Learning to Teach Mindfully:
Examining the Self in the Context
of Multicultural Education

By Tom Griggs & Deborah Tidwell

This article tells the story of a self-study partnership between the authors, Tom and Deb, two teacher educators from different institutions. This partnership began with discussions about shared interests and shared dilemmas in teaching multicultural education content at our respective universities. Over a 2-year period of time, we began to look closely at Tom's experiences integrating mindfulness (as defined by Thich Nhat Hanh, 1991) into his instruction, which resulted in self-study research asking the question, How has mindfulness affected my teaching graduate multicultural education courses at my institution?

In the literature of self-study in teacher education, we find few works exploring mindfulness (Griggs & Tidwell, 2012). However, self-study research has examined issues of noticing and caring that remind us of mindfulness as an approach to teacher education. In one example, Kelchtermans and Hamilton (2004) argued the value of emotional understanding in effective teaching and suggested that caring about and noticing the lives and reactions of others is critical to creating an effective learning environment.

In the interconnection of multicultural education and issues of race, Schulte (2004, 2009) argued that teacher educators cannot effectively address preparing

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new teachers for a diverse classroom without examining their own issues of White privilege, especially when teacher preparation has a presence that is overwhelmingly White (Sleeter, 2001). Such reflective practice requires teacher educators to be aware of their life experiences that have influenced how they perceive and know about the world and to step beyond that context to appreciate and understand the views and world knowledge of others.

For us, mindfulness, as described by Nhat Hanh (1991), is about compassion, empathy, and deep listening. It provides an approach to thinking about one's teaching and to addressing one's teaching actions in the field on a moment-by-moment, breath-by-breath basis. It is a phenomenon that is interwoven into all that we do as teachers.

Our self-study research on Tom's practice grew out of a series of events that were both professional and personal. He had become familiar with mindfulness partly because of challenges he was facing in his own personal life. Ultimately, this led to incorporating mindfulness into his professional work, in both intentional and serendipitous ways. Deb came to study Nhat Hanh's (1991) notion of mindfulness through her self-study work in collaboration with Tom (Griggs & Tidwell, 2012); she was intrigued by Tom's philosophical discussions of being mindful in his thinking about his teaching. What Deb noticed was that the depth of Tom's reflections about his teaching in this context was unusual. She felt that Tom's reflections demonstrated, in a fine-grained and detailed way, a kind of self-awareness and an attention to his students' efforts to make course content meaningful and to express their understandings. She saw Tom's reflections as permeating every aspect of his thinking process about his teaching.

The mindfulness meditation that Tom has been practicing for more than a decade is rooted in Buddhist spiritual philosophy. Smith and Novak (2003) stated that, in Buddhism, the keys to leading an ethical life are summarized well in what is called the Eightfold Path. The path comprises eight aspects: right views, right intent, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. In this work, Smith and Novak also explained the appropriate contextual definition of each of these concepts and the relationships among them. Particularly pertinent to the present discussion, however, is the way Smith and Novak described right mindfulness and right concentration as being related through meditation, shaping how we "become what we think" (p. 47).

Buddhism proposes that the end result of finding a balance between focused and detached presence is mindfulness, and this balanced approach to being present in the moment leads to liberation and enlightenment. Mindfulness, then, is the capacity to be both present in the moment and aware of the larger context in which the present moment is taking place; it is the ability to quiet the mind, displace oneself as the center of interaction, and recognize instead the centrality of a harmonious quality in one's interaction with others and with one's environment. Mindfulness is also about developing awareness of the interbeing (Nhat Hanh, 1998) of all things:

the interrelationships—even the interdependence—between oneself and the other, and oneself and one's environment, right down to the molecular level.

To best make sense of the voices within this article, we have written about our experiences and understandings of our joint self-study work by writing in first person within each of our own contexts. We begin with Tom's discussion of the development of mindfulness in his life, which provides the rich context for this study, and follow with Deb's discussion of her role as the critical friend and other voice in this story. As a self-study of practice, Tom's voice is reflected in first person singular throughout the discussion of the methodology, data, and discussion of the meaning of those data within the context of his teaching practice.

