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Orientations for co-constructing a positive climate for diversity in teaching and learning

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Orientations for Co-Constructing a Positive Climate for Diversity in Teaching and Learning

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Abstract:

Based on the reality that cultures often do collide, especially in classroom learning spaces, we have engaged with the theoretical, conceptual, and empirical literature regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion in teaching/learning spaces, particularly from the perspective of our expertise around multilingualism and multiculturalism. In this chapter, we identify five orientations that we believe are necessary conditions for creating a positive climate for diversity in teaching/learning spaces. These orientations are Openness (teaching/learning that embraces multiple knowledges with grace), Interconnectedness (humanizing teaching/learning that produces belonging), Agency (teaching/learning grounded in self-determination), Curiosity (teaching/learning for growth through exploration and inquiry), and Creativity (teaching/learning that generates possibility and transformation). By operationalizing these orientations, we provide a heuristic for educator and educational stakeholder reflection, action, and praxis (Freire, 1994) and argue for their value in these (post-)pandemic times for intercultural learning, diversity, and equity.

Research has illustrated that a positive diversity climate at school can improve students' wellbeing and life-satisfaction (Aldridge et al., 2018; Allodi, 2010; Anderson & Graham, 2016; Eccles & Roeser, 2011) and predict better belonging among minoritized students (Baysu et al, 2016; Heikamp et al., 2020; Lee, 2017). Further, a positive climate including contact and cooperation among students, multicultural values, and emphasizing a common humanity, has been shown to be positively associated with the intercultural competence of both immigrant and non-immigrant background students (Schwarzenthal et al., 2020).

Despite such clear benefits for embracing diversity and creating a positive climate for it in classrooms, many teachers, students, and school communities struggle to create the opportunity for diversity to be positive and productive. In schools there is often a dominant cultural narrative that difference is deficit (Mitchell, 2013), as identified through research on varying issues around race, language, social class, ability levels, religious backgrounds, culture, gender, sexuality, and other identity markers that can minoritize and "otherize" students, teachers, and other members of school communities (Spencer et al., 2020; Stetsenko, 2017). These issues impact students' perceptions of belonging (Lee, 2017) and can play a role in violent and deeply troubling bullying issues (Siperstein et al., 2022) as well as impacting academic achievement (Carter & Welner, 2013). Further, the pandemic has exacerbated many of these issues for students and teachers

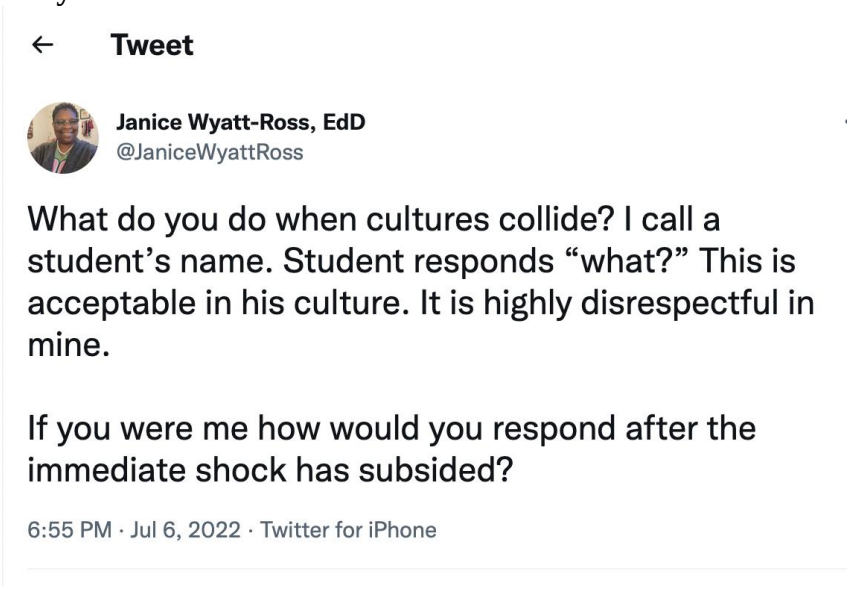
from minoritized groups (Meinck et al., 2022); mental health issues are dramatically on the rise (Theberath et al., 2022) leading to an increasing call for attention to social and emotional learning and wellbeing in schools (Heineke & Vera, 2022; Muller & Goldberg, 2020). In contrast, where diversity is positive and productive, diversity unites members of a community around their strengths and generates possibilities grounded in variety and difference rather than in spite of it.

