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1 PEDAGOGICAL HUMILITY AND PEER MENTORING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION

KIM A. CASE, MARY E. KITE, AND WENDY R. WILLIAMS

- “During a guest panel of lesbian and transwomen speaking about their lived experiences, a White woman student raised her hand to ask a question, or so I thought. She proceeded to open her Bible and read Leviticus out loud, condemning the panel to hell.”
- “As the social psychology class discussed the differences between prejudice and stereotypes, a White man yelled out across the room that ‘All Iraqis are terrorists!’”
- “A student climate-change denier flipped out and flipped me off and told me I was preachy and said ‘f**k you’ maybe 30 times.”
- “After watching the film *Selma* in class, a student critiqued the show for being biased because it did not give equal time to the arguments of the White supremacist counter-protesters.”
- “My student asserted that people living in poverty should be ‘packed up on a bus and sent back across the border where they came from.’”

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Navigating Difficult Moments in Teaching Diversity and Social Justice, M. E. Kite,
K. A. Case, and W. R. Williams (Editors)
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- “After watching a video on consent, I shared a recent news story about a college student who was raped. She had been drinking with a guy, let him sleep in her dorm room, and woke up to him performing sex acts. A male student insinuated it was her fault and likened it to being robbed while walking down the street counting your money out loud.”

When we asked a broad range of educators for personal examples from their classrooms of “difficult moments” in teaching diversity, they quickly and easily came up with the quotes above (and many more). Yet, answers for how they handled these moments were offered more slowly and with large doses of humility. After many combined years of teaching social justice courses ourselves, we were not surprised by this. Despite the regular occurrence of such events, faculty teaching diversity and social justice topics often struggle with the question of how to handle these moments pedagogically. We search for answers in scattered journal articles, in random chapters buried in feminist teacher anthologies, or from trusted colleagues—if we are lucky enough to have them. More recently, we turn to online forums, social media collectives, and even anonymous posts within closed groups for advice and support. Despite these desperately needed and much appreciated resources, finding sufficient support quickly and efficiently when these difficult moments occur presents a problem. Rarely do we have time to conduct an extensive review of the literature, confer with a long list of online groups, or even consult a trusted colleague before the next class meeting.

This collection aims to provide a prepared and directly relevant source for some of the most common and challenging dilemmas faced by educators teaching social justice. Some address the “in the moment” events that happen in our classrooms, such as those examples at the beginning of this chapter. Others focus on things we can do to better prepare our students prior to the occurrence of difficult moments, to structure classrooms to prevent them from happening in the first place, or to help instructors regain balance after they have occurred. Our authors also address our roles as teachers inside and outside the classroom. Contributors address topics such as handling personal threats, responsibly incorporating current social justice events, navigating our own stigmatized identities, dealing with bias in teaching evaluations, the need for self-care, and more.

The idea for the book was initially sparked from reading a casebook about how to handle ethical dilemmas in the classroom (Keith-Spiegel et al., 2002). Those authors identified a set of ethical issues from their own and others’ experiences and collaborated to offer their best, reasoned advice about how faculty should respond if they faced similar situations. It seemed to me (Mary) that instructors who teach about diversity and social justice related courses would likewise benefit from such a resource. I pitched this idea to Kim and

Wendy and, happily, they agreed to join me on this journey. The resulting collaboration has been restorative for all of us and, thanks to our authors, the result has far exceeded our expectations. Their collective wisdom has resulted in this volume before you. We could not be more grateful for this opportunity.

