Pedagogical Approaches to Student Racial Conflict in the Classroom

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The majority of higher education faculty value diversity in the classroom; however, the majority of faculty also report making no or few changes in their classroom practices to deal with diversity issues. Faculty are in a position to facilitate classroom diversity in such a way that pedagogically avoids, supports, or challenges students' learning about race and dealing with overt or covert racial conflict. Some faculty take on this challenge vigorously, while others approach it with considerable anxiety about their own knowledge or skills and students' emotional reactions. This article explores some of the ways faculty address student conflict amid and around racial diversity in the classroom. Interviews with 66 faculty of different races and ethnicities, genders, and disciplines led to analyses of the various approaches they enacted and dilemmas they experienced in the face of such racial conflict. They include a range of decisions, such as: to avoid conflict through attempts to control the classroom environment; to minimize such conflict; to divert or distract students' attention from conflict; to react to the conflict in a way that attempts to incorporate tensions for further learning; and to proactively design course activities to normalize and surface conflict in ways that enhance students learning about race and racial interactions. Examples and analysis of different ways of dealing with classroom racial diversity and conflict as well as the need for interventions to improve faculty members' ability to deal with such situations are offered.

Keywords: race, pedagogy, conflict, racial conflict

The majority of faculty claim to value diversity in the classroom; however, the majority of faculty also report making few or no changes in their classroom practices to deal with diversity-related issues (Maruyama & Moreno, 2000). Although recent research has showed there are many positive educational and civic outcomes possible in racially and ethnically diverse classrooms (Chang, Astin, & Kim, 2004; Gurin, 2003; Pike & Kuh, 2006; Stephan & Vogt, 2004), these classes also can be and have been the site of conflicts, both subtle and heated, between students of different (racial and ethnic) backgrounds (Marin, 2000; Sidanius, Levin, van Laar, & Sears, 2008). Conflict has been defined classically and formally as the struggle where the aim is to gain objectives and simultaneously neutralize, injure, or eliminate rivals (Coser, 1967; see Senggirbay, 2011, for a review of various definitions). We follow Palmer's (1987) thoughtful description of conflict in teaching and learning environments as "a public encounter in which the whole group can win by growing" where conflict is often open, public, and noisy (p. 25).

As Warren (2005) argued about faculty responses to such conflict, "Many of us, when hot moments occur, simply react. Our minds stop working" (p. 620). With few exceptions, re-

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search on the management of diverse college classrooms seldom provides practical details about what it is that faculty do, do not do, or can or should do in these conflict-laden circumstances. Nor does it often address the different pedagogical approaches and responses to conflict of faculty members of diverse backgrounds. Our research explores how faculty members of different races and ethnicities and genders assert agency and design pedagogical practices in negotiations around students' racial and ethnic conflicts.

A forthright focus on diversity-related concerns in higher education is crucial for the individual development of White students and students of color, both during and beyond the college experience (Gurin, 2003). Gurin, Nagda, and Lopez (2004) found that the "actual experiences students have with diversity consistently and meaningfully affect important learning and democracy outcomes of a college education" (p. 358). In addition, Bowman (2010) argued that institutions should adopt diversity requirements that include multiple courses, and that diversity be woven into existing general education coursework throughout the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Gurin (2003) argued further that structural diversity (the number of people in each racial or ethnic category), informal interactional diversity (the frequency and quality of intergroup interaction), and classroom diversity (organized instruction focused on learning about and gaining experience with diverse people) were each imperative to student learning (also see Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002). Given the existence of at least some degree of structural diversity on many campuses, we focus herein on classroom diversity.

Students typically enter college from racially and ethnically segregated secondary schools and neighborhoods (Echenique & Fryer, 2007; Krysan & Farley, 2002; Orfield & Gordon, 2001). As a result, they often do not always understand or agree with their peers who have different backgrounds. Lack of knowledge, awkwardness, and suspicion between White students and students of color are almost always present, as of course are friendships and effective study and work relationships (Antonio, 2001; Gurin, 2003; Guyton & Howard-Hamilton, 2011). Under these circumstances, conflict between and among students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds is to be expected; they may be overt, visible, and acknowledged, or covert, invisible, and operating under the radar. Gay (1997) has suggested publicly acknowledging and using conflict as a productive way to increase student involvement, to challenge their own and others' ideas, and to develop more complex ways of thinking through intergroup and difficult dialogues (also see Gurin, 2003; Maxwell, Nagda, & Thompson, 2011).

What options do faculty members, who have substantial power in the classrooms, have in these circumstances? Meyers (2003) has provided strategies for preventing classroom conflict, such as communicating warmth and interpersonal sensitivity, establishing a shared course framework, and building a sense of community among students. Alternatively, Rich and Cargile (2004) used the theoretical framework of social drama as a reflection of racial conflict in society and in the classroom, and encouraged faculty to engage the conflict in the classroom in a transformative manner. They stated, "we should invite conflict and the social dramas that may ensue. It may seem easier to skirt issues of race but it is at our own peril. We believe that teaching students how race and privilege are perpetuated can potentially lead to lasting transformations. For some students, the transformation may begin during class. For others, perhaps, the seeds have at least been planted" (p. 363).