Therefore, in these (post-)pandemic times, it is clear that creating a positive climate for diversity in school is necessary, though there are myriad barriers to overcome to develop such a climate. In this chapter, we propose orientations that we assert can assist teachers, students, and other members of school communities in co-constructing positive climates for diversity in teaching and learning spaces. To accomplish this, we first explore a real-world classroom situation and discussion around it to illustrate some of the pitfalls and limitations of current approaches to creating a positive diversity climate. Second, we define and discuss the value and purpose of focusing on orientations as central to creating positive diversity climates. Finally, we advance five orientations (e.g., dispositions, beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, etc.) drawn from research and theory to serve as heuristics for teachers, students, school leaders, and other members of school communities in collaborating to generate positive climates for diversity in classrooms, even in widely different contexts. While our empirical work is beginning, we believe these orientations offer a strong foundation for all educators and educational stakeholders to collectively transform schools into positive diversity climates across a variety of community contexts.

When Cultures Collide: Take-Aways from a Public Conversation

Below is the image of a tweet that launched a public conversation on Twitter about what to do "when cultures collide?" The author of this tweet, a Black woman with a doctorate teaching high school students in the US, asks how others would respond to a cultural collision that occurred in her classroom between her and a student.

Figure 1. Janice Wyatt-Ross Tweet



There were over 100 responses to this tweet when we came across it, with the majority suggesting the teacher should set expectations for student behavior and teach students what is appropriate either privately or with the whole class. Other responses said to "get over it" or "you need to calm down" or asserted that what the student did wasn't disrespectful at all. Some responses even tried to tease out the intent of the student to determine if it was disrespectful. These variety of responses illustrate an assimilationist perspective (Kendi, 2017) suggesting that respect has one common definition and students need to learn to assimilate to behaviors that support that one definition. These posts also illustrate orientations focused on teacher control, student compliance, and monolithic notions of "respect."

A minority of posts grappled with the complexities in cultural collisions rooted in power relationships. These responses suggested co-creating classroom norms and deferring to each other's preferences in the classroom (between both teachers and students). Some discussed culturally responsive practices (e.g., Gay, 2000), or the idea that educators should generate spaces that are responsive to the cultural practices of students, families, and communities outside of school. For instance, one suggested asking the student, "How could you and I both honor our very different cultures?" In these posts, power was addressed through suggesting that each member of the classroom community matters and there are ways that both teachers' and students' preferences should and could be addressed. The author of the original tweet continued to engage in the thread and at one point said, "In a culturally responsive world we create a culture of mutual respect" (July 6, 2022).

Although the minority of tweets were encouraging, the majority still focused on control, assimilationism, and compliance. Assimilationist perspectives avoid the complexity of cultural collisions and evade opportunities to create pluralism. As Nieto (2021: 112) argues, "Culture is complex and intricate; it includes content or product (the *what* of culture), process (*how* it is created and transformed), and the agents of culture (*who* is responsible for creating and changing it." Therefore, in teaching and learning spaces, deeper understanding is needed to understand the sociocultural, political, historical, geographic, linguistic, racial, ethnic, class, ability, religious, and gender factors impacting the possibilities for creating a positive diversity climate.

In Viesca et al. (2019), several of us collaborated to examine the research literature on preparing content teachers (e.g., teachers of mathematics, science, literature, etc.) to work with multilingual students. We included research on the practice of teaching multilingual students in content areas and examined the identified body of literature through a complexity lens. From this work, we established three necessary domains for quality teaching to occur in content classrooms with multilingual students. These domains are orientations, context, and pedagogy. In Viesca et al. (2022), we explored pedagogical practices of content teachers with a reputation for excellence in working with multilingual students, highlighting some promising pedagogical practices for working with multilingual learners. Currently, we are exploring and operationalizing necessary competencies for context and orientations.