We (the three editors) determined that the way to build the foundation for this book was to first provide a venue for discussion of the challenges faculty face when teaching about social justice. Thus we began by seeking a way to make our community support model a reality. I (Mary) had attended three Nag's Heart retreats (see Preface, this volume for herstory of Nag's Heart; see also Stockdale et al., 2017) but had never led one. We (Kim & Wendy) were familiar with the format but had not yet attended one. I (Mary) approached Faye Crosby and was delighted when she agreed to accept our proposed retreat. In the Nag's Heart tradition, we aimed to create a trusting, safe space that was, at the same time, unabashedly brave. Trust, courage, and humility are essential when a community shares physical, psychological, and emotional space, as we and our participants would over the course of the retreat. With this goal in mind, and with Faye's guidance, we embarked on our next step: identifying teacher-scholars who could join us for a weekend in the Fall of 2017 at Faye's home in Santa Cruz. We came together to discuss the challenges we knew most, if not all, social justice educators faced.

Because these moments occur in different institutional contexts and student populations, we sought faculty from diverse institutions. Our faculty came from public and private colleges and universities with differing missions, including community colleges, small liberal arts colleges, Master's comprehensive universities, and doctoral research-intensive schools. In addition, these schools included historically Black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, and low-income serving schools. Knowing that these moments have different impact depending on career stage, we also sought scholars who represented early, middle, and late career. Finally, our selective process also attended to diversity in terms of intersectional social locations of participants, especially given our (Mary, Wendy, & Kim) homogenous and privileged identities as White, heterosexual, cisgender, able-bodied, U.S. citizen women. Ultimately, we selected nine teacher-scholars with interests and expertise in teaching social justice to join us in person to explore these topics together. Although our authors teach in colleges and universities and based their chapters on experiences in those settings, we firmly believe the issues they address are relevant to teachers in K-12 institutions and that they, too, will find sage advice in this volume.

As this was my (Kim's) first Nag's Heart retreat, I did not know what to expect. I (Wendy) was a graduate student at UC Santa Cruz when Faye hosted other Nag's Heart retreats, so I knew a little about them through second-hand

stories. Participating for the first time as a senior faculty member, in a setting (Faye's Santa Cruz home) that was familiar and beloved, filled me with excitement and trepidation. I (Mary) knew from experience that each Nag's Heart has its own personality and that our retreat's trajectory would depend on our leadership and our participants' willingness to share our vision.

Within moments of arriving, each of us felt the feminist spirit soaring through the house and touching us all. It was immediately clear that the 12 women who attended to discuss difficult dilemmas in teaching social justice brought their full selves. Combined with the care, planning, nourishment, and sharing of brave space, the weekend was a magical and transformational delight. In brave spaces, participants commit to openness, honesty, the courage to learn, and the willingness to be uncomfortable for the sake of learning and supporting others. Collectively, we witnessed interventions to implement self-care, understanding, and compassion. Innovative ideas bounced around the room and deep mentoring relationships formed. Being in the house under one roof, our group members had time not only to process deep and challenging subjects but also to relax while elaborating on ideas and connecting with each other. At our Nag's Heart, there was a collaborative spirit that was absent of academic competitiveness. Breaking bread, sharing rooms and bathrooms, and having coffee (or wine) in our pajamas, we found that the close-knit physical space facilitated openness in a way that a meeting at a hotel or conference center never could.

As the retreat came to a close, participants spoke to the power of peer mentoring in their teaching, roles as mentors, and broader career development. After the weekend, we received overwhelmingly positive feedback speaking to the transformative power of peer mentoring:

- "It truly was a gift to be mentored by such a dynamic group consisting not only of advocates for social justice, but also of people truly passionate about teaching. It was a treat to be among people with such pedagogical creativity and wisdom."—Lisa Brown
- "In an era in which academia has become an increasingly competitive and at times combative environment, our peer mentoring retreat was a creative and effective model for collaborative and productive scholarship."—Susan Goldstein
- "While perhaps unintended, the retreat opened my eyes to possibilities for my teaching, mentoring, and scholarship as an advanced academic, a matriarch. I now have multiple examples of elders I want to emulate, and a vision for my own lifetime contribution to social justice and feminist psychology."—Asia Eaton