One of the core arguments behind the suggestion that faculty could and should seek the positive value of conflict as a pedagogical tool stems from the psychological principles of ideological incongruity, cognitive dissonance, or disequilibrium (Bowman, 2010; Gurin et al., 2002; McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001). By surfacing or creating tension and conflict, and by challenging students to confront the differences between their own experiences and worldviews and those of others, or between their understanding of social phenomena and the empirical reality of the environment, cognitive dissonance and its resolution can lead to new understandings of self and others. Analyses and guides for faculty members' skillful use of dissonance have been discussed especially in the context of the search for "teachable moments" via multicultural pedagogies (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007; Adams, et al., 2010; Rich & Cargile, 2004; Torres, 1998).

Faculty members' own social identities may also make a difference in their classroom plans or responses regarding identity-based conflict. For example, students may not always feel comfortable with, agree with, or accept the authority of faculty members from underrepresented minority groups (see Chesler & Young, 2007; Purwar, 2004; Stanley, 2006, for faculty perspectives on this dynamic; see Graheme, 2004; McPherson & Jewell, 2007, for student perspectives about reports on student evaluations of faculty). Perhaps as reflections of different social identities and histories, or of varied educational experiences and goals for the classroom, White faculty have been much less likely than faculty of color (with the exception of Asian American faculty) to incorporate diversity-related content into their courses, and men have been much less likely than women to report that they have incorporated readings on racial issues in their classes (Lindholm, Szelenyi, Hurtado, & Korn, 2005; Mayhew & Grunwald, 2006; Milem, 2001).

The goal of this article was to explore how, in the context of structural diversity, faculty members negotiated students' racial and ethnic diversity-related conflicts in the classroom. Our findings outline, in illustrative and practical detail, some specific pedagogical options that reflect faculty agency in the classroom. We recommend changes to prepare and support faculty for more effective responses to diversity and conflict, and to better educate students for participation in a diverse and changing democracy.

The Current Study

In this study, we explored aspects of classroom conflict concerning issues of race and ethnicity through in-depth interviews with faculty of different races and ethnicities and genders across the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. We used a constructivist-grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006; Morse et al., 2009), in which we started with participants' constructions of reality and moved to the literature relevant to our analysis based on participant narratives. We were familiar with some of the relevant general literature prior to initiating the study, but the findings helped us to intentionally visit the literature specific to the discourse of the participants. In this way, we saw this research process as iterative; literature

and findings folded back on each other throughout the cyclical research process (Pasque, Carducci, Kuntz, & Gildersleeve, 2012).

Our orienting questions inquired into whether and how faculty address conflict around issues of race and ethnicity, and what methods they use to address (or avoid) such conflict. In the following sections, we describe the methodology and methods of the study, provide examples and analyses of the types of conflict reported by faculty and the approaches faculty used, and the implications for pedagogical and structural change in the academy based on the faculty narratives.

Research Design

We employed a constructivist-grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2005, 2006) in this study where the researcher operates in a subjective and context-specific manner (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Charmaz (2006) argued that grounded theory can be congruent with a constructivist lens if approached in methodologically congruent ways. Charmaz (2006) explained,

> In the classic grounded theory works, Glaser and Strauss talk about discovering theory as emerging from data separate from the scientific observer. Unlike their positions, I assume that neither data nor theories are discovered. Rather, we are part of the world we study and the data we collect. We construct our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives and research practices. (p. 10)

As such, we used Charmaz's constructivist-grounded theory approach in this study to develop codes, categories, and interpretations from the voices of the faculty interviewed in an iterative manner. Thus, we developed a code system informed but not based on classic works on the resolution of interpersonal conflict and informed by our own experiences as faculty and/or former students. After conducting the preliminary analysis through the three-stage process described below, we turned to prior relevant theoretical literature across a number of fields. It may be important to note that, for this article, our goal was not formal theory generation, but the use of a constructivist approach to illuminate and conceptualize ways in which faculty do or may address issues of diversity and conflict in the classroom. Although we under-

stand that prospective qualitative studies and quantitative surveys may be developed from our intentional-grounded theory study, our hope—instead—was for this article to further consideration of a wider range of pedagogical approaches.

Methods

This article is a part of a larger ongoing qualitative study, "University Professors and Diversity in the Classroom," the objective of which is to explore how university faculty address issues of racial and ethnic diversity in the classroom and in their peer and departmental relationships. The study was conducted at a single, public, research extensive institution located in the Midwestern United States. This university has maintained a track record as a leader in efforts to diversify its student and faculty populations.

The study included 66 faculty members who either received awards for excellence in teaching and diversity work, or who were known and nominated by their peers as successful teachers in diverse classrooms (via snowball or chain sampling, Patton, 2002). The criteria for these awards were stated in very broad terms, as were our requests to recipients to nominate others with such presumed expertise. Thus, this sample was limiting and not representative of faculty at large, but of faculty from a public research university who have been specifically acknowledged or recognized by peers or administrators as having particular expertise. Despite these limits, the reports from this sample should be particularly illuminating for those interested in dealing with diversity and conflict in the classroom.

Individual faculty were interviewed using a semistructured conversational interview protocol (Fontana & Prokos, 2007) that asked questions about teaching in general, teaching specifically in a racially diverse classroom, and personal understandings and experiences with race and racial conflict. To focus on the specific area of interest, we first asked general questions about race and pedagogy. Some participants talked about conflict in relation to this question; some did not. Given our expectation that racially diverse environments often carry the potential for conflict, we then asked more specific questions about conflict. Inter-

viewers were also encouraged to ask probing questions and to seek more depth in the answers, if needed. At times in the analysis, we referred to answers to other questions in the interview in order to more fully understand the context of a given example or situation.

