Using Protocols to Facilitate Sensitive Conversations about Diversity with Undergraduate Students
Context for this Study

- Historically, Weber State University served as:
  - Weber Stake Academy (1889 - 1933)
  - Weber State Junior College (1933 - 1964)
  - Weber State University (1991 - present)
    - a comprehensive regional university with a community college mission
    - under LDS (Mormon) church ownership until it was turned over to the state in 1933

https://www.weber.edu/AboutWSU/history.html
https://www.uen.org/utah_history
Purpose of the Study:

...to examine the effects of protocols on participants' awareness and sensitivity to diversity issues in American society and schools.

Protocols are structured processes and guidelines for conversation that are recommended for the following uses in the field of education:

- on practice
- for change
- with texts
• toward equity
Why use protocols?

According to the National School Reform Faculty, protocols are “Like guardrails along a highway...under the leadership of a trained coach, (protocols) provide guidance and a safe place for honest and useful feedback.” (nsrfharmony.org)

McDonald et al (2013) explain the ironic effects of protocols in this way: “Under the right circumstances, constraints are liberating.” (p. 1)

According to Robin DiAngelo (2018), originator of the theory of White Fragility, “Refusing to engage in an authentic exploration of racial realities erases (and denies) alternate racial expression.” (p. 86)
Other quotes from DiAngelo to consider incorporating:

- While implicit bias is always at play because all human beings have bias, inequity can occur simply through homogeneity; if I am not aware of the barriers you face, then I won’t see them, much less be motivated to remove them. Nor will I be motivated to remove the barriers if they provide an advantage to which I feel entitled (xiii)
Demographics

According to College Factual (2019), WSU is “on par” with the national average in terms of diversity in the student body.

Study Participants:

Students in two separate sections of my course, EDUC 3205: Culturally Responsive Teaching for Preservice Elementary School Teachers

- N = 34
- Female = 92% / Male = 8%
- Hispanic = 18%
- White = 82%
Matching the protocol to the task

- Protocols were used during most class meetings.
- Particular consideration needed to be given when the conversation had potential to be complex.
- I needed to “constrain” the conversations with rules so I could set their voices free.
- We will take a close look at three protocols in particular and examine the results of the study.
- Other resources on handout.
Protocol #1: Marvin’s Model

- **Prior experience:** Students took Harvard’s online IAT on skin tone (Project Implicit)
- **Objective:** to debrief or facilitate rapid communication
- **Procedure:**
  - Form groups of 4 - 5 people
  - A question will be asked / 30 seconds to think.
  - Each person speaks for 20 - 30 seconds.
  - Others just listen; do not respond.
  - Next question.
  - All discuss: What have we learned? What do we need to unlearn?
Data from Marvin’s Model

- Alive Reading 1
- Whole class debriefing:
  - The Latinx students came to the realization that they do this WITHIN their own culture and families.
  - Other students talked openly about racist family members and how to deal with that in family gatherings.
  - We then discussed bias vs. prejudice and the importance of self-awareness.
  - The conversation segued well into watching a CNN report on the Doll Test from the 1940s and its relevance today.
Protocol #2: The Tuning Protocol

- **Prior experience**: Most students attended the keynote speech at the WSU diversity conference by Jane Elliott, racial justice educator, who is well-known for her brown eyes/blue eyes experiment in the late 60s.

- Her aggressive style had offended many in the audience; I decided to use the Tuning Protocol to debrief and explore her message.
The Tuning Protocol Procedure

Objective: to generate honest, direct, and respectful feedback in order to TUNE our values and perspectives through listening to others’ diverse and candid perspectives.

Guiding Question: Was Jane Elliott’s message communicated? Did she have an impact on the Weber community? How and why?

Let’s reflect together, alternating WARM and COOL comments.

First, we need to all gain an understanding of how she presents her message about power and prejudice. Please just watch, no commentary until we use the protocol.
Data from the Tuning Protocol

- **Whole class debriefing:**

  Students alternated warm and cool comments for the most part, though occasionally they needed reminders.

  Let’s listen to a few of their comments that demonstrate the journey that they are on toward understanding.
Protocol #3: The Final Word

- **Objective:** to expand the interpretation of a text by encouraging the emergence of diverse viewpoints and voices.
- Later in the day, we were going to critique social studies textbooks.
- I needed them to consider the cultural bias and lack of counter-narratives in curricula.
The Final Word Procedure

- **Read** the excerpt from Trevor Noah’s memoir. Highlight one or two quotes that really resonate with you.
- **Presenter A reads the phrase** or sentence aloud and **reflects** on it for 2-3 min.
- **Reflect back**. Go around the circle and each listener reflects back for one uninterrupted minute. Do not interpret or evaluate (*From what you said… I can see that… I hear you saying that… I think you feel that*)
- **Final Word:** The presenter has one minute to react to what was said.
- **Repeat** with next person and different phrase.
In Germany, no child finishes high school without learning about the Holocaust. Not just the facts of it but the how and the why and the gravity of it—what it means. As a result, Germans grow up appropriately aware and apologetic. British schools treat colonialism the same way. "Tell, that whole thing," a kind of disclaimer. "Tell, that whole thing. "Tell, that whole thing."

In South Africa, the atrocities of apartheid have never been taught. We weren't taught judgment or shame. We were taught history: "The way it's taught in America. In America, the history of racism is taught like this: "There was slavery, then there was Jim Crow and then there was Martin Luther King, and now it's done." It was the same for us. "Apartheid was bad. Nelson Mandela was on." Facts, but not many, and never the moral or moral dimension. It was as if the teachers, many of whom were white, had been mandated. "Whenever you do, don't make the kids angry."
Data from the Final Word

- Alive Reading 2
- Whole class debriefing:
- Many themes arose, such as:
  - The politicization of history; America always has to look “great”
  - The tendency to sugar-coat the facts
  - Our ability to study the tragic historical events in other countries (the Holocaust was mentioned), but not the horrors of slavery and westward expansion
- One young student summed up the thinking of many in the class very well and in quite a passionate way, as heard here:
Results of the Study

● Observational and anecdotal data demonstrated that students had made progress in terms of self-awareness and understanding.

● What did the hard data say?
  ● Paired sample t-tests compared individual responses on all pre- and post-survey questions.
  ● A small p value ($\leq 0.05$) on almost all questions led me to reject the null hypothesis.

● In essence, the class (and our use of protocols) helped them to grow in many ways...
What did the hard data say?

Statistically significant growth for these pre- and post-survey questions:

- rate your level of knowledge about diversity
- your opinion of the importance of the content of this course
- your level of preparedness to teach children who are culturally and linguistically diverse from you
- how comfortable are you talking about issues related to cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and religious diversity

The one question that resulted in a decreased mean:

- how open-minded do you consider yourself to be
Lessons Learned

- We learned a lot from one another.
- It’s not the destination that matters, it’s the journey.
- One student told me several months later, in a joking way, “That class ruined me! I’ll never look at things the same way again.”
- I asked 15 of the students, who I am teaching again this semester (literacy course), “What were the big takeaways for you?”
I feel like before 3/25 I was a little naive. To some things, I felt like I was open but after the class opened my eyes to that naivety, I feel open but overwhelmed with that huge responsibility.

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Questions? Connections ?? Feedback?
Thanks so much for attending!
Stay in touch:
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