Tom's Story: Developing a Sense of Mindfulness

About 12 years ago, I went through a divorce that led me to look deeply into what I might do differently in my life in ways that would transform the suffering inherent in this personal and family crisis into more positive experiences. For me, this meant that I needed to learn something important from the experience of my divorce to guide my life in the future, which would transform my view of what had happened (and how I had responded to it), and which would also benefit all who had been touched by it.

At the time, I had the opportunity to attend a 4-day spiritual retreat not far from my home with Thich Nhat Hanh, a world-renowned Buddhist spiritual leader, scholar, and teacher from Vietnam. This was not long after he had published his book *Anger: Wisdom for Cooling the Flames*.

The timing was perfect. As I stated, I was feeling in need of personal guidance. Thay (meaning "*Teacher*," as his students call Thich Nhat Hanh) was only 40 miles away from my home, and I went willingly and relatively open-heartedly to the 4-day retreat. This experience led me to become a regular meditator (in the style of my teacher's mindfulness practice of engaged Buddhism) to help establish a sangha (a meditation community) in my town, to read many more of Nhat Hanh's books and writings, and gradually to transform my outlook on my life and the world. This has occurred in both profound and subtle ways, many of which I was barely aware of prior to undertaking this self-study. Deb commented on an early draft of a related manuscript (Griggs & Tidwell, 2012) that my mindfulness practice pervaded my work. Mindfulness has played an important role in the way I conduct self-study research, through which I have realized that it has come to form much of the basis for my teaching. In practicing mindfulness, I have enriched my reflective practice in teacher education "through the incorporation of non-Western notions of reflection" (Tremmel, 1993, p. 434). The purpose of this article is to examine some of the ways in which this seems to have occurred.

In working at becoming more mindful in my everyday life, I have come to recognize that mindfulness is not something that is necessarily easy to practice, nor

is it something you can readily turn on and off intentionally at all times. It requires both focus and ease; mindfulness is a way of looking at, experiencing, and relating to the world. In some ways, it forms the lenses through which I see and perhaps the gloves with which I handle the day-to-day situations I encounter. Yet, in other ways, it comprises attitude, personality, stance, and disposition.

I found the practice of mindfulness transformed my thinking in my personal life, in the ways in which I conducted my daily affairs, but I had not consciously attempted to implement mindfulness in my teaching practice nor to examine more closely how I might be engaging in mindfulness in my teaching. Central to my understanding of the value of cultivating mindfulness is that it can help one to be more conscious and aware of oneself and one's surroundings on a more continuous basis, partly in the service of being the kind of person one aspires to be, and partly to operate with compassion and empathy more profoundly and more consistently.

For purposes of the present discussion, my definition of mindfulness is shaped by two related conceptions. The first conception is conveyed across Thich Nhat Hanh's vast body of work as reflected in Ellsberg (2001); it can be broadly defined as being present in the here and now, or as being conscious of oneself and finding peace, happiness, and calm in one's surroundings, including social environments and interactions. Mindfulness slows me down (in a constructive way), promotes self-reflection about how to respond to the situations and people with which I am in contact as I live my life, and causes me to act more consistently with understanding and compassion and in ways that reduce conflict.

Another closely related conception of mindfulness has to do with being a mindful teacher. The Mindfulness in Education Network (2014) defined mindfulness as "the energy and power of awareness and attention, present as a potential in all human beings" (para. 3). MacDonald and Shirley's (2009) definition of mindfulness, while largely rooted in Thich Nhat Hanh's particular form and practice of engaged Buddhism, is also part of the teacher education literature; these authors defined mindful teaching as that "which is integrative, reflective, and deep," as contrasted to "*alienated* teaching—which is coercive, privatized, and resented" (p. 29). Furthermore, they assert that, when teachers work mindfully, "they struggle to attain congruence, integrity, and efficacy in their practice" (p. 4).

My understanding of mindfulness in my personal life had grown over time and had become a natural part of my daily thinking, a kind of lens through which I view the events of my day. But for Deb, this notion of mindfulness in teaching was new. As I began discussing with her how I approach teaching my multicultural education classes, the realization came to both of us that for much more meaningful discussion to occur, especially in her role as my critical friend, Deb needed to become more familiar with my conception of mindfulness as a way of thinking about thinking.