The diverse research team consisted of 31 people: 15 White people and 16 people of color; seven men and 24 women; and two faculty members, two postdocs, 14 graduate students, and 13 undergraduates. Faculty and graduate students conducted the interviews, and they, and the specially trained undergraduate coders, regularly collaborated in the process of analysis and interpretation of the results. The three senior coauthors of this article each conducted some of the interviews, and all four coauthors participated in the coding and thematizing process. Throughout the iterative process, analyses for the current study were brought to the larger interracial research team for triangulation and additional insight, thereby strengthening the "goodness" of the study (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006).

The larger research team also engaged in intentional researcher reflexivity, both individually and as a group, in order to strengthen the quality of the qualitative research (Jones et al., 2006; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Team members regularly read and reacted to the content and process of each other's interviews and often shared their own personal and instructional experiences with regard to racial diversity and conflict. The reflective discussions among members helped deepen the research experience and analysis process. Elsewhere, we (Pasque, Chesler, & Young, 2013) explored the perspectives of the multiracial researcher team through a thematic analysis of the reflexive discourse—both the writings and the dialogue. This reflexive approach echoed Charmaz's constructivist perspective that we, as researchers, are part of the world we study. The coauthors of this current article included two White women, one Latina, and one White man.

Participants.   The sample included 34 men and 32 women faculty members at a single research university. Twenty participants self-identified as African American, 14 as Asian or Asian American, eight as Latina/o, four as Native American, two as Arab American, and 18 as White. Nineteen taught in the humanities, 25 in the social sciences, and 22 in the natural

sciences. The faculty taught a wide range of courses with different subject matter, class size, and instructional technologies. They were not chosen to represent the race, gender, or disciplinary characteristics of the larger university faculty, but in the hope that people rewarded or named for their reputational skills in dealing with diversity might provide important insights. Interviews lasted between 60 and 90 min, and were usually conducted in the faculty participants' offices.

Methods of analysis. Following constructivist-grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006), our initial coding process was "incident to incident" coding (vs. "word by word" or "line by line") (pp. 50–53). The total number of incidents made by these 66 faculty members, in response to the inquiries that specifically addressed issues of conflict, was 161. Any individual faculty shared between one and 11 incidents regarding conflict; and several provided comments that simultaneously reflected several of the different themes as described below. In recognition of this complexity, therefore, we primarily characterized types of responses and approaches to conflict, not types of faculty members. More specifically, we explored the incidents or comments made by the faculty members and did not analyze the individual faculty members themselves.

At this point, we used a constant comparative approach of faculty members' comments in order to "establish analytic distinctions" and make comparisons at each level of the analytic work (Charmaz, 2006, p. 54). The second phase of grounded theory coding was focused coding, in which "codes are more directed, selective, and conceptual" than incident coding (p. 57). In this phase, the key codes or categories in the Results section reflect the data themselves. Our initial codes included teaching pedagogy, faculty approach, student approach (as described by the faculty member), faculty allegiance to students, faculty protection of students, and faculty assessment. Through the third and more detailed phase of grounded theory coding, axial coding, subcodes were created and each of our codes contained between three to six subcodes or categories. From there, we focused on "faculty approach to conflict situations" about race and ethnicity to address our specific research questions.

On exploration of the various faculty approaches to conflict situations in the classroom, we discerned and created a typology of five major codes or themes from the faculty narratives, as they recalled specific situations and addressed these situations: no conflict, avoiding conflict, controlling conflict, reactively using the conflict for learning, and proactively surfacing or stimulating conflict. At this point, we conducted an iterative process to further explore some of the literature on conflict responses and management in higher educational pedagogy, especially about race and ethnic relations, to determine whether and how our results' categories have roots in prior research and theorizing, and to reach a higher level of conceptualization. We then employed elements of Charmaz's (2006) theoretical coding, which was more integrative and helped us to tell an analytic story with coherence. Although this literature appears first and last in this article, we explored it in detail after the main themes were uncovered.

In the following sections, we identify specific examples of the racial and ethnic conflicts faculty members described, the approaches faculty used to address (or avoid) conflict, and the implications for individual and structural change in the academy based on the faculty narratives. In all cases, we used the words spoken by participants and have not altered them to conform to typical grammatical standards.

Findings

Five major themes reflected the faculty members' approaches to conflict situations about issues of race and ethnicity. The first theme was "not in my classroom," where faculty members reported that there was no conflict in their classrooms. Second, "let's not make a scene: avoidance and minimization," where faculty avoided or trivialized or minimized the conflict. In this case, faculty members recognized that there was a conflict and at times provided a specific example, yet avoided addressing it in class. In the third theme "taking control: defuse, distract, and divert," the faculty members sought to gain or regain control of a situation by stopping the conflict or using authoritative methods of teaching. Fourth, in "reactive usage: turning overt conflict into a learning opportunity," some faculty members responded to the conflict in a manner intended to be productive for students'

learning about race, letting or coaching them to "play out" or resolve the conflict in the classroom. Finally, in "proactive usage: surfacing underlying or covert conflicts for learning," some faculty members deliberately planned ways to surface anticipated or underlying racial conflicts and proactively engaged students in a transformative dialogue aimed at helping them learn from the conflict.

In the next sections, we describe each of these emergent themes and provide representative or reflective examples. We also share the self-identified race and ethnicity (e.g., African American, White), gender (woman, man; there were no self-identified transgender faculty in this study), and fields (natural sciences, social sciences, or humanities) of each participant at the end of each quotation.

