistribute power to establish equity on our campus?*" Here, equity is defined as ensuring that each and every member of the campus community (i.e., student, faculty, staff, etc.) receives what they need to be successful in their role. One unique attribute of confronting midnight efforts is that they rely on the knowledge and skills gained from the previous zones. For instance, one must have an awareness of issues related to power and positionality (often gained through surface competency) as well as how they contribute to those issues (often gained through bias twilight competency) to engage at this level.

Concurrently, unlike the previous two zones, initiatives at this level require substantially more sustained effort over time. In addition, confronting midnight often demands collective action, such as strategic planning and policy development, making it difficult for faculty and staff to maneuver through this zone in silos. The North Carolina Student Support Center's (NC SSC) database of social care services and resources entitled Findhelp.org (formerly known as Aunt Bertha) is an exemplar of the fruit of this zone in higher education. There is no shortage of literature describing the socioeconomic challenges that some low-income, first-generation college students face (Paulsen & Gissword, 2009), including food and home insecurity (Hallett & Freas, 2018; Innis et al., 2020) as well mental health challenges (House et al., 2020; McFadden, 2016). Acknowledging the cultural realities of this subgroup of community college students, the NC SSC evoked systemic action, providing every community college with a membership to Findhelp.org to facilitate their access to the resources they need. The development of this database was a collaborative long-term strategy to center the needs of students on the margins. Students experiencing pressing social needs are vulnerable populations with limited institutional power. Providing access to this database helps to redistribute power to these students, enabling them to connect with service providers and community organizations directly.

Confronting midnight is complex; this area is ripe with opportunities for initiatives. When strategizing efforts at this level, faculty, and administrators should consider the following questions:

- How are we designing for those farthest from power?
- How do we recognize when we are mistakenly centering Whiteness and White comfort in our design over the actions and efforts needed to invoke change?
- How will you actively disrupt oppressive assumptions and privileges within your sphere of influence?

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have discussed the origins and development of cultural competence, as well as its evolution in the field of education and emergence in the subfield of higher education. We have also employed Jowsey's (2019) three zones of cultural competency as a lens for understanding the rigor and depth of cultural competence-related efforts in higher education. As evidenced in this chapter, the term cultural competence is often not clearly defined, and efforts in higher education focus primarily on simplistic awareness rather than systems-level change. As the first chapter

in this book, we hope to set the stage for your journey beyond your surface competencies and instead bravely work towards confronting midnight. Subsequent chapters in this section seek to equip you with the knowledge and tools necessary to make this journey. As you engage this book, keep in mind the words of acclaimed Black queer activist and prolific writer James Baldwin (1962), “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

CASE ANALYSIS #1

Cultural Competence in Higher Education

Organizational Context

New England College (NEC) is a midsize highly selective private liberal-arts institution in the northeast region of the United States. The vast majority of students are White and affluent, with many legacy admission students. Faculty at the institution strongly value academic freedom, with an organizational culture that has traditionally been very hands-off with regard to influencing faculty with regard to their pedagogical choices.

Individual(s) Central to the Case

Dr. Zales (she/her) is a cisgender straight White female professor in her mid-50s. She serves as a full-time tenured professor in the history department. In her department, she works alongside 10 tenure-track and 15 non-tenure-track faculty. Of the full-time faculty, 20% are people of color, none of which are tenured. With nearly 20 years of experience at NEC, Dr. Zales has taught more than 9,000 undergraduate students.

Dr. Emily Simpson (she/her) is a cisgender straight White female in her 40s who is in her second year as the Chair of the NEC History Department. Dr. Simpson’s scholarly works centers on the ways power impacts historical narratives and recently has explored decolonization efforts in how history is taught in contemporary society.