Deb's Story: On Becoming a Truly Critical Friend

I have been involved in self-study research for more than 15 years, and in that time I have been a critical friend to several research colleagues as they have studied their practice. In each of these experiences, my role was to partner in the discussion of research data, of findings and their meanings, and of meanings derived from engagement and processes during the study. Throughout, my effort has focused on the familiar teaching practices, administrative dynamics, and experiences shared across contexts in higher education. But to be in the role of a critical friend in Tom's study required more than my familiarity with self-study research or with higher education practices and dynamics. When I initially talked with him about his work in multicultural education, we found that we had much in common related to our interests as well as similar dilemmas in our teaching about multicultural education to our predominantly middle-class, White, female populations of students.

As Tom began explaining his use of mindfulness and how his meditation practice had been transformative for his personal life, I found the conversation intriguing, and I saw connections between his thoughts and the self-study research that seemed similar in nature. For example, Kroll (2004) discussed her work with college students and the notion of caring and respectful engagement with students of color; Coia and Taylor's (2004) work in feminist pedagogy examined the caring relationship and shared authority found in teaching; and Eldridge and Bennett (2004) described characteristics of a caring learning community. As I listened to Tom speak of mindfulness in his work, I also connected his thoughtfulness of practice to Trumbull and Fluet's (2010) notion of pedagogical thoughtfulness. During these initial discussions of his practice, I felt my experiences with self-study had prepared me well to serve as critical friend, yet I found this role of critical friend less clear when examining teaching practice grounded in mindfulness.

As we began discussing more deeply his self-study in mindfulness within his teaching, I was not clear what Tom meant by being present in his teaching. As he discussed the complexity of examining compassion as part of the dynamics within his online course, I struggled to understand the significance of what he framed as important to his teaching. The notion of compassion as reflected in self-study research (e.g., Good & Pereira, 2004; Hamilton, 2008; Kessler, 2006) often referred to compassion as an affect of teaching that influences decisions (and heightens the emotional responses to events) or defined compassion as a disposition of teaching. But Tom's discussion of compassion had greater depth and complexity of meaning, involving not just self-reflection, but possibly something more spiritual in nature, perhaps akin to the Buddhist terminology to which he would occasionally allude and that is described in this article.

It was at this point that I realized my lack of knowledge of what Tom conceptualized as mindfulness was affecting my ability to be useful as a critical friend. I

needed to become an informed participant to become an effective critical friend. To this end, I began by reading *Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life* (Nhat Hanh, 1991). In addition to this reading, I was able to better connect with the text through my continued discussions with Tom about his teaching, the language of his teaching, and the choices he made in his practice. It was through this tutorial process that I was able to view Tom's teaching practice through the lens of mindfulness and to grasp the significance of the key issues he raised in his self-study of practice.

The Context of the Study

This study is a retrospective, self-reflexive analysis of the dynamics of my own teaching of an online section of a graduate course in multicultural education in a school of teacher education in a university in the western United States. The students in the graduate courses that are the focus of this study are mostly in-service teachers who are female, White, and middle class, with generally minimal diverse life experiences, in their own education or otherwise. Many of them come from communities that are fairly isolated and often relatively devoid of recognizably diverse cultures, people of color, diverse ways of knowing, and/or diverse languages. Even isolated American communities like these, however, are changing slowly over time. Yet this lack of diversity experience on the part of many of my students in the earlier years of their lives remains an important characteristic of the dynamics of my multicultural education courses.

One tension that emerges in developing an online course is the lack of knowledge about the identities of the students who will enroll in the course. Because this is an online course available to students across the country, their identities are largely unknown to me. Based on my knowledge of the demographic composition of the national and regional teacher corps, I assume that my student enrollment will largely mirror this population, including the fact that 90% or more of my students will be female and from White, middle-class backgrounds. For the most part, this assumption has been correct. Yet a rich diversity exists among my students in terms of their understandings and conceptions of the social worlds within which they live. I use this more subtle yet complex diversity as we begin addressing larger concepts in multicultural education.

The course itself is a survey foundations course about the field of multicultural education. There are no prerequisites related to the course content anywhere else in our graduate programs, so students with a wide diversity of specialized interests (e.g., reading, special education, or elementary education) are taking it, with almost all of them doing so as a program requirement rather than as an elective. Because a majority of the students enrolling in this course typically have little to no experience with multicultural education, my fundamental purpose in teaching this course is to provide exposure to the framework of multicultural education and

to open students' eyes and awaken their curiosities about the role of diversity (of all kinds) in education, in teaching, and in learning.