Not in My Classroom

The first theme that reflected some faculty members' perspective was reports of "no conflict." In these examples, faculty members indicated that they did not experience racial conflict in their classrooms, even if they shared a story of a racial conflict elsewhere in the interview.

In this first example, the faculty member reported that he had not experienced conflict or tension about race in the classroom.

> Interviewer: Have there ever been issues or points of conflict or tension among students in your classes along racial or ethnic lines?
>
> Faculty: No. I would guess to some extent that we do eventually get to socioeconomic [issues] but nothing has come up in that context. We talk about education eventually and what they're exposed to in junior high and high school, and that's somewhat sociological. But we've never gone into any issues that have elicited—and you pick up the vibes in class—anything that gets people anxious or excited or hostile or anything like that. (White, man, natural sciences)

Here the faculty member indicated that he perceived the possibility of conflict around race and ethnicity, but indicated that, "No," it did not happen in his classes. He appeared to perceive such conflicts as inherently negative, because he was concerned about conflict causing students to become anxious, excited, or hostile. Note that the interviewer's question did not define conflict and tension as either positive or negative, but in a manner typical of many if not most faculty members; he clearly saw it as negative.

In a second example, the faculty member stated that because he taught the "hard sciences" he would stick to facts.

> Racial event in the classroom? Hmm. I've been here almost over 10 years now, and I cannot remember one racial event in the classroom . . . [We deal with] facts, just the facts. Hard science. So, yeah. I can't think of anything. (African American, man, natural sciences)

For this African American natural scientist, the content of "hard science" and "facts" within the natural sciences was exclusive of "racial events" and racial interactions among students. However, students in class always are dealing with things other than facts—themselves, their histories, their peers, the faculty member, the syllabus, what else might be going on across campus, and their reactions to and relationships with each of these factors (Reddick, Jacobson, Linse, & Yong, 2005; Riley, 2003; Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011). And of course the hard sciences themselves often address issues and controversies about race and ethnicity, for example, the investigation of health disparities, human factors in technology, the impact of environmental conditions on different social groups, the representation of women and people of color in the sciences and medicine, and the like (Bowman, 2010). But not here, not in this classroom.

In a third example of this theme, a faculty member distinguished between "differences of opinion" and "conflict."

> No conflict [regarding diversity matters]. I've had differences of opinion in class. But I haven't had a situation where there was a conflict. And I don't think it's a problem for people to have different opinions. There's never been any threats of physical or emotional damage, or somebody being upset or feeling physically unsafe, or harassed by other students. I've never had that experience at this institution. (African American, woman, social sciences)

This faculty member recognized student differences of opinion, however, her distinction between "differences of opinion" and "conflict" seemed to rest on conflict being associated with physical or emotional damage or harassment. Clearly, many forms of difference and disagreement exist than are represented by these poles, but seeing the possibilities in such stark terms limited both the faculty member's vision and the potential of response to issues that arise.

These examples did not determine whether there truly was no conflict (of an overt or covert

character) about race in these classrooms—or, as the first example notes, socioeconomic differences—or if the faculty member did not see or was ignoring the subterranean racial landscape. Arguing that no conflict existed permitted the faculty member and students to stay focused on the scientific material on hand. It also kept the environment "safe," at least safe for members of the majority community (Kendall, 2006). On the other hand, sustained noncognizance of the possibilities and complexities of subtle racial conflict may have maintained patterns of intimidation and exclusion for or by students of color, unacknowledged problematic behavior by White students or students of color, and contributed to a form of socially organized and supported ignorance.

"Let's Not Make a Scene": Avoidance and Minimization

In the avoidance and minimization category, faculty members recognized that conflicts about race did exist in the classroom but consciously avoided addressing them. In the first reflective example, the faculty member described a situation in which a student made an inappropriate comment with "racial connotations" that sparked a reaction from other students.

> It was a big group and you could feel this feeling, this tension, but then he (the student) kept going and nobody stopped him. And I think a few people looked at each other and then someone stopped him. I think if we're not going to say something then people will think it's okay to say it, and it's not. I would have definitely talked to the student, but then I wouldn't want to make a scene in front of everybody. (White, woman, natural sciences)

This faculty member clearly was conflicted: she recognized that issues needed to be addressed, otherwise "people will think it's okay to say it, and it's not." However, she did not address this situation when it arose, because she did not "want to make a scene in front of everybody." Her approach also avoided publically humiliating or targeting one student as the problem. In this instance, she did not take the opportunity to model classroom and pedagogical leadership for her students, and further did not talk to the student out of the class, although she did indicate that the latter might be a good idea. Fortunately, despite—or because of—the faculty member's desire to avoid a scene, another

student stepped in, stopped the speaker, and provided a space for others to speak.

In the next representative example, the faculty member noted that there are gender and ethnic (as well as other) differences in the sciences, "it comes up content wise," but he did not deal with such issues explicitly in the classroom.

> Um, it . . . it's very sort of, ah, implicit, I guess. It's not . . . not a very big . . . we don't deal with it explicitly. I don't deal with it explicitly. Um, there are times when it comes up content wise . . . And there are gender and ethnic differences. And, I mean, it's a plain and simple fact in the sciences. There are differences. You get both, not only with ethnicity and gender, but also with age as well. (Latino, man, natural sciences)

Interestingly, this natural science faculty member appeared to have a different view of the nature or role of scientific "facts" than did a colleague quoted earlier.

In the final example in this section, the faculty member talked about wanting to "appease the White folks" in class, but wished he would have handled it differently.