Case Scenario

Since assuming the role of chair, Dr. Simpson has received a number of complaints about Dr. Zales’s introductory world history course, with students citing that her class is only about “old dead White people.” They

have also complained about her rigid policies and reluctance to provide support to students. For example, a group of international students once sent an email detailing their experience when they asked Dr. Zales if she could send them her PowerPoint presentations two to three days before class. She flatly denied their request, stating that this would result in the students not attending class. The international students explained in their email to Dr. Simpson that they just wanted extra time to digest the material due to the language barrier.

Resolving to have a conversation with Dr. Zales, Dr. Simpson set up a time for them both to meet to talk about the potential for change within Dr. Zales's introductory world history course. Specifically, Dr. Simpson hoped that Dr. Zales may be open to restructuring the course through a lens of cultural representation and relevance. During the meeting, Dr. Simpson thanked Dr. Zales for her extensive service to the institution and politely relayed the ongoing critical feedback she had received about the course. Dr. Zales acknowledged the criticism and stated that she has gradually tried to incorporate influential people, artifacts, and texts from non-European nations. However, Dr. Zales also stated that she would be unwilling to completely revamp the course due to her belief that students need to be steeped in the knowledge of the "great European pioneers" to succeed in this major.

Other Contexts for Consideration

- Dr. Emily Simpson has had much success in her role as Department Chair and has built a strong rapport with her faculty.
- In nearly two decades at NEC, Dr. Zales has received minimal formal training on topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). In particular, she has only completed two university-mandated workshops on how to best support LGBTQ+ students and how to conduct an inclusive search and hiring process. Nevertheless, the university recently created policies to promote DEI by requiring all faculty to report their inclusive practices. This new policy required Dr. Zales to reevaluate the images, language, and text presented in her classes and on her course website. In reflecting on this new policy, Dr. Zales has frequently thought, "I am at the point now [in my career] where multiple demands are being made, but the mechanics are difficult to figure out." This has brought moments of frustration as there is very little follow-up from university

leaders and no forum to share inclusive practices or learn from other faculty.

Discussion Questions

1. Using the models presented in the chapter, how would you frame Dr. Zales's level of cultural competence?
2. How might Dr. Simpson continue to help advance cultural competence in her department?
3. In what ways might NEC, or Dr. Zales's academic discipline inadvertently reinforce, or create comfort for, Dr. Zales's present level of cultural competence?
4. How can NEC academic leadership balance support academic freedom for its faculty in the classroom, while also encouraging culturally responsive classroom experiences for students?

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CHAPTER 2

IMPLICIT BIAS AND THE COLLEGE CLASSROOM

Charmion B. Rush
Western Carolina University

Cynthia B. Wooten
Winston Salem State University

Implicit biases are prejudices that can operate without intention or conscious awareness (Rudman, 2004). They are thought processes and random judgments that happen within individuals without them even knowing it. Also known as unconscious bias or social cognitions, implicit biases are mental shortcuts we harbor to describe the associations we hold about the attitudes and behaviors of others. Without malicious or ill-intent, these biases are spontaneous judgments that we may or may not agree with but become a part of our daily lives. Unlike explicit bias, an act that occurs when someone outwardly expresses their negative stereotypes and beliefs and is very conscious of these judgments (Boysen & Vogel, 2009), implicit bias stems from very normal, everyday mental functions resulting from our experiences. Implicit bias consists of “actions or judgments that are under the control of automatically activated evaluation, without the performer’s awareness of that causation” (Greenwald et al., 1998, p. 1464). This means that a person could be biased yet remain unaware they are projecting their judgments towards others. Implicit bias can shape the language we use and how we interact with one another based on race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, and other cultural identities.

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This chapter is intended to support post-secondary educators in their understanding of implicit bias and, more importantly, how to reduce its impact within the college classroom. No matter how progressive one may be, the fact remains that implicit bias exists and more discussion about its management is necessary to create awareness about this predisposition for post-secondary personnel who work with students in the college classroom. As faculty, we must create inclusive and respectful environments to have honest and authentic discussions about the state of implicit bias with our diverse community of learners. Once we (the authors of this chapter) have addressed the context of these intersecting challenges, we will offer some strategies to bridge the gap to more equitable, inclusive, and diverse classroom settings. Respectfully, we will conclude our chapter by providing a few guiding principles to those interested in exploring the application of implicit bias, as well as changing the underlying associations that form the basis of this concept within higher education.