Our retreat focused on the difficult dilemmas faculty encounter when teaching social justice topics and courses. Rather than rely on the three editors to identify dilemma topics, prior to arrival we crowd-sourced ideas for the most pressing, common, or traumatizing dilemmas from our scholar-teachers. Most of the chapters in this volume represent the social justice teaching dilemmas that the group shared and analyzed during our week-end retreat. Unfortunately, because of other commitments, not all attendees were able to contribute to this volume. Nevertheless, we are grateful for those participants' sage advice and warm support, which facilitated the thinking of the other chapter authors. The chapter ideas from attendees were then enhanced and expanded on by additional authors who, after the retreat, joined one of our original collaborators as chapter coauthors or wrote their own chapter on a critically important issue. Thus, we were able to go beyond the topics covered at the retreat and provide a more robust coverage of the most typical scenarios we face in our classrooms and on campuses. We are grateful to these additional authors who shared our vision and who adopted the values of the Nag's Heart peer mentoring model as they wrote their chapters. Our original book idea led to the mentoring retreat and also to transformative peer-mentoring with these additional co-authors who shared the philosophy and practice of Nag's Heart to shape their chapters. Our overarching goal was to break pedagogical isolation, model pedagogical humility, and provide peer mentoring to readers.

PEDAGOGICAL ISOLATION

Regardless of discipline or courses taught, the strongest message we receive from social justice educators revolves around pedagogical isolation. We (Kim, Mary, and Wendy) all have experienced this isolation first hand while teaching about diversity and social justice and the controversial topics that are addressed in those courses, including privilege awareness, implicit and explicit bias, and the system-level factors that support the status quo. We have witnessed our peers, mentors, and junior colleagues struggling with contentious classroom discussions, student resistance, and others' discounting the importance of teaching these topics. We also know that quality advice on pedagogical best practices for these challenges is difficult to find.

All too often, our colleagues who believe in the importance of diversity education are the sole instructor in their department or college charged with infusing social justice and diversity content into the curriculum. Accompanying this isolation are worries about the consequences these instructional challenges might have on their career success. For example, when problems

arise, faculty may believe they will be judged as inadequate or ineffective teachers, particularly by their colleagues who do not face these difficult dilemmas. Our colleagues may also wonder about the impact of teaching about social justice on their student evaluations, particularly if others fail to understand the unique challenges of teaching about controversial issues (see Dunn et al., 2013). Our colleagues may be further uncertain about whom to ask for help and may find little institutional recognition or support for their work; if this support does exist, they may not know how to access it. This isolation can occur at all faculty ranks but can be particularly difficult for junior faculty who feel too vulnerable to share pedagogical difficulties, especially with those who might later serve on their tenure and promotion committees.

This common and persistent pedagogical isolation may lead to or exacerbate anxiety, imposter syndrome, burnout, frustration, and feeling overwhelmed and demoralized (Ahluwalia et al., 2019). Left without peer support, this isolation may even reduce confidence in their teaching abilities and motivation to teach about these challenging or taboo social issues. We know from our own responses to pedagogical isolation that educators may withdraw from teaching diversity and inclusion by altering the curriculum or stepping away from courses altogether to avoid the difficult dilemmas that often arise. Yet, as our chapter authors attest, diversity educators are not alone. We can, and do, support one another. One goal of this book is to provide this support through our authors' frank and open-hearted discussion of their experiences.

PEDAGOGICAL HUMILITY

Identifying possible avenues for responding effectively to difficult moments in the classroom or on campus requires openness to learning from others and *pedagogical humility*. This term, introduced by Kim Case at the 2018 Annual Conference on Teaching, refers to our obligation to prioritize critical self-reflection and analysis of our own shortcomings and to explicitly acknowledge that we often do not automatically know the best next steps for minimizing harm while maximizing student learning. The most shocking and jarring moments with students or with faculty and staff colleagues offer opportunities to step back and consider what we do not know. Without pedagogical humility, faculty may stay stuck in a range of initial emotions such as outrage, defensiveness, frustration, stereotype threat, hurt, or self-righteousness. Pedagogical humility means assuming we have much to learn about student-centered design and allows us to stay open to the possibility that students might also teach us, that there is value in consistently seeking

constructive feedback from students and peers, and that increasing our self-awareness and self-reflection is an ongoing process.