> The first day of class last term I had one student of color who, when we were going around, said, "Well this is why I am here, I'm going to take this class because all of you (White) folks don't know anything about us and you need to learn and understand your shit." Well, the White kids were immediately taken aback. They were put on the defensive and shut down whatever dialogue was going on at the time. And this is another thing I wish I would have handled differently at the time. In my attempt to appease the White folks in the class I almost minimized what she said. I felt I was minimizing, as I was trying to validate her but not offend others. I felt I was minimizing what she said. (Asian American, man, social sciences)

This faculty member avoided conflict in order not to heighten the defensiveness of White students, and perhaps alienate them from the students of color and the course. Thus, he intervened in a way that he felt may have diminished the impact of the original statement, failed to explore its meaning, and left all students hanging.

The strategy of avoidance suggested that the academic classroom (or at least the classroom in some disciplines) may not be the best place for explorations of race and racism, or that the task of doing so was just too difficult. If we seriously consider Allport's (1954) classic set of conditions for positive intergroup relations and difficult dialogues, it may be most appropriate to

seek alternative (cocurricular) environments, ones with greater safety for honest expressions, trust, and sustained interaction around common tasks. On the other hand, Feagin and Vera (1995) argued that "minimization" of the expressions or concerns of people of color, and the reactions of Whites, and avoidance of dealing with them, contributed to the development and maintenance of "sincere fictions," beliefs that support the power of dominant groups, but that lack veracity.

Taking Control: Defuse, Distract, and Divert

In the control category, faculty members often responded to conflict by using authoritative approaches to maintain order and assert or take back their authority to control the classroom, such as delivering a monologue, moving to another topic, or stopping the conversation all together.

When asked how she dealt with racial conflict in the classroom, one White social science faculty member explained that she cut off the discussions, because she did not have time for "stupid debates" in her classroom.

> I certainly have silenced students. I've certainly just ended behavior that was inappropriate. I certainly have just engaged them in debate and shot down their arguments. But I also probably turn it in such a way that the other students do not lose a lot of energy. I mean, I'm not into having stupid debates in my classroom. So sometimes you just need to cut it off and move on so you don't lose time. (White, woman, social sciences)

This faculty member provided space for students to debate with her and with other students, we hope in relevant and appropriate ways. Her concern about control was reflected in her language ("stupid debates"), and the ways she sometimes silenced or shut down students' arguments because she did not want students who say racist things to take up class time. At times, however, even "stupid debates" may be matters of serious import for some groups of students, and her pedagogical style may have failed to attend to some students strongly felt concerns.

In the exercise of a second form of control, a male natural science faculty member addressed racial conflict by diffusing the situation and diverting students' attention to something else.

> They were going at each other verbally. I was at the other side of the classroom when it [an argument about

race and welfare] started and so all of a sudden there was this explosion and people were yelling at each other. But I walked over and sort of talked them through it. All I could do was to defuse and so at the point of time I got them to talking about something else and we went on from that point. Then I dismissed class a bit early and I did sit down and talk with the students again. (Native American, man, natural sciences)

In this conflict about race and welfare, the faculty member controlled the situation by distracting the students from the conflict and redirecting the discussion to another topic. This strategy ended the conflict during class time, and the faculty member sat down privately with the students after class to further the discussion between them (but not in a public arena and thus not in a way that informed other students of a "resolution").

In this final representative example, the faculty member described her particular reaction when she felt that students may have been careless or malevolent.

> In a few situations where I thought the students were either being careless or malevolent, then I'll pull them aside and say, "Hey, you need to make a choice. If this is not the right class for you because you're not willing to deal with this seriously, there are many other classes in this university [and] I would recommend that you take one of them. But as long as you're in this class I expect certain things of you." And that usually shuts people down, or shuts the behavior down, not necessarily shutting them down. (African American, woman, humanities).

To control the classroom climate, the faculty member described giving students an ultimatum—to stay in this class and deal with the issues seriously and without unnecessary conflict, or to choose a different class in the university. As such, she let students know that they were not meeting her expectations for appropriate classroom behavior.

The establishment of a controlled environment via various strategies promises greater safety for participants engaged in challenge and response. Without some substantial degree of emotional safety, it is hard for students to learn and push on their own learning edges. However, there are limits to the value of safety: under some circumstances, it may lead to avoidance. Linking this general phenomenon to the faculty, Wing Sue, Torino, Capodilupo, Rivera, and Lin (2009) elaborated especially (but not only) on White faculty members' desires for safety and their fears of "emotionally charged" classroom

encounters about race. They found that faculty members were concerned about "loss of control over their classrooms—that the situation would get out of hand and they would not know how to handle it" (p. 1096).

Reactive Usage: Turning Overt Conflict Into a Learning Opportunity

Some faculty members responded to conflict in ways that helped students explore issues or deal with events that arose and their racial and social meaning. In some cases, faculty members let students talk through the conflict during class time so they could gain a deeper understanding of the material; at other times, they structured course activities around the conflict and provided time for students to process it themselves. This opportunistic style helped distinguish potentially transformational from control approaches.

In this first example, the faculty member started by emphasizing what she saw as her responsibility to create and maintain a safe environment for learning. When something occurred that challenged that safety or that opportunity for all students to voice their views and experiences, she reacted and actively intervened.