Because this course is a required one and contains unfamiliar content for most of the students who take it, the trajectory of the course starts with teachers' stories and personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) of working in and for diversity. From there, it jumps to a discussion of the rationale for learning about multiculturalism from a societal perspective (including political, economic, sociological, and anthropological dimensions), eventually circling back to deeper reflection on a person's own attitudes about issues of race, class, gender, and ability, and finally to discussions of the implications for teaching practice in and for diversity.

As a White, male educator myself, working with this population of students, I see self-study as a means to better understand the dynamics of my teaching within this context. Specifically, I am concerned with how mindfulness influences the way I discuss diversity with my graduate students so that it will be meaningful to them, enable them to engage with the complex issues involved in teaching in diverse environments, and impact their understanding of its significance in their professional lives.

Teacher educators face many dilemmas (Berry, 2007) and tensions (Berry, 2007; Newman, 1998) associated with teaching about teaching and in preparing their students to teach in diverse settings (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Howard, 2006). These tensions are heightened by the social and sociopolitical contexts (Nieto & Bode, 2012) within which teacher preparation for diversity occurs. My teaching and self-study research in this context have been shaped by my reflections on two main sources: (a) my readings and practice in mindfulness (Ellsberg, 2001; Nhat Hanh, 1991) and (b) Howard's (2006) stages of White identity development and my participation in a seminar at his REACH Center in 2000, in Seattle, Washington.

When I am teaching this course, I keep in mind Howard's (2006) three stages of White identity development, which he calls *fundamentalist*, *integrationist*, and *transformationist*; in a sense, when I assess my individual students' knowledge of teaching in diversity, I am tracking evidence of these stages of development in them. A fundamentalist White orientation focuses on the literal aspects of race and Whiteness, with an assumption of supremacy in the idea of Whiteness. Fundamentalist thinking is "single-dimensional understanding of truth," which "in its less intentional and more unconscious form . . . may be characterized by denial and/or ignorance of Whiteness and White supremacy" (p. 103). Howard sees this denial or ignorance as a marker of this fundamentalist orientation, with a strong commitment to defending the rightness of what they believe, often manifesting as "colorblindness" (p. 105) and a denial of differences across groups of people. Fundamentalist Whites can be seen as either "overtly or covertly racist" (p. 105) when they interact in cross-cultural contexts.

Howard (2006) described integrationists as having an increased awareness of

diverse approaches to truth, acknowledging diverse approaches to what is seen as the truth. Integrationists see White dominance as an historical truth but not necessarily as currently relevant and have little recognition of their own racism in their day-to-day living. Howard described integrationists as underestimating "the change that will be necessary to achieve real equity and social justice" (p. 107).

To be a transformationist, Howard (2006) argued, an individual needs to recognize the complexity of constructing truth through different lenses, by "actively seeking to understand diverse points of view" (p. 110). This dynamic process shifts across differing cultural and social contexts. A transformationist is aware of the multiplicity of perspectives about what is true and finds the individual view as one among many possibilities. To accomplish such awareness for myself requires that I practice what Buddhism calls *karuna*, which translates roughly as "compassion" (Smith & Novak, 2003). Nhat Hanh (1998) defined compassion in this context as "the intention and capacity to relieve and transform suffering and lighten sorrows" (p. 172). Such a definition closely parallels one conception I have of my work as a multicultural educator (albeit in this context, transforming suffering and lightening sorrows caused by prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination based on human diversity and difference).

Howard (2006) suggested that, to be an effective multicultural educator, the goal is to become a transformationist. I pursue this goal with the students in my multicultural education courses, continuing their development and my own, along the lines explained in Howard's typology. As a result of my own earlier research (Griggs, 1996), I had become aware of how my Whiteness was both figuratively and literally *in my face*, in that I was forced to confront the idea that my Whiteness was an issue in my teaching. The findings in this earlier study of my first-year experience teaching high school, where my students were approximately 95% of Mexican origin, closely parallel Howard's (1999) description of how he came to know about diversity from a White life experience. I associate my own development, this coming to know, with Howard's (2006) stages of White identity development. Thus Howard's theorizing about diversity and education has become an additional lens through which to examine my teacher education practice.