IMPLICIT BIAS

Implicit bias is a universal phenomenon, not limited by race, gender, or even country of origin (Perception Institute, n.d.). “Regardless of how fair-minded we believe ourselves to be, most people have some degree of unconscious bias” (Unconscious Bias and Higher Education Report, 2013, p. 1). As individuals, we tend to automatically respond to others in positive and/or negative ways based on both favorable and unfavorable assessments that are activated unconsciously, involuntarily and/or without one’s awareness or intentional control (Harper, 2015). In fact, 98% of our brains work without expressing cognition or thoughts, but through automatic processes that influence the way we perceive and make determinations about people (Jones, 2017). In higher education, studies have demonstrated that implicit biases can permeate educational settings in several forms, all of which yield disadvantaged consequences for many marginalized groups and underrepresented populations (Fiarman, 2016; Morin, 2015; Staats, 2014).

According to Staats et al. (2017), teacher expectations tend to vary based on the demographic characteristics of their students. Instructors tend to hold assumptions about their students’ learning behaviors and their capability for academic success based on their students’ identities and/or backgrounds. Instructors may also assume that students from certain backgrounds or social groups have different intellectual abilities and/or ambitions. For example, an instructor might assume that a student from a certain background will be satisfied with lower achievement levels. As noted, teachers who held negative, prejudiced attitudes appeared more predisposed to evaluate their ethnic minority students as being less

intelligent and having fewer promising prospects for their school careers (Van den Bergh et al., 2010). Specifically, when comparing instructors' expectations of student achievement, there is a tendency to have lower expectations for African American and Latino/a children compared to European American children. Ultimately, these assumptions can impede student growth, which can affect student academic performance (Staats et al., 2017).

If not acknowledged and addressed, these impulsive judgments can lead to a cycle of negative socialization. The cycle of socialization, a process through which social identities are created (Byrd, 2021), is largely influenced by media images, the news, our education, historical narratives, cultural influences, or experiences and conversations we have had with others. Case in point, if you truly evaluated your inner circles, what socialization messages have you received throughout your life? What personal and social identities have been created as a result of these messages? More importantly, how have these messages contributed to structural inequality within your classrooms? Although we all have the best intentions, the candid truth is that these mental mindsets play a pivotal role in how we form unconscious perceptions and unintentional associations about others. These lived experiences are the premises of implicit bias and the hallmark of the recent spotlights noted in the college classroom on cultural differences, diversity, equity, and inclusivity. Implicit biases serve as the foundation for the heightened awareness and broad protests around racism, sexism, and homophobia across college campuses.

Much of the evidence for the pervasive rise of implicit bias on college campuses comes from Harvard University's Implicit Bias Association Test (IAT) (Drumwright et al., 2015). In sum, the virtual IAT asks participants to rapidly respond to a series of questions based on projected images that require word associations (whether positive or negative) about one's gender (e.g., his/hers), race (e.g., Black/White people), sexual orientation (e.g., hetro/homosexual), and a variety of other aspects of identities (e.g., young/old, etc.). When responding, the IAT measures the strength of associations between concepts and evaluations or stereotypes to reveal hidden or subconscious biases (e.g., good or bad people) when pairing items that you deem to be similar (Nabors, 2019). Overall, regardless of the chosen assessment category, the founders of the IAT found more than 70% of White subjects more easily associated white faces with positive words and Black faces with negative words (Drumwright et al., 2015). This fact concluded that we all have an affinity for those within our own groups linked by a common interest or purpose. As such, there's a potential for implicit bias (as noted in this example, racial implicit bias).