> With the power I have, I have the responsibility to create a safe environment. So when other students jump and attack a particular student, again, my role is to, not to defuse the situation, but to trying to process what happened. And then if students are not confronting some problematic statement, then I see it as my role to intervene. But there again, you know, my position already comes into play. I mean, if I said the same thing as a White male faculty, I would be perceived very differently. I would be very careful. I don't want to excuse racist or sexist comments. But at the same time, I think that when I say things, I always have this kind of bit of concern or fear that, again, you know, this student would perceive what I saw very differently and more extremely than they would if the same statement came out of another faculty. (Asian American, woman, social sciences)

She did not immediately try to "defuse" the situation, but tried to help students make sense of it and learn from it. In addition, this Asian American woman raised her concern about the power differentials between herself and "a White male faculty," indicating her sense that some students might see her and her White male colleagues differently, especially given the delicate role a woman of color may occupy when

she challenges racism or sexism. Several first-person commentaries by men and women faculty of color have suggested the generalizable nature of this dilemma (see, e.g., Castellanos & Jones, 2003; Li & Beckett, 2006). We return to this issue of the potential impact of the instructor's identity on pedagogical choices and classroom dynamics in the Discussion section.

> In a similar manner, the next faculty member also responded actively to racial conflict. Racially problematic behavior gets handled. Immediately we stop the class, we form a fishbowl, we have a discussion. "What happened? Why did it happen? What does it mean? What are the consequences for everybody in this room? What alternative behaviors do we have?" I mean that's immediate. (African American, woman, social sciences)

When racial conflict arose, she attended to it directly and engaged students in dealing with it publicly via use of a "fishbowl" activity. Fishbowls are a teaching and learning strategy in which students break up into two groups where each group consists of students who have the same identity, perspective, and/or experience (Griffin, D'Errico, Harro, & Schiff, 2007). One group creates an inner circle (the "fish") and the other creates an outer circle (the "bowl"). Students in the inner circle share their perspectives with each other and students on the outside may only listen. After the students in the inner circle engage in a deep conversation, the students switch circles, and the students who listened now sit in the middle and speak, and students who spoke, now listen. When finished, all students come together in a large circle and an open discussion ensues. In this way, students must hear the entire argument of people who are different from them as well as the multiple perspectives among students who share the same background and possibly the same general view. They also share with others some of the realities of their own common and particular social identities.

In another reactive variant of "using conflict," the next faculty member asked a student for clarification, probing into a comment the student made.

> In my class last semester, where an Asian student . . . said something about "colored women." I thought, well, let's see if anyone says anything. And I said, "Does anyone have any questions for so and so?" So since nobody said anything I said, "I noticed you used the term 'colored' and I was wondering if you could sort of explain what you meant by that." I knew that if

I didn't say anything about it, there would be some members of the class that would be highly offended, and others who would feel uncomfortable, and then some who wouldn't even notice that it was an issue, and I wanted to make sure that that was addressed. (Latina, woman, social sciences)

This faculty member directly addressed the language of the student, but in a way that let her revisit her comment and explain her meaning. The faculty member identified a potentially racialized situation that did not initially involve overt conflict for students and raised the underlying conflict situation directly in front of the entire class. In this manner, she made sure that the power of language to affect students' feelings was addressed. At the same time, to achieve the objectives, one student's language was targeted, and we did not know that student's later response.

In each of these examples, the faculty members used teaching and learning strategies to flush out perspectives initially brought up by students on race and ethnicity that may underlie an emergent conflict or a difficult topic. The faculty had different methods for doing so, depending on the class and their own pedagogical perspectives—and in at least one case—the faculty member's overt reflection on the impact of her own racial and ethnic identity. As noted by other faculty reports, the disadvantages of such an approach are that it may divert students from the core subject matter of the lesson, raise strong emotional feelings in students, or stretch the faculty member's skills in handling the classroom discussion.

Proactive Usage: Surfacing Underlying or Covert Conflicts for Learning

Some faculty sought to use conflict for learning in a more proactive style. They preplanned situations or activities where they expected conflict to surface or occur and worked together with students for the conflict to be useful—and transformative. The next example illustrates such a proactive approach in the natural sciences.

> We deliberately try to make our classes and small groups as heterogeneous as possible. We'll actually introduce issues that may be so-called "hot button" issues and ask the students to really think about them and reflect on their own values and then bring these things into the sessions. And part of this is really to create a sense of disequilibrium. We pose questions or

raise contradictions that will allow students to really kind of think about who they are and what their values are. (Asian American, man, natural sciences)

This faculty member intentionally incorporated "hot button" issues into the curriculum ahead of time, hoping students would respond by exploring the issues and comments that arose. He expected and hoped to create disequilibrium or ideological confusion, and that students would encounter conflict and challenge one another as they explored their values and learned of differing perspectives. Hot button issues are matters of known controversy, such as affirmative action in college admissions, explanations for racial differences in morbidity and mortality, and so forth. This faculty member did not specify the particular issues he introduced, but did note later that their use helped create disequilibrium and engaged students' emotional as well as cognitive processes in the effort to deepen reflection and discussions.

In another proactive example of using conflict, the faculty member approached conversations about race as opportunities to create learning. This was in response to the interviewer asking if there had ever been issues or points of conflict or tension among students in (your) classes along racial or ethnic lines.