Our challenge as educators is to resist systemic patterns of pedagogical isolation through strengthening our pedagogical humility. In particular, teaching about diversity, inclusion, institutional privilege and oppression, and the many other social justice issues of our times increases our vulnerability within the academy. Through pedagogical humility, faculty can release the expectation that they should magically know the perfect educational path. We can let go of unreasonable self-judgment or internal narratives that tell us we would not encounter difficult moments if only we were better teachers. Pedagogical humility opens the door to break down the isolation and usher in validation, brave spaces, unconditional support, innovation, and creativity. The importance of modeling this approach at the retreat was illustrated by the reflections of our Nag's Heart participants.

- “To promote social justice, we have to take risks in the classroom and try new things. And with risks comes the potential for mistakes or failure. It is so hard to admit that I’ve failed in the classroom, let alone failed on something so important as addressing prejudice and privilege. Learning from others’ experiences helps me lessen the chance of failure and connects me with others who are doing this work.”—Lisa Wagner
- “The women generously shared their own stories of feeling isolated, unappreciated, and in some cases, afraid.”—Desdamona Rios
- “The retreat introduced me to an amazing group of scholars who were willing to share their experience and wisdom. I appreciated the candid feedback on my own dilemma and the opportunity to think about how my own positionality impacted my teaching style and my reaction to a difficult student.”—Salena Brody
- “The retreat was highly impactful for me in terms of my pedagogical approach to social justice. I gained tools to implement in my classroom, but perhaps more profoundly, I felt challenged to address many aspects of myself, such as my privileges and my burnout.”—Leah Warner

As Lisa, Desdamona, Salena, and Leah demonstrated, pedagogical humility requires us to open up and share, with the utmost honesty, our missteps, teaching failures, and fears. Mentors and those seeking mentoring must commit to pedagogical humility and be willing to bring emotional vulnerability to this process. As Salena and Leah noted, receiving candid feedback and feeling challenged made an impact on their teaching because they were humble and vulnerable enough to accept constructive criticism coming from a place of unconditional support.

PEER MENTORING IN BOOK FORM

The American Psychological Association's (2013) *Guidelines for the Undergraduate Major in Psychology* identified sociocultural awareness as a major learning goal. This goal focuses on achieving balance between addressing negative motives and situations (e.g., conflict, oppression) and responding to and resolving these issues (e.g., understanding multiple perspectives, appreciation of diversity). To achieve this balance, the guidelines point to the importance of acknowledging that effectively incorporating diversity remains an unmet goal while, at the same time, recognizing positive outcomes that come from promoting diversity.

As editors of this volume, we champion the importance of reaching this goal for each undergraduate psychology major and each psychology graduate student. Faculty in other disciplines, such as sociology, anthropology, social work, ethnic studies, and women's and gender studies, also strive to meet this goal as do teachers in K–12 classrooms. This book serves as a resource for instructors who, like us, have undertaken this journey. As instructors of diversity courses or core courses with social justice approaches, we know first-hand just how challenging this work can be. We know from experience that instructors of diversity and social justice face unique challenges. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, students' comments and reactions can sometimes be shocking even to the most experienced instructors. Moreover, the topics covered in these courses often challenge students' worldviews and raise emotional issues that instructors find difficult and draining to address. Faculty must balance the perspectives of privileged students, who differ in their levels of multicultural competence, with the lived experiences of members of underrepresented and marginalized groups. Issues can arise in the classroom that leave faculty unsure of how to proceed or how to maximize students' learning opportunities (see Kite & Littleford, 2015).