As the assessment is designed, the IAT is a valid assessment to measure our hidden stereotypes, prejudices, and discriminations (Greenwald et

al., 2009). Collectively, examples of group behaviors in higher education biases included:

- *College professors are substantially more likely to respond to student emails if the student emails indicate that they are probably White males.*

A survey of more than 6,000 faculty members, across a range of disciplines, has found that when prospective graduate students reach out for guidance, White males are the most likely to get attention. The survey also found that public university faculty members are much more likely than their private counterparts to respond equally to students of varying backgrounds. And the greatest victims of discrimination may be those with names that suggest they are Chinese women (Milkman et al., 2015).

- *With online instructors, where there is less opportunity to get to know people due to limited contact, certain students who are identifiable by race or ethnicity due to name association can be targets of implicit bias, possibly having an adverse effect on evaluations of student work or the amount of attention an instructor provides to the student (Conaway & Bethune, 2015).*

When using the Brief Implicit Attitudes Test (BIAT), Conaway and Bethune (2015), concluded that remote learning can exacerbate confirmation bias, one's attempt to prove assumptions and stereotypes. This type of bias is prominent with online instructors who may have limited contact with their students. As a result, they may associate some aspect about a person or group and will then unconsciously seek confirmation or search for evidence to prove their assumptions. As noted, this relationship exists between implicit bias and student names, however the degree to which bias exists differs. Across the board, the results reflected a weak implicit bias against Hispanic names and a stronger implicit bias against African American names when compared to Caucasian names. This trend was reiterated when Caucasians compared Hispanic names to African American names.

- *Likewise, there is a correlation between attitudes and race within the traditional classroom settings regarding instructors' predispositions to students' intellect and academic performance (Ferguson, 2003).*

While influenced by the immediate assumptions of outward appearance, an analysis of research by Ferguson (2003) regarding bias in the traditional classroom revealed that instructors are biased and tend to develop preconceived sets of expectations of particular students based on group membership such as race, ethnicity, and gender. It was found that

instructor expectations can have a profound effect on student performance and achievement and a number of characteristics have been identified as having an influence on shaping teacher expectations including but not limited to ethnicity, stereotypes, and names (Rubie-Davies et al., 2006).

The primary reason Ferguson's study was first implemented was due to the consistent gap in test scores of Black and White students. Some interesting observations were made such as teachers calling on White students to read in class or to answer questions more often than asking the Black students to participate. The teachers already lay down the groundwork on making even the students perceive who the teacher thinks is a smarter race within the classroom (Conaway & Bethune, 2015).

While college student bodies have increasingly become more racially diverse, almost three-quarters of faculty identified as White (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). Specifically, in 2020, 39% of faculty identified as White males and 35% identified as White females. In contrast, there is an underrepresentation of faculty of color. In comparison to White faculty, only 4% of full-time faculty were Black females; 3% were Black males, Hispanic males, and Hispanic females. With racially diverse students emerging as the majority population (Wells et al., 2016) it is no surprise that faculty, especially faculty of color, play an important role in improving campus climate and helping students to achieve their full potential. This expectation includes being able to adequately prepare and promote academic success among all their students. To assist all students to reach their full potential, "faculty must be self-aware of the unconscious biases that drive their attitudes and behaviors" (Ross, 2008). We will further explore the attitudes and behaviors surrounding implicit bias by examining the concepts of stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination.

STEREOTYPES, PREJUDICE, AND DISCRIMINATION

We need to consider how implicit biases might impact our daily actions, behaviors, and decisions. Although implicit attitudes and perceptions are ordinarily treated as being out of our control, evidence supports that contact is one of the best ways to address its influences (Jones, 2015). In fact, implicit bias can be addressed and countered if we become aware of our individual interactions and take actions to redirect our responses. This is especially important if we are part of a majority group with more social, economic, or political power than a minority one. As Cavicchia (2015) said, "They [unconscious biases] are at play in all aspects of our lives and if you do not deliberately and consciously focus on their differences, they will control you unless you control them." Since our identities are formed against others who are outside of our own social groups (out-