While multilingual students all use one or more languages in their daily lives, they are more broadly characterized by diversity. They come from all socioeconomic backgrounds, ability levels, religions, cultures, languages, races, ethnicities, etc. Even within the context of multilingualism, no two multilingual learners are the same in terms of their language

proficiencies and uses. For teachers to be great teachers of multilingual learners specifically, and truly all students generally, teachers need to develop a positive climate for the inherent diversity that all students bring to teaching and learning spaces. As Heineke and Vera (2022: 156) observe, multilingual students want teachers to understand, empathize, and recognize "the potential harmful events and environments occurring in schools […] without diminishing the unique backgrounds and experiences of individual students."

Our work has long been informed by Blömeke et al. (2015) who defined competencies on a continuum from dispositions (composed of both cognition and affect-motivation) to situation specific skills (which includes interpretation, perception, and decision making) to performance (or observable behavior). This model clearly underscores the importance of orientations in the realm of both dispositions and situation specific skills that then impact performance/or observable practices. We have chosen to focus on the broader notion of orientations (rather than the specific aspects of the Blömeke et al. model) as we are also seeking to work at a level where diversity across cultural, political, social, and historical contexts can be meaningfully accounted for in our research. By working at a more capacious level of orientations, we are seeking to understand disposition and aspects of situation specific skills across varying teaching and learning situations.

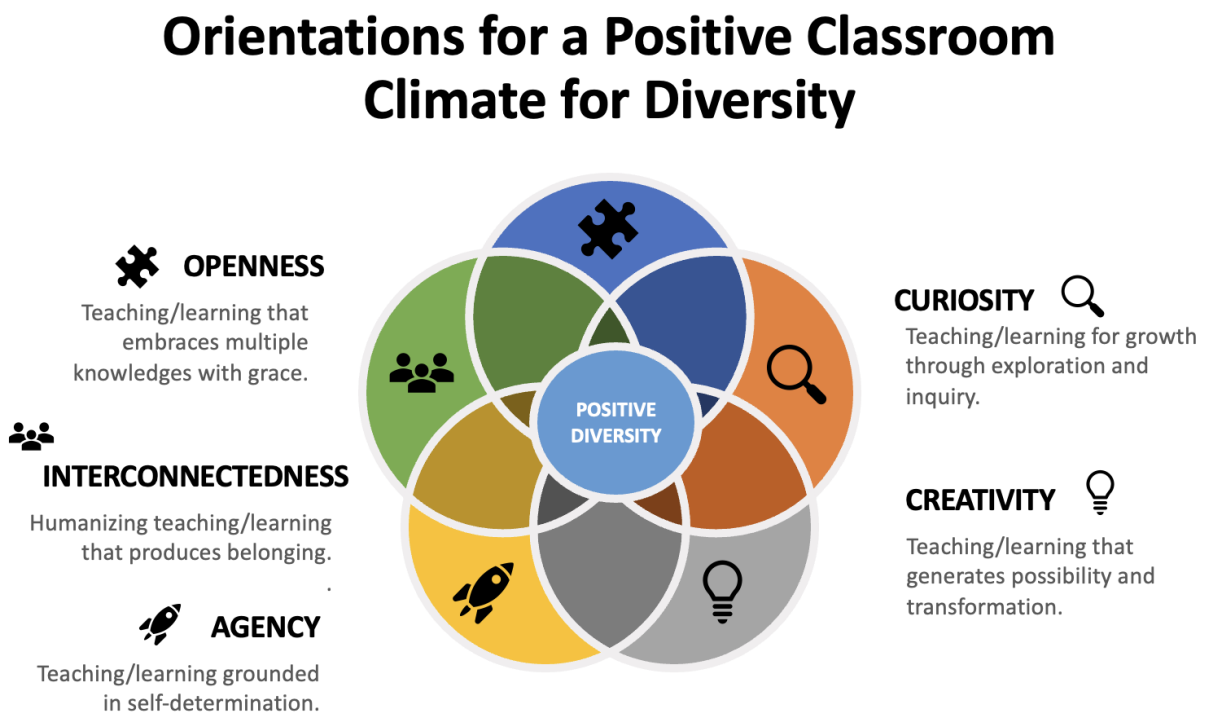
In our study of pedagogy, we utilized the Enduring Principles of Learning (Viesca et al., 2022) to explore the pedagogical practices of teachers with local reputations (from colleagues, principals, etc.) for excellence across four different nations (Germany, Finland, US, and England). A major finding was around conducting our research around principles – or sincerely capacious ideas captured by the Enduring Principles of Learning – those principles truly endured in value for understanding pedagogy across varying international spaces. The Enduring Principles of Learning are critical sociocultural theory operationalized into pedagogical practices and have a rich empirical history illustrating their benefit for a variety of student learning outcomes (Teemant et al., 204; Tharp, 2006; Tharp et al. 2000). The principles are joint productive activity, language and literacy development, contextualization, challenging activities, instructional conversation, critical stance, and modeling. As principles broadly defined yet specifically articulated, they were relevant and meaningful mechanisms to capture classroom practices and pedagogical excellence across four different cultural, linguistic, political, social, and historical contexts. By focusing here on similarly capacious orientations that capture dispositions, beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, interpretations, and decision making in meaning making, for example (Mezirow, 2012), we seek to articulate conceptualizations that can endure meaningfully across varying context to truly embody and elevate the diversity we seek to position as positive and productive.