The gift of peer mentoring provides the golden opportunity to thrive as educators. When teaching about emotionally and politically charged topics such as racism, privilege, welfare, immigration, transgender rights, or toxic masculinity, trusted peer mentors make a world of difference. Establishing a group of peer mentors, whether within one's own institution or spread across national and international networks, may reduce feelings of isolation and help normalize experiences with microaggressions and seemingly impossible situations in the classroom and beyond. In other words, peer mentors can help correct the gaslighting (Roberts & Carter Andrews, 2013), imposter syndrome (Hutchins & Rainbolt, 2016), and self-doubt that often parallel teaching social justice.

Our book provides a peer mentoring resource that addresses the complexities of teaching diversity and social justice. Our contributors are a vibrant group of feminist and intersectionality scholars who have the experience and expertise to address the pedagogical dilemmas that arise in teaching controversial and taboo topics. Our book comes from a feminist, social constructionist perspective, which is consistent with our reading of the literature on effective strategies for teaching social justice. The dilemmas covered align with extensive research on quality teaching in general and teaching about diversity specifically (e.g., Prieto, 2009; Warner et al., 2013).

The dilemmas we identify come from the authors' own experiences. With the goals of dismantling pedagogical isolation, modeling pedagogical humility, and serving others through peer mentoring, we pushed authors to write from the personal. In stark contrast to our/their positivist training as social scientists, we empowered them to write in the first person from a place of pedagogical humility. We found authors were challenged by the idea of writing about personal experiences and using "I" to discuss what they sometimes viewed as professional failures in the classroom. They tended to write in third person, include lengthy literature reviews, and remove themselves from the dilemmas. In contrast, we advocated for writing in a way that pushed back against our own training to be absent, invisible, "objective," and distant scholars. Knowing that they are all eminent scholar-teachers, we encouraged them, and ourselves, to fight the urge to fade into the background as authors. To encourage pedagogical humility and make room for sharing the personal, we also specifically asked authors to limit research citations. As a result, citations within chapters are intended as starting-points for those curious about the literature or wanting further research-based support for content, rather than as full expositions of the science. As authors, we (Kim, Mary, and Wendy) found the tendency to overcite the literature sometimes crept into our writing, perhaps as a result of feeling more vulnerable. The need to be perceived as legitimate scholars seemed heightened the more we pushed ourselves to express the personal within our own chapters.

DIFFICULT DILEMMA RESOURCES: CHAPTER STRUCTURE

To streamline ease of use and quick access to resources when these difficult dilemmas arise, we designed chapters to follow the same main structure throughout the collection. This consistent chapter structure begins with the dilemma to be addressed. Included dilemmas cover not only pedagogical questions and moments in the classroom context, but also broader challenges associated with our campuses, our colleagues, and institutional barriers. This

consistent chapter structure allowed us to maximize peer mentoring: Each chapter reflects the results of peer mentoring among the editors and authors, but also serves as an opportunity for peer mentoring from the chapter authors to the reader. The chapter structure is as follows:

- Summary of Dilemma
- Faculty Reflection
- Considerations of Context and Intersectionality
- Best Practices
- Structural Implications (if relevant)
- Resources
- Chapter References

For example, a chapter tackling the issue of student resistance to learning about transgender perspectives would begin with a description of a classroom interaction. The chapter author(s) would then offer reflections on the approach they took in the moment and potentially what they would have done differently in retrospect. Within Considerations of Context and Intersectionality, contributors offered suggestions for addressing dilemmas across courses, disciplines, career stages, institution types, and more. With respect to intersectional praxis and pedagogy (Case, 2017), chapters may also address the potential ways that instructor social location might affect the teaching dilemma. How does the identity of a White woman teaching about Black Lives Matter influence White students' learning? Does a Latina faculty member face particular stereotype threat challenges with White and African American students who question her expertise?

Although we believe there are clear advantages of using this consistent book structure and a position of pedagogical humility, we also acknowledge that it sometimes resulted in more editorial suggestions than authors typically encounter when writing book chapters about their areas of expertise. In addition, our authors trusted us that sharing their missteps would not diminish them, but rather be enlightening for others. We are forever grateful to our authors for their patience with this process and hope they (and you) agree that the result is a strong, user-friendly resource that upholds the sharing of missteps as a strength, not a weakness.