The complementary dynamics of studying how I practice empathy and compassion at the same time as I teach about Howard's (2006) typology of White identity provide the context for examining how mindfulness is realized in my practice. These frameworks have also shaped my thinking about the development of course materials and the design of the course (as mentioned earlier), as well as my approaches to critical conversations with my students on diversity and Whiteness.

Data Sources

The data for this self-study arose from two main sources: (a) the content and organization of the course materials (the syllabus and discussion board questions)

developed for this online course and (b) my language (as course instructor) in response to students' postings as they answered questions that I had composed and published in an online discussion board. Discussion board data were transcriptions as documented online, and my responses online were labeled Dr. G. Although student language was not analyzed for the purposes of this study, the context of my responses as the instructor were embedded within the students' comments and their meaning. Thus the analysis of my responses took into consideration the context of the students' comments and queries.

Method of Analysis

To understand the context for the data analysis of my responses on the discussion board, it is important to understand the process by which I responded to students. I conducted the initial data analysis by focusing on the global meaning of my responses in the discussion board postings, with particular attention to language connecting practice to issues related to teaching in multicultural contexts. Students responded online to prompts I provided based on weekly reading assignments. I then closely read these responses. I formulated my responses to them by mindfully attending to evidence of White identity development as I saw it reflected in the White students' postings.

My instructional goal was to encourage these students to reflect deeply on their own attitudes about issues of race, diversity, and multiculturalism. One way I set about this was to present alternative framings of their discussions of these issues. The process I used to respond involved reading through students' responses, pondering how students were making sense of the open-ended questions I was posing, and evaluating their responses through the lens of Howard's (2006) stages of White identity formation. At the same time, I acknowledged the value and content of the student's response.

In this study, I have addressed trustworthiness (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2000) by working with Deb to analyze the data for global themes. In our analysis, we are borrowing from narrative inquiry analysis of stories (Chiu-Ching & Chan, 2009; LaBoskey & Cline, 2000) in conjunction with a constant comparative approach (Dye, Schatz, Rosenberg, & Coleman, 2000). We read through the language of my responses and labeled phrases and particular vocabulary that reflected specific tenets of mindfulness (specifically focusing on language that reflected compassion, language that reflected empathy, and language that reflected deep listening).

Distinguishing language as compassion versus empathy versus deep listening depended on the context of the language use. For purposes of the present study, we labeled language as compassion if it connected (directly or indirectly) students' language and experiences with the content or meaning of the readings. Compassion provided students with the opportunity to connect their voices to the meaning embedded in the course content. Empathy was reflected in the language when I

connected my own experiences to the students' comments. Deep listening was reflected in comments in which I demonstrated an understanding of the students' context by providing a connection between the course content and the students' own context within and outside the course.

I also looked more closely at my written responses to students' postings to see how I used Howard's (2006) model of White identity transformation to monitor my students' and my progress in facilitating their development as multicultural educators. For this reason, I chose the language within my responses to students' answers to discussion questions as one source of evidence of—and as a tool for—developing multicultural awareness. I examined the language I used in my responses to student postings during the early, middle, and late stages of the course. I closely analyzed my choice of language as a manifestation of teaching mindfully. For example, I looked for evidence demonstrating that I perceived that they (a) were resistant to course concepts; (b) recognized that they, as teachers, have a role to play in establishing a more welcoming environment for their diverse students; and (c) were willing to accept responsibility for playing this role. I analyzed my responses for key phrases that reflected the attributes of Howard's stages of White identity development as well as for evidence that I used the key concepts of mindfulness (compassion, empathy, and deep listening) to attend to my students' progress.

I also used key principles of mindfulness and multicultural awareness development to analyze the content and organization of my course materials. I examined the syllabus and discussion questions I posted online for the course. I focused specifically on how I organized my teaching and developed the timeline for learning and thinking about practice within the course materials.