Orientations for a Positive Diversity Climate

Based on the reality that cultures often do collide, especially in classroom learning spaces, we have engaged with the theoretical, conceptual, and empirical literature regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion in classrooms, particularly from the perspective of our expertise around multilingualism and multiculturalism. In Figure 1, we identify five orientations that we believe are necessary conditions for creating a positive climate for diversity in teaching/learning spaces. These orientations are Openness, Interconnectedness, Agency, Curiosity, and Creativity. By

operationalizing these orientations, we provide a heuristic for educator and educational stakeholder reflection, action, and praxis (Freire, 1994).

Figure 1. Orientations for a Positive Classroom Climate for Diversity



As noted above, the use of the notion of orientations in this work is to operate at a capacious level where we can capture and support diversity while also generating shared understandings. Love (2019) called for teachers to develop their own philosophical and theoretical "north star" to guide their work and inform the decisions they make in teaching/learning. We suggest that creating a positive climate for diversity is a worthy north star for educators to navigate towards and our orientations orient educators towards achieving that worthy goal. Specifically, we use the term orientations to include broad concepts like beliefs, attitudes, ideologies, dispositions, perspectives, values, philosophies, theories, etc. All aspects of our inner selves that determine the direction our decisions, practices, and engagement head in. While the orientations in Figure 1 pursue positive and productive climates for diversity, we do not believe that this is the same as everyone always feeling comfortable or the absence of conflict. Rather, we assert that when our five orientations are guiding the work in teaching and learning spaces, conflict can be addressed in ways that preserve the common dignity and humanity of all involved.

We see the world as a place where each individual should have the opportunity to grow in ways that they find useful and valuable. According to the UN Human Rights Declaration Article 26, education should be for the purpose of the "full development of the human personality," something that requires opportunities for self determination. In order for each human to have this opportunity through education, we have to acknowledge that we are not alone on the planet – our actions, attitudes, words, behaviors, etc. impact others as we and those around us strive to fully develop their own human personality. That space of impact where one person's or group's self-actualization comes into contact with another person or groups is where we feel our orientations can be most helpful. As socialization processes, the use of control, assimilationism, and compliance only serve to reproduce inequity, social hierarchies, and domination/oppression (Harro, 2018). However, if we engage in those spaces from the orientations described below, might humanizing solutions to challenges be found? Might students learn to engage with difference in productive and positive ways versus through dominating and oppressive ways? Our empirical work to answer these questions has already begun through an exploratory study in five countries (Finland, Norway, Germany, England, and the US). What we share below is the foundation of our empirical work, the operationalization of five orientations that are grounded in existing theoretical, conceptual, and empirical research and hold promise for creating teaching/learning spaces that embrace, elevate, and are positive for diversity.

Openness: Embracing Multiple Knowledges with Grace

As an orientation in teaching and learning, openness is practiced through critical self-reflection and an ongoing commitment to rethink and disrupt various messages, biases, and social norms that many have been socialized to accept without question. Such openness requires a fair amount of reflection and ongoing internal work for each member of the teaching/learning community. Sealey-Ruiz (2022) describes "Archaeology of the Self" as an action-oriented process of questioning assumptions, engaging in critical conversations, and practicing reflexivity. She argues that this is "the ability to read, write about, discuss and interrupt situations and events that are motivated and upheld by racial inequity and bias" (Sealey-Ruiz, n.d.). Embracing multiple knowledges with grace is possible when individuals have a strong sense of themselves, their culture, worldview, positionality, values, worth, dignity, etc.