MAXIMIZING THE IMPACT: HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

For educators like ourselves, this book offers the peer mentoring stories, reflections, guidance, and resources to immediately address difficult moments in the classroom and beyond. A student may express anger at their instructor for challenging stereotypes about undocumented immigrants, or a student

may push back on our use of inclusive terminology or may claim we are threatening their “right” to free speech. We aim for this collection to serve as a go-to guide in these moments that cause confusion, frustration, and even deep emotional and psychological pain for educators. By going directly to the one or two chapters that reflect the difficult dilemma at hand, educators can use the authors’ reflection, best practices advice, and contextual considerations to reflect on their own experiences and possible next steps. If needed, the resources section could be used to pursue additional support. The chapters also offer strategies for creating classroom environments that can reduce the possibility that these painful moments arise.

USE BY ADMINISTRATORS

Department chairs, deans, and faculty development directors may also use the book to become more effective mentors of faculty teaching diversity and social justice courses. Our lived experiences and the stories we gather from colleagues consistently illustrate the lack of support faculty receive from administrators who evaluate them for merit review and promotion and tenure. Administrators sometimes assume that difficult dilemmas arise because of deficits within the educator (e.g., incompetence, attitude). We urge them to instead refer to these chapter dilemmas as a means for supporting faculty who willingly take on these intensely challenging topics. Faculty development leaders may consider providing copies of this collection to incoming faculty who will be teaching courses that address diversity topics or use social justice pedagogical approaches. In addition, administrators must pay significant attention to how these dilemmas impact underrepresented faculty. Although any faculty member teaching diversity and social justice may face these difficult moments, marginalized and underrepresented faculty often experience increased frequency and intensity of incidents (Plaut et al., 2014; Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2008). Acknowledgement and validation of this reality for marginalized faculty, along with offering this peer mentoring guidebook, could signal a more developed and institutionalized culture of administrative support.

COMMUNITY BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION

The original and persistent goal of the Nag’s Heart peer mentoring model is to build feminist communities that grow well beyond the time-limited weekend retreat. In fact, Nag’s Heart participants report lasting connections,

friendships, and support systems that sustain them throughout their careers. We detailed the genesis of this book in the Nag's Heart model because it is formative to understanding how the book came together and how we hope our readers will use it. Through the creation of this book, we formed a feminist academic community of support that is steadfast and long-term, and we were able to extend this community to authors of this volume who could not attend the retreat. With all of our authors, we continue to share resources, celebrate each other's accomplishments, check in on each other, engage in peer mentoring, call when we need to vent, copresent on this work at conferences, attend each other's talks in support, and host each other in our homes when travelling to conferences.

Likewise, we view this book as a source of peer mentoring that supports community-building across the discipline of psychology. We know from our own personal experiences that teaching diversity and social justice leave faculty feeling drained, uncertain, isolated, invalidated, targeted, frustrated, and much more. We most often struggle with these dilemmas in isolation and avoid turning to colleagues for fear of being blamed for the dilemma or labeled as incompetent. Educators may know of no other institutional colleagues teaching these topics, but yet they need a confidential resource to turn to for guidance. Access to the dilemmas described here, along with careful reflection on possible pedagogical strategies and avenues for support could drastically alter faculty experiences when these situations arise.

In the spirit of pedagogical humility and continuous growth, we present this volume as an invitation to a conversation. We view this as the beginning of a dialogue that we hope to see extended across psychology and additional disciplines with faculty teaching diversity and social justice. To be clear, we did not cover all or even most of the difficult dilemmas, but hope this resource reduces pedagogical isolation, promotes pedagogical humility, and provides a source of peer mentoring. We hope that the readers we have not met will reach out to any of the chapter authors either in person or in cyberspace and that they too will extend their expertise and feminist spirit to likeminded colleagues and friends.

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