==Perceptions of the Black Race==

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We cannot discuss intercultural communication without looking at the cultural contributors and factors that have led America to the political and racial unrest this country finds itself. This training session was designed to talk with colleagues regarding important issues applicable to our understanding of intercultural communications and how relevant this topic is in the context of racial injustices. The training session's goal was to have an open and honest discussion and not to pass judgment but assist in understanding and awareness.

In planning the lesson and the expected learning outcomes Wajnyrd (1992) raised two teaching aspects, (1) teaching does not equal learning, and (2) not to confuse teaching aims with learning outcomes.   First, teachers' created lesson plans to teach learners may miss students' marks to grasp the subject's intended meaning, limiting the learner's achievable learning. It is essential to assess the dynamics between learner's learning and teaching, starting with (a) a teacher's preparation of lessons, (b) teacher decision-making in the classroom, and (c) curriculum planning to identify needed modifications in the teaching approach (Wajnyrd, 1992, p. 66)

Therefore, part of my lesson preparation is adopting mindfulness, which requires me to consider my international colleagues living in the US. It requires me to consider that most international students viewing the current civil unrest in America may or may not be grasping with complete understanding the commentary on the subject they hear on television concerning racial injustices and inequalities. It may not be entirely clear why Black people are asking for a revolutionary change in America concerning how people see them, treat them, and kill them concerning the phrase "Black Lives Matter". Therefore, as an educator, I must take routine action involving reflection on my teaching methods and presence in the classroom, choosing how to present and introduce different topics.

The lesson plan focus was inspired by a statement expressed in an earlier discussion post. An international colleague expressed that their ideas about Black People in America were formed from watching Television programs and movies. Smith (2009) stated that the cultural patterns that shape how we perceive, communicate, and behave were, for the most part, around before we arrived on the scene and how culture shapes our trajectories through life (p 41). Racial stereotypes of early American history have had a significant role in cultivating attitudes toward African-Americans.

In working with adults in a diverse population, racism and ethnocentrism can quickly become a problem. I realized while I understand the topic discussion of racial injustice, talking about race relations could be a difficult conversation and uncomfortable for many. Especially for students who may feel their knowledge is too limited to comment on the subject. I must use discernment when thinking through the kind of learning environment to create for the students. Smith (2009) reminds us that intercultural learning is a two-way interaction. For most students, creating an atmosphere to have the ability to ask questions, have respectful discussions, and build a relationship between students and teachers is critical to building trust and a sense of protection. Still, conflict is a part of life, and a diverse classroom can lead to tensions between students as well as between the students and the teacher. Addressing cultural diversity and other arising issues directly can minimize these tensions.

There are routine actions that I can implement within my classroom to foster a harmonious classroom environment. As the teacher, taking an active role in creating an atmosphere that does this by learning who my students are through various methods. There will be a mix of cultures in all likelihood. Finding activities to allow the student to share their culture helps the teacher and the student become aware of certain things to maintain a respectful learning environment.

With this consideration in mind, it is important not to overlook a learner's background and affective factors as how students give sense and process input to reduce any probable cause for the student to disconnect (Allright 1988). I decided to have Students provide their responses in a round table discussion format. I introduced the class to the rules of engagement for the discussion, explaining it is okay for us to disagree. However, remain respectful in our responses to each other and allow colleagues to complete their thoughts and responses as they provide their answers to the questions. The first question, "*In your culture or the cultural context in which you work or live, tell me, what are the perceptions of black people, particularly African Americans, in your country?"* intends to establish an understanding of the cultural patterns that shape how we perceive each other. I, too, must continually be reflective and aware of my own biases when listening to non-native speakers and being prone to cultural bias.

While the session continued this line of questioning perceptions, it is important the teacher bridge the discussion of the perception topic back to past class assignments and readings to maintain focus and manage the classroom. I used a deductive approach, prompting students to re-examine their perceptions in relation to the class reading regarding pre-conceived notions and cultural scripts explained in (Jackson, 2014) by asking, "*How have your perceptions changed, or do they remain the same*?"

We re-examined how American culture manufactured degrading depictions of men and women in the black community during earlier class discussions. These characterizations were done with postcards, films, movies, and TV shows to serve as entertainment and fear-mongering devices to indoctrinate white Americans into a belief system that started during the Jim Crow era. These characterizations instilled beliefs are far-reaching with globalization and the technologies enabling individuals, corporations, and nation-states to reach farther and faster

across the international communities. One can understand the difficulties of undoing years of this messaging, rhetoric, and programming in the minds of white people and international communities who have witnessed these portrayals of black people in movies across the globe. These images are rooted and fixed in the minds of many. It is hard to erase with the TV and film industry depicting and limiting Black people to roles that continue to perpetuate racist stereotypes.

Early intervention via Education is definitely a start to assist each member in widening his or her perspective from a narrow view of self and the culture we live in. Suppose Education will be the tool of choice for addressing hate. Equally important for the teacher to understand the root cause of that fear and hate. It is meaningful during teachable moments – to the offender, receiver of the offense, and those who stood in silence during the offense to describe the behaviors those believed as good or bad, which means as educators, we have to recognize our own self-awareness and the blind spots we also carry into teaching and create honesty and transparency of those perceived differences.

A simple task I can implement is choosing to be self-aware of my own words and gestures. I choose not to be too sensitive about most misunderstandings. Nevertheless, if I feel offended by a student's words or actions, I address the comments calmly and professionally. I try to offer clear reasons for why I found the words offensive. For example, one of the Trainees asked and implied, somewhat sarcastically, "Why is the black community in such an uproar with killings by the police and less concerned about the black-on-black killings performed in its communities." While I am a teacher, I am also a black woman. Instead of becoming angry or upset, I try to use a level voice register. I took the time to explain by rephrasing the question primarily for the benefit of the entire class to hear and understand the question and to follow along with my response. By

stating, "the manner and the tone in the way you are asking the question, "Why do black people care more about white-on-black crime than the black-on-black crime" and "why are they not rioting about that?" can be considered culturally divisive. Jackson (2014, p. 87) explained "how individuals in power, consciously or unconsciously, create and maintain communication systems that reflect, reinforce, and promote their own way of thinking and communication." This student, who was male and white, who interrupted my response was adamantly, explaining that he could pull data that would statically confirm this. Instead of scolding the male or holding onto negative emotions, I was able to use the situation to create a learning opportunity. Graves (2000) discussed, "Language learning involves analyzing language and how it is used to gain, hold, and deny power" (p. 29). At this point, engaging the entire class is more important. Focusing less on one student brings the entire class into the discussion.

By raising their attention to the "what about black-on-black crime," rejoinder usually is meant to imply that African Americans are indifferent to the thousands of young black men and increasingly black children who are slain every year in gun violence (Coates, 2012). I explained that the data likely shows many killings in these neighborhoods. However, this question insinuates that black people blithely accept killings of our own that have ravished communities for decades and take to the streets only when white police officers do the killing. When we talk about data, there is evidence that African Americans are more concerned about crime than white Americans because their neighborhoods are hit the hardest (Carswell, 2020). Data will also show Black communities are the staunchest supporter of stringent gun-control laws (Carswell, 2020). Reminding students again, I directed their attention to earlier conversations about how the Media has not always been forthright, fair, and equal in its media coverage of the many outcry events that have occurred. It provides the class with further clarity and context that long before the

'March for Our Lives' and the 'Black Lives Matter' movement dominated the headlines in recent years, African Americans were marching in crime-ridden neighborhoods to protest the killings (Coates, 2012).