An important aspect of openness is epistemic humility (Dillard, 2021), which is the ability to admit what one *does* and *can* know as well as what one *does not* and *cannot* know. Such humility also recognizes that there are multiple ways of knowing and thus no universal epistemology or ontology that should be privileged over all others. We often use a popular meme with our students to illustrate this point, one we have recreated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Illustrating Legitimate Different Perspectives

Figure 2 illustrates how two people can have very different views, but both still be right. This simple image shows how there truly can be multiple legitimate perspectives and ways of being in the world. However, considering this situation where one person sees a six and another person sees a nine, what is it like if the person seeing a six is the only person saying it is a six and is minoritized for that view? Also, is it legitimate for someone to see an eleven? Or an apple or a pretzel? Who gets to decide what is legitimate? Such questions illustrate the issue of power and privilege in the context of epistemologies and ontologies that are often deeply entrenched in the historical context of white supremacy and colonialism. Thus, our openness and the internal work we do to embrace multiple knowledges with grace must attend to deeply historical issues of power and privilege as well as the multiple cultural ways of being and seeing the world that exist. Humility in telling and listening to each other's stories and experiences creates the possibility for openness to counter issues of supremacy and inequitable power distributions that are deeply entrenched in our communities and teaching/learning spaces.

Openness is also necessary to adopt new ways of thinking upon receiving new information (Grant, 2021). Grant discussed how difficult it is for people to have an open mind and engage in flexible rethinking because of how much we are inclined to hold tight to our assumptions, instincts, and habits. He explicitly asked readers to "let go of knowledge and opinions that are not serving you well, and to anchor your sense of self in flexibility rather than consistency" (p. 12). In order to develop this kind of openness, Grant suggested several approaches. First, to think like a scientist which he articulated as, "treat your emerging view as a hunch or a hypothesis and test it with data" (p. 251). One challenge in our current world is defining quality data or even quality science. It is outside the scope of this chapter to explore all of these issues; however, it is relevant to note the importance of fact-checking and using media/digital literacy practices to determine the quality of data we use to learn about the world and engage in it. The second thing Grant suggests is to define your identity through your values, not your opinions. If your sense of self is so deeply grounded in your opinions, it can be difficult to be open and potentially rethink old beliefs and ideas. In contrast, if you see yourself as someone who values learning, curiosity, and mental flexibility, you can be much more open and free to shift your thinking when you encounter new meaningful information.

Grant offered further recommendations to assist in developing openness. He recommended proactively seeking out information that counters your views. This is a way to disrupt confirmation bias and escape echo chambers where you only hear the same perspectives that verify your own. You do not have to agree with the views that are counter your own, however, engaging with them can challenge your assumptions. In turn, this helps you continue to learn and expand your understandings of the world and people in it. Grant also suggested that it is important to avoid confusing confidence with competence. He suggests using situations where you doubt yourself as an opportunity for growth and to embrace the joy of being wrong.

This idea of there being joy in being wrong is something we find incredibly important for openness in teaching/learning spaces. Too often, teaching/learning is constructed around perfectionism. Students do not take risks for fear of negative social or academic consequences for making mistakes. Similarly, teachers feel pressure to act as perfect role models who know all the answers and never do anything wrong. With such dynamics at play, the emphasis is not on learning or growth—it is on right answers and perfectionism. The complexity of the world demonstrates that there are few answers that are definitively right in every context and situation. Therefore, for openness to generate diversity as positive and productive, we need to embrace humans as flawed. Such an orientation accepts and expects all human beings to exist and operate in imperfection, thus offering grace, love, acceptance, and understanding to both others and self in the face of conflicts, mistakes, and problems as well as successes and celebrations. In the face of human flaws and errors, we must grapple with the notion of intent. Intention is important, but it should not be weighed more heavily than the impact of one's actions. For example, even if someone didn't intend to harm someone else, if the impact was harm, there needs to be an openness to addressing and repairing it. There is a difference between accidentally stepping on someone's toes and deliberately stepping on them, both in terms of impact and intention. However, regardless of intention, the impact of stepping on someone's toes will be pain and potentially long-term damage. The impact of that action, regardless of intention, needs to be attended to.