Results

It is perhaps not coincidental that Howard's (2006) description of what it will take for White educators to navigate the "river of change" (p. 69) includes empathy. He identified it as an essential quality for teachers to cultivate to create a successful school system in a society as diverse as ours. His definition of empathy could, in many ways, double as a definition of compassion as conceived in Nhat Hanh's (2003) discussion of mindfulness; there are definitely similarities and complementarity between the two. Howard (2006) stated that empathy allows a person the "opportunity to view social reality from different perspectives" (p. 76). Similarly, Nhat Hanh (2003) wrote, "As long as we allow hatred to grow in us, we continue to make ourselves and others suffer. . . . [We] have to transform our hatred and misunderstanding into compassion" (p. 184).

The two preceding quotations, from two different fields (education and spirituality), unify the concepts of compassion and empathy. In the process, they unify the domains of mindfulness and multicultural education themselves. My recognition of this link closes the circle of thought and intention for me as a teacher educator

working mindfully to promote awareness of the demands diversity makes on teachers. This, for me, is perhaps the most significant outcome of this study.

Three themes emerged from the analysis of my teaching data. The first of these is the way I used language in my discussions to foster mindfulness to effect student understanding of course content and concepts, and closely related to this, the way I used written language—especially the formulation of questions, choice of words, phrasing, and even choices about when to use active and passive voice—to establish the affective environment I view as essential to my students' learning in an online course. The second theme highlights the way in which mindfulness was reflected in the data through my instructional planning. The third theme evolved from my realization of the distinction between teaching in and teaching for diversity.

Using Language to Foster Mindfulness

In retrospect, what is noticeable about my responses to my students' postings is the time and intent I used to develop my responses; this thoughtfulness characterized the process by which I engaged in writing online as an important manifestation of mindfulness. Although it was not visible in the actual responses themselves, the reflection on the process brought to life the nature of mindfulness I used to develop my comments. Through my discussions with my critical friend, Deb, the mindfulness embedded within my practice emerged.

Mindfulness took place both during and between the weekly online interactions I had with my students. My weekly prompts encouraged their self-reflection with the intention of inviting them to consider—rather than insisting on—my own White transformationist perspective. Because a central goal of this teaching was to help my students understand the dynamics of White identity orientation, it seemed necessary to carefully craft my responses so that I did not evoke their defensiveness or resistance. My data suggest that I was able to devise ways to circumvent some of the limitations of electronic communication (e.g., absence of immediacy of response, body language) by attending mindfully to how I used language.

This focus on the careful crafting of my electronic postings was intended to create a safe online learning environment. What emerged were specific ways that I phrased my responses, provided vocabulary, and suggested alternative framings for dilemmas students were likely to face in diverse teaching contexts. For example, during the earliest part of the semester, one of the first prompts to students is as follows:

> Dr. G: What resistances/defensiveness does this reading assignment raise in you? What "huge nods" of agreement? Why? How do you think you might most productively handle these reactions? (Week 4, fall semester)

As described earlier, Howard's (2006) typology of White identity orientations suggests that it is essential to find ways to evaluate and make judgments about certain actions by educators and/or circumstances within schools as clearly discriminatory in their impact on diverse students. In my exchanges with students, I routinely turned

my focus away from the actors in a discriminatory situation and toward the effects of the actions taken. In so doing, I was able to reduce my students' discomfort with the whole business of labeling people or events as "racist" or "racism," which in turn enabled even greater discussion of such potentially threatening or forbidden topics. The following excerpt from the discussion board provides an example of such mindful intention in my responses, when my students hesitated to identify these apparently discriminatory behaviors:

> Dr. G: If I'm understanding you correctly here, I agree it's hard to label some of the things you see happening in schools and in the larger society in which we live as "racism" and "discrimination." I think this is largely because one result of the civil rights movement—although arguably unintended—is that talking about racism and discrimination has become largely taboo, because there is some tacit agreement among most people that these are bad things. And, of course, very few folks want to be seen as bad or as doing the wrong thing, even if these people are ethnocentric in the extreme, do believe in racial superiority of one group over another, and/or judge people and treat them differently because of the color of their skin (or their gender, or their socioeconomic status). This is almost as true for perpetrators as it is for victims of discrimination and racism.
>
> The way I have dealt with this is to label processes/behaviors that are racist or discriminatory in their effects as such, rather than focus on the perpetrators of the behaviors, or the motives for the processes. (Week 4, fall semester)

In attending to the affective delicacy in such interactions, I mindfully modeled and explained how I myself had attempted to move away from an integrationist toward a transformationist White identity orientation. This was realized in two ways: (a) I assumed a self-revelatory stance in relating course concepts to my own teaching experience and, in the process, modeled ways that my students might do the same for themselves; and (b) I reflected deeply about how my choice of words and use of language in general might impact my students. My language choices and phrasing of comments were instrumental both in representing a transformationist view and in practicing mindfulness in my teaching. Therefore my responses reflected the underlying belief characteristics of transformationist White identity that have to do with acceptance of and willingness to engage across differences.