> I try and create situations where people have an opportunity to learn. I see awkwardness [about race and racial conflict] as normal and natural. I'll sometimes do an exercise asking people to think about their social identity. I often do that early in the semester so that the issues of race and gender and class identity are seen as part of our common problems. When people start to talk with one another about these issues, it helps to deal with the information gap, it starts at least to put people into conversation with one another and moves people into interaction with one another in ways that don't fit with their normal styles. (White, man, social sciences)

This faculty member publicly addressed potential tensions about race early in the semester in order to create productive interaction on the topic from the start of class. In his view, challenging and potential conflict-laden discussions of these "common problems" associated with race and difference, and the difference that race makes, became norms or expectations for the entire course. He attempted to normalize the awkwardness that often accompanied discussions of social identity and difference, and hoped to use the subsequent discussions about

race and conflict to build on throughout the semester.

The value of proactive approaches to diversity conflict in the classroom seemed to be a normalization of conflict, the forthright attempt to deal with awkwardness, and help for the students to learn how to deal directly with such situations. A number of similar proactive examples to these issues were detailed in the Ouellett (2005), Adams et al. (2007), and Maxwell et al. (2011) anthologies on dealing with difficult dialogues. Clearly, not all faculty members in all disciplines or subject matters are able to justify taking time and energy to intentionally and deliberately focus on these classroom topics and dynamics related to race. In addition, some faculty may not have the skills needed to proactively engage conflict in the classroom related to topics of race in a manner that furthers productive understanding.

Discussion

In some situations, faculty members clearly were conflicted: they recognized that issues needed to be addressed, otherwise "people will think it's okay to say it, and it's not," but did not elect or feel able to address the situation as it arose because, as one faculty put it, she did not "want to make a scene in front of everybody." Wing Sue et al. (2009) labeled this an "ineffective strategy" in the long run. But the conscious effort to ignore or avoid a scene, and by extension the conflict around potentially offensive racial language or behavior, may have allowed students to "save face" and diminished the risk of unhelpful emotional outbursts. Indeed, working "offline" in one-on-one follow-ups outside the classroom avoided publically targeting any individual and may have produced significant individual learning. On the other hand, the lack of an apparent or public faculty response may also lead to other students' public evasion and withdrawal. When students withdraw, faculty do not have a sense of what issues continue to percolate or how to encourage students to extend their own learning edges. Not addressing the issue in the moment may ease tension and permit a return to the subject matter at hand, but may also fail to take advantage of the opportunity for the faculty member to model classroom and pedagogical leadership in the space with all

students present, and for them to deal with the situation as a learning community.

Silencing or controlling classroom conflicts may have similar effects—both positive and negative. On occasion, actively using the conflict for learning can heighten some students' anxiety and generate resistance to course goals (McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001). Surfacing, highlighting, or intentionally creating conflict to produce learning seems counterintuitive to the conduct of an orderly classroom. And efforts to deal straightforwardly with racial conflict may also lead to potential sanctions from faculty colleagues about "noise" or departures from the established curriculum. Such considerations also draw attention to the need for broadly based cultural reform in some of the core norms and policies of the academy that do not reward and may even constrain innovative teaching, especially at the undergraduate level.

What Is to Be Done?

There is no one correct or best way to deal with all racial conflicts, overt or covert. Much depends on the nature of the conflict itself, the resources of students, the context of the classroom, the personal and professional goals and styles of the instructor, and the wisdom and skill available to the faculty member. We all have our own preferences, skills, and skill gaps. As Fox argued (2001), "Passionate confrontation can be a powerful learning experience . . . but confrontation is not for everyone, nor is it the only way instructors can help student move toward a greater understanding of each other" (p. 65). However, an interest in creating and sustaining a diverse democracy calls for emphasis on those approaches that may lead to student learning about diversity and racial conflict, over and above simply maintaining order and apparent harmony or peace in the classroom.

In the face of these findings, we note that Darder (1991) argued, "Instead of looking for quick-fix methods to restore a false sense of harmony at such moment of confrontation, educators must seek to unveil tensions, conflicts and contradictions that perpetuate discriminatory attitudes and behaviors among students" (p. 117). Active and effective faculty modes of response to racial conflict in the classroom probably contain elements of the following: recognizing the conflict, even if it is somewhat

hidden; diagnosing the nature and focus of the conflict (Is it really racially based or influenced?); checking one's own emotional reactions and potential biases (or fears and hopes); deciding whether, when, and how to address the overt or covert interactions or responses involved; listening to the voices and feelings of students who are a party to a conflict, as well as to their allies and associates; normalizing the existence of racial conflict in the context of a racially inequitable and contentious society and educational system; initiating some set of productive exchange and perhaps even problem-solving among contending parties; and continuing the effort to balance control of a potentially disruptive situation with the commitment to student learning from and about such situations.

Several recent commentaries and studies from many fields have pointed to the importance of using pedagogical techniques such as active learning, inductive teaching and learning, cooperative learning, inquiry teaching, problem-based learning, engaged learning, and other learner-centered pedagogies (see, e.g., Adams et al., 2007; Amador, Miles, & Peters, 2006; Riley, 2003; Smith, Sheppard, Johnson, & Johnson, 2005; Weimer, 2002). These techniques provide faculty members with the opportunity both focus on central curricular tasks and to adopt many of the interactional or experiential methods described above by faculty committed to using conflict for learning across the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. But how can we prepare and support faculty in the development and use of such techniques? Changes both in individual faculty members approaches and in the organization within which they teach and learn will be required.