Grant's (2021) book "Think Again" offered some final tools to help generate openness. He suggested trying to learn something new from each person you meet, deliberately building a network of people who can challenge you (not just support you), and not shying away from constructive conflict. While we will discuss conflict more in the next orientation, we believe learning by being challenged and digging into conflict contribute to openness.

As an orientation, openness is an ongoing intrapersonal and interpersonal process to develop and foster positive and productive diversity in teaching/learning spaces. As such it embraces multiple knowledges, experiences, and perspectives. It also relies on epistemic humility and grace in facing our shortcomings, ignorance, and even unexamined success. When prepared, an educator can use openness with students to address and resolve cultural collisions in teaching/learning spaces as a way to model, teach, and experience diversity as a collective benefit.

Interconnectedness: Reciprocity in Relationships and Belonging

Interconnectedness, as an orientation, is grounded in relationships that foster an authentic and wide-spread sense of belonging and love. Reciprocity and accountability are central features of humanizing interconnectedness. For example, teaching/learning spaces must be deliberately

developed to ensure individual self-actualization occurs in reciprocity and with accountability (Simpson, 2017). In this way, individual self-actualization (grounded in self-determination and agency) ensures collective self-actualization through reciprocity and shared accountability. With these commitments in place, all forms of diversity can come into relationship in ways that are positive and productive while co-creating authentic love and belonging at the individual and collective level. This idea is strongly embraced in the literature from Indigenous scholars and activists who ground their work in the interconnected nature of all living and non-living beings (e.g., Kimmerer, 2013; Simpson, 2017). Simpson (2017) describes this interconnectedness as follows:

> Part of being in a meaningful relationship with another being is recognizing who they are, it is reflecting back to them their essence and worth as a being, it is a mirroring. Positive mirroring creates positive identities; it creates strong, grounded individuals and families and nations within Indigenous political systems. So at the same time I am looking into the mirror, I also am the mirror. What do I mirror back to my kin? Dysfunction? Criticism? Cynicism?...To me, seeing someone else's light is akin to working to see the energy they put into the universe through their interactions with the land, themselves, their family, and their community. Aaniin[1] isn't an observation but a continual process of unfolding; it is a commitment to the kind of relationships where I have dedicated myself to seeing the unique value in the other life as a practice (pp. 180-181).

In this quote, Simpson illustrates many important facets of interconnectedness – beyond just the notion of engaging with others for the purpose of mutual benefit. In Simpson's vision of interconnectedness, there is both recognition and reflection on who one is and what one sees in the other. As she noted, this can include negative or positive mirroring. However, the purpose and goal of what she calls reciprocal recognition is that commitment to relationships where "I have dedicated myself to seeing the unique value in the other life as a practice" (p. 181). At the core of such work is a responsibility toward building community grounded in reciprocal recognition. When individual and collective self-actualization is grounded in reciprocity, the interconnectedness among people leads to diversity being positive and productive. In a school setting where expansive diversity exists, this attending to the individual as meaningful and important as part of the collective whole provides important tools for conflict resolution grounded in both the needs of the individual and the whole.

Another characteristic of interconnectedness in positive diversity climates for learning is capture by what Venet (2021) discussed as part of equity-centered trauma-informed education, unconditional positive regard. Venet explored the value of adult/youth relationships grounded in unconditional positive regard – meaning regardless of what a student may say or do, the adults in their world should act through word and deed to communicate unconditional positive regard for that student simply because they are a human with dignity and worth. We recognize how challenging this is and the aspirational nature of such an idea. And, we also think it is important to strive towards both in relationships with adults and children as well as between adults. If we

[1] Simpson defines this term as "a way of saying hello that is common for Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg people to use." When breaking the word apart and putting it back together, it can be translated as "taking in all the thought and feeling of your journey in the universe, how do you see or recognize yourself?" or "I see your light," or "I see your essence," or "I see who you are."

develop interconnectedness grounded in unconditional positive regard with all the humans we interact with, we can constantly hold the value, worth, and human dignity of each person we interact with at the core of our interactions.