The following discussion board question provided an opening for students to begin to see the connections among their own perspectives about diversity, their relationships with students from diverse backgrounds, and their teaching practice:

> Dr. G: What do you see as the relationships between and among the four concepts that constitute the theme for this week's reading ("transformationist" pedagogy, culture, identity, and learning)? Why might it be important to consider the four together/simultaneously, for you as a teacher?

Although this question does not explicitly address it, empathy is embedded within White transformationist pedagogy, and through considering the relationships be-

tween a person's own and others' culture, identity, and learning, I seek to promote the development of empathy in my students.

This care with my language was not limited to my online commentary. As we examined my course syllabus in conjunction with the language choices across my online teaching, Deb suggested that my use of language in my communiqués embedded an agenda on my part, focusing my students' attentions toward a transformationist view. This led to an intriguing discussion about purposeful teaching as agenda driven for content learning versus mindful instruction to embed a specific way of knowing into daily engagements. And it was through this rich debate that we came to realize the power of the lens through which we view our actions. As we continued to discuss and debate the role of intent in our teaching, we revisited the readings on mindfulness. As the critical friend, Deb was grappling with the whole notion of intent and what it means to be intentional. We more clearly understood my choice of language as reflecting my desire to model a transformationist approach. As an instructor engaged mindfully in my teaching, the language choices I make and the manner in which I engage also become critical tools for modeling and fostering deep self-reflection among my students.

Instructional Planning as a Reflection of Mindfulness

As our discussions of the course content and organization deepened, however, the issue of how the materials were developed became more prominent, and we began to analyze the sequence in which content was addressed. It was through these discussions that my use of mindfulness as I organized and planned my course became more evident. Initially, Deb examined the elements within my syllabus and also my discussion board questions, and this led to a discussion of why I chose the particular content I chose and why I organized the content in the way I did. What emerged were three interacting themes we termed key influences: concept load, student needs, and time.

By concept load, I am referring both to the complexity of the content information being addressed in the course readings and to the personal and professional challenges I believed that content was likely to present for my students. We saw concept load as profoundly influencing how I thought about my course work and how I structured the online course discussions, but it also connected directly to what I perceived would then become the students' needs in addressing the demands within the content. While concept load and students' needs might be seen as separate influences, in this context, they are in fact synergistic in nature as they interact with and influence one another. In this synergistic relationship, the mindfulness in my teaching promoted both compassion and deep listening. My thinking focused on my students and on the professional contexts in which they work. In this way, I provided access to both the content and the profound implications of that content for them as teachers.

During the data analysis, as we discussed course content choice in the syl-

labus, Deb prompted me to deepen my own retrospection. Our discussions helped to make clear the importance I had placed on students' needs in relation to time: time to absorb the significance of key concepts in the course and time to consider the implications of these concepts for themselves as people and as professional educators. What we identified as needs reflected what I saw as the considerable demands on my students arising from the readings, especially in thinking about their roles as educators in fostering social change. I saw the potential for tensions and conflict for my students as they worked through the stages of White identity formation (Howard, 2006).

Teaching in Versus Teaching for Diversity

At the beginning of this study, we talked about diversity in terms of broad demographic categories. But as a result of my mindfulness practice within this multicultural education course, my definition of diversity grew to include a greater appreciation of the role of individual difference. As a result, I became aware that there is more human diversity in my teacher education classrooms than is sometimes readily visible; it became incumbent on me to model with my students the kind of respect for diversity that I was advocating for them to model with theirs. This awareness presented me with one of the most difficult dilemmas I have to negotiate in my teaching about multicultural education. I have come to conceptualize this dilemma as the need to mindfully teach both *in* and *for* diversity.