Individual change.   One focus of individual change may be addressed using training, retraining, or development efforts that attend to faculty members' own base of knowledge—about race, about our national and international histories and contemporary realities, about one's own racial identity and cultural perspectives, about the racial experiences and attitudes of students who they are teaching, and about the likely impact of all these factors on classroom dynamics. The importance of faculty self-knowledge, especially about racial matters, has been emphasized by Bell, Love, Washington, and Weinstein (2007). Knowledge about the

students with whom faculty work is another essential component of good teaching—whether about or in the midst of race or anything else. Such knowledge goes beyond the often lost art of knowing students' names; it involves understanding the social identities of students and what they bring with them into the classroom, while avoiding essentialist or stereotypic assumptions. Hardiman and Jackson (1992) and Tatum (1992) have emphasized the importance of assessing—formally or informally—students' stage of racial identity development.

A second focus of individual faculty development is their skill regarding how to deal with overt or subtle racial conflict. This need was expressed by the White woman from the humanities who said, "I really was pretty much at a loss how to deal with that" and who hoped that it did not happen again. Wing Sue et al. (2009) reported a similar finding, and O'Brien (2006) has argued that, ". . . perceiving one's own 'loss of control' can be a scary feeling, especially when mainstream pedagogical philosophies reflect a hierarchical teacher-student model . . ." (p. 70). Faculty also need to recognize their own "triggers" in these situations—their own emotional reactions—in order to stay present in discussions and facilitate a complex exchange among students. Clearly, faculty also need to be alert to the prejudices (conscious and unconscious) and discriminatory behaviors (intentional or not) that students bring with them, as well as be able to acknowledge and deal with their own internal states—their own prejudices, anxieties, triggers, fears, and hopes for themselves and their students. A number of these concerns, along with specific pedagogical options, were discussed in an excellent and broad pedagogical anthology by Ouellett (2005).

A third individual focus can be programs on how to address how faculty members' own social identities impact their classroom operations (parallel to positionality and reflexivity discussions for researchers). Moreover, some faculty development efforts may need to focus explicitly on the issues faced by White women faculty and men and women faculty of color, who often face doubt and resistance in their efforts to sustain legitimacy in a predominantly White and male university system, let alone how they deal with student conflict.

Organizational change.   Beyond individual change, there is a necessity for support

systems for faculty dealing with diverse classrooms (which one way or another may include everyone) and related conflict, especially for those who elect to initiate or respond in ways that involve some risk—the risk of innovation, of addressing issues students or colleagues would prefer to ignore or stifle, of treating students' relationships with one another as important as curricular content (Anderson & Carta-Falsa, 2002; Hickcox, 2002). Turner, Gonzalez, and Wood (2008) especially emphasized the importance of such options for faculty of color, given some of the unique challenges they face (see Sulé, 2011). On occasion, such networking and alliance building may lead to the creation of a small teaching counterculture, one where committed faculty work together to challenge organizational norms around teaching, around race relations, and about orthodox pedagogies (e.g., Kaplan & Reed, 2005).

Faculty development programs focused on individuals are not likely by themselves to make a major difference in how university faculty approach matters of racial and ethnic diversity in the classroom. Many faculty object to or resist participation in such programs, seeing little tangible benefit or resenting intrusion into their spaces of academic freedom (Wagner, 2005). Individual commitments to such activities may address the lack of preparation many faculty experience, but they are not likely to alter the organizational norms, policies, and practices of departments and universities as a whole with regard to undergraduate teaching, and especially to innovative pedagogies that address racial and ethnic diversity (Chesler, Lewis, & Crowfoot, 2005; Elicker et al., 2009). In this regard, faculty development efforts need to be complemented with organizational development efforts, actions that challenge the collegiate cultures and practices that minimally reward teaching, especially in research institutions, and that therefore minimally support or reward innovative teaching that challenges normative racial patterns—in and out of the classroom (Chism & Whitney, 2005). In some institutions, special recognition (such as the awards provided to some faculty in this sample) and perhaps protection need to be provided for innovative educators who take on this challenge. Approaches taken by innovators or change agents who manage both to challenge prevailing norms and practices and to stay alive and prosper are detailed by Meyerson (2001). Other principles of organizational change concerning race relations in higher education are detailed by Chesler et al. (2005), Law, Phillips, and Turney (2004), and Smith et al. (2002). Strong endorsements of such efforts, from chairs, deans, and provosts are probably essential to faculty investments in development and to the later implementation of new organizational approaches to race and racial conflict in the classroom and the institution.

We do not argue that there is only one way to address conflict in the classroom, or that there is only one way to prepare and support faculty as they deal with these situations. But we do encourage faculty and university leaders to find approaches that work for their own pedagogical goals and styles while honoring all students in the classroom—speakers and listeners—who can all be actively engaged in the creation of a learning community around racial and ethnic diversity.

Conclusion

Griffin and Ouellett (2007) have argued that, "The initial response of many faculty members to potential conflict in the classroom is to shut down any disagreement, ignore the emotional and affective tone in a class, and keep a tight focus on intellectual and informational content" (p. 105). But both conflict and harmony (or collaboration) are normal in our society and in our collegiate classrooms. Students of varied backgrounds bring to the classroom a desire to associate and learn with one another and anxieties, awkwardness, and prejudices about one another. Recognition of both sets of realities is essential for maintaining a stable classroom and a learning classroom. When handled poorly or not at all, classroom conflict can distract students from their studies, create emotional distress, surface or sustain poor interpersonal and intergroup relations, intimidate or silence students of any racial and ethnic background, and generally threaten orderly educational processes and learning itself. When handled well, classroom conflict can create the dissonance essential for significant learning, permit new and different voices to be heard, clarify important

differences, raise issues to a level and place where they can be seen and addressed, and provide students with models for creative engagement and problem-solving.

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