This does not mean that we do not address challenging, harmful, or disruptive behaviors when they come up. With an orientation towards interconnectedness grounded in unconditional positive regard, positive approaches to conflict resolution can be informed by restorative (Winn & Winn, 2019) and/or transformative justice (Souto-Manning & Winn, 2019). Such approaches center our interconnectedness and the human dignity, worth, and value of all involved to create consequences for actions that promote transformation rather than focus on punishment (Kaba, 2021).

Abolitionist activist Mariame Kaba (2021) explored various aspects of accountability and argued for the value of conceptualizing accountability around consequences versus punishment. She suggested that punishment is focused on inflicting suffering and pain rather than repairing harm and changing future outcomes. While consequences can be uncomfortable, they should not be for the purpose of punishing and suffering. Rather, the purpose of transformational consequences is to generate accountability to shared community values, which makes the meeting of those values possible in the future while also addressing and repairing harm that has been caused. At the core of abolitionist thinking, according to Kaba, is this notion of accountability focused on reasonable consequences for transforming relationships and repairing harm instead of the focus on punishment that is so common in many conceptualizations of accountability today.

We feel these ideas are important for the orientation of interconnectedness grounded in unconditional positive regard. To generate a teaching/learning space where diversity is positive and productive, the interconnected nature of every member must be taken into account. This can be done in several ways: (a) creating shared community values and agreements grounded in unconditional positive regard for each human in the community; (b) generating conflict resolution protocols that are responsive to shared community values and inherent human dignity and worth of each individual member of the community; and (c) creating transformational consequences that improve members' interconnected behaviors, attitudes, decisions, and actions in ways that are consistent with shared values. Such reciprocal recognition of each other, defaulting to positive regard, and being accountable to repair harm in relationships constitute interconnectedness as an orientation toward promoting a positive diversity climate in school settings.

Agency: Self-Determination

Teaching and learning that co-constructs a positive diversity climate must be grounded in self-determination for all involved in the teaching/learning processes. An orientation of agency, a commitment to self-determination, can shift the actions of dominance-, compliance-, and control-based relationships to that of collaborative agency and leadership.

As a concept, agency has wide traction in the research literature from looking at its presences and absences in the context of intersecting oppressive systems (Brockenbrough, 2011; Love, 2017), to its relationship to time representation in different linguistic and cultural traditions (Loermans et al., 2019). There are ways that agency has been theorized as a "compass of

transformation" where "agency arises when the situation demands it and falls away after the dilemma has been address" (Green, 2022, p. 105). But Bourdieu's theorizing of the tension between structure and agency probably has the broadest traction in the research literature (Noyes, 2008). Our purpose here is not to thoroughly review or critique the myriad ways agency is understood, theorized, and/or researched in the literature, rather to propose the important ways that an orientation towards agency can create the context in teaching/learning spaces for diversity to be both positive and productive.

To that end, Sherman & Teemant (2021) offer valuable insights naming teacher agency as "moral coherence," (p. 6) and explore the relationship between agency, identity, and power. For us, the interplay of agency, identity, and power is important not just for teacher agency, but also for learner/student agency as well. We suggest that for a teaching/learning space to be a place where differences can be positive and productive, agency should provide consistent opportunities for self-determination for all members of the learning community.

Therefore, we offer a simple and straight forward understanding of agency as an orientation – the expansive and consistent opportunity to participate in decision-making around the issues/factors that impact the individual and collective classroom learning community. To us, an orientation towards agency is deeply democratic and suggests a collaborative and collective mindset versus one guided by individualism. Echoing other orientations, especially interconnectedness, agency becomes an important lever for self-actualization (e.g., positive and dynamic identity development) while creating more balanced power relationships. For, as members of the learning community enact their agency, they must also attend to the impact of their words, actions, etc. on those around them (e.g., interconnectedness). An orientation towards agency is an important lever to disrupt the commonly present practices of control and domination (Viesca & Gray, 2021) and open up a space of self-determination in collaborative learning-focused communities.