What we mean by this distinction is that it is one thing to teach for diversity (i.e., to promote appreciation of and respect for diversity, and how this can be manifested in teaching practice, for my students' edification) and quite another to function effectively as a teacher in diverse settings. Teaching for diversity is very much a question of advocating for diversity-friendly teaching environments. This advocacy can be accomplished relatively easily, if it is enough of a priority. Yet it is quite another to teach *in* diversity.

Teaching in diversity is realized when such diversity manifests, for example, in the form of a student who does not necessarily share my opinion that diversity educators are not overstating their cases, when it comes to ascribing large discrepancies in student achievement and success to environmental factors such as institutional racism, socioeconomic status, and prejudice and discrimination at the personal level. In a face-to-face instructional context, teaching in diversity also manifests when one of my students, who does not appear to be racially diverse to us, nonetheless self-identifies as being a member of a nondominant racial or ethnic group through the telling of his or her story during the course and through the comments he or she makes.

Given the difficulty in overcoming fundamental disagreement that diversity is an issue that deserves educators' attention, I am challenged to respect this ideological diversity as part of the more general human diversity context within which I teach. Teaching in diversity requires "walking the walk" in addition to "talking

the talk" (Olsen, 2010, p. 18), even when I may have a philosophical or ideological disagreement with our students about core issues in multicultural education.

Another result of this broadening of my understanding of diversity and how it affects schooling experiences is that I have gradually come to believe more in individual difference as a significant factor in academic achievement of students from diverse backgrounds, even if I do not agree that it is generally the main determinant of student achievement for such students as a group. As I have come to respect the ideological diversity and the individual difference with which I am presented in my graduate courses, I still seek to persuade my students of the significantly disproportionate influence of environmental and societal factors on diverse students' success. I emphasize the importance of self-transformation and self-reflection about a person's preconceptions as critical to becoming an effective educator, both in and for diversity. (For me, this is at the core of Howard's 2006 stages of White development.)

Conclusions

In this self-study, I found that the preparation of my course and my teaching have benefited from mindfulness practice. I would assert that one such benefit is being able to more effectively create the kind of learning environment that is conducive to students' success. As I have found repeatedly in my experiences as a multicultural educator of teachers, there is a decidedly visceral dimension to teaching and learning to teach in and for diversity. For me, mindfulness in my teaching practice has been a critical part of dealing with the affective dimensions of this work.

One way this has happened is that the environment for such teaching, which is often characterized by a certain tension or discomfort—and which Howard's typology of White identity explains quite well—has been transformed into a calmer, more self-reflexive one that better supports learning about multicultural education and the many challenges it presents for educators. Based on this self-study, we would assert that this is accomplished by relieving some of the tensions and discomforts involved, by transforming the perceptions and attitudes of those who engage in mindful practice in their daily lives and by providing more inviting, more compassionate, and less stressful ways to approach the complex and challenging topics and concepts inherent to such study.

Through mindfulness meditation, I seek and find the means to achieve a kind of harmony, peace, and acceptance of the complexities found within formidable challenges to my own preconceived notions about any number of potentially difficult issues. Mindfulness meditation allows for a depth of personal exploration and self-reflection related to teaching in and for diversity that might not otherwise be possible. I have found a means to get to the bottom of my impulses, to understand better how I relate and am related to those impulses, and to give myself time to recognize that I have a choice about how best to respond to them.

Although I certainly would not contend that it is impossible to be an effective multicultural educator without teaching mindfully, I have made a strong case for the beneficial effect of my mindfulness practice on my own teaching. I have also come to the conclusion that those teacher educators who engage in mindfulness in their professional work stand to benefit similarly.

As I discovered, it is surprisingly easy to start a mindfulness meditation practice. Though there are many books available that explain meditation, one book that gently and gracefully introduces the would-be practitioner to mindfulness meditation is Nhat Hanh's (1991) aforementioned *Peace Is Every Step*.

As researchers, we have found that our study reveals the power of theoretically grounding teaching practice in mindfulness (Nhat Hanh, 1991) and in intentional consideration of language as a tool to establish an appropriate affective space for learning, even in an online setting. In addition, grounding in conceptual frames such as Howard's (2006) White identity formation provides a means of addressing students' ways of knowing and development as these courses progress, as well as a set of guideposts to help pursue course objectives in preparing teachers to teach in diverse contexts.

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