Curiosity: Growth Through Exploration and Inquiry

To co-construct a positive diversity climate, teaching and learning needs to be grounded in an orientation towards curiosity with ongoing commitments to exploration and inquiry. This requires a fundamental shift from teaching focused on established learning outcomes to the kind of pedagogy Freire (1994) described when he called for teachers/learners to read the word and the world. It also aligns with Indigenous educational practices grounded in observation and exploration (Kimmerer, 2013; Simpson, 2017). These teaching/learning approaches necessarily embrace pluralism across process, product, and outcome, disrupting current practices grounded in standardization and sameness (e.g., Alim et al., 2020). Curiosity shifts the focus from mastery to growth, from memorization to exploration, and from standardization to generative difference.

There is a great deal of research literature that explores inquiry-based approaches in classrooms and suggests their benefit (e.g., Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2010). The simple act of focusing on open-ended inquiry projects rather than units and lessons is powerful for engaging students. Such a shift moves from focusing on a limited set of ideas and knowledges to an exploration of a variety of perspectives, ideas, and experiences. Creating learning around questions also allows for varied learning pathways to be taken (even multilingual ones) and varied outcomes that illustrate meaningful learning has occurred. Thus, an orientation towards curiosity creates a meaningful context for diversity and difference to matter in teaching and learning spaces.

Curiosity also becomes an important tool in addressing cultural collisions and other conflicts that might arise in the classroom. With advancements in understanding of neuroscience and the biological implications of the impact of trauma, experts are advising a shift from asking questions of those who misbehave from "What's wrong with you?" to "What happened to you?" (Perry & Winfrey, 2021). As an orientation, curiosity opens up the possibilities to approach people, problems, confusing ideas, and difficult situations from a space of curiosity for the purpose of understanding. Acting from a place of curiosity can help to humanize all involved in a situation and find common ground as well as understandings of the root issues at play. However, curiosity can certainly be applied in oppressive and racist ways. The extensive history of such practices in the name of science has led to extensive oversight into all research with human subjects to ensure that ethical procedures are being followed to preserve human dignity and consent. Because inhumane practices have been at times justified for the purpose of curiosity, the necessity for each of the orientations we are forwarding to be understood and constructed in relationship to the other is clear. When understood and constructed in relationship to the other orientations, curiosity substantively disrupts curricular and pedagogical practices that are monolithic, assimilative, or oppressive in nature toward students' diverse ways of being and knowing. Curiosity in teaching/learning environments generates positive and productive climates while also generating the possibility for our final orientation – creativity.

For curiosity in relationship to agency, openness, and interconnectedness should substantively disrupt various oppressive projects in teaching/learning spaces. It also opens up the possibility for our final orientation to meaningful interaction as a transformative tool to generate new opportunities.

Creativity: Generating Possibility and Transformation

Creativity should be both at the center of co-constructing a positive diversity climate as well as the outcome of it. Deeply imaginative, creativity in teaching/learning goes beyond what is or has been to what can or should be. Rather than replication and/or recitation, creativity as an orientation should fundamentally be about creating new possibilities and transformation.

Often creativity is understood in terms of the arts. We heartily endorse the integration of the arts into teaching/learning spaces. However, we also want the notion of creativity to extend beyond the visual or performing arts. Creativity can be at play when solutions to perplexing problems are found. Creativity can generate a tangible piece of art like an image, film, or song, but it can also generate co-constructed values or a unique approach to solving a mathematics problem. Creativity can be outdoor education, online WebQuests, and/or craft projects. In its most meaningful form, creativity is the generative application of learning in ways that improve teaching/learning spaces. And when it does, differences and diversity can truly be positive and productive.

Conclusion

In these (post-) pandemic times, teacher education is grappling with shifting demands and needs from students, institutions, and communities. However, within these shifting demands is an ongoing and extensive call for improving intercultural learning, diversity, and equity. We assert that our five orientations offer a useful heuristic for all educators and educational stakeholders

striving for equity and justice through education. As orientations, they leave space for different approaches, perspectives, and practices to be put into place while also offering grounding ideas and tools for moving towards teaching/learning spaces where diversity can be positive and productive. Such work is particularly important in our current historical (post-) pandemic moment where fascism and authoritarianism is on the rise and our interconnected nature as a global community creates opportunities and challenges. A collective effort in teacher education and other educational spaces of orienting our efforts towards collaboratively generating diversity as positive and productive appears to be a positive path towards a more equitable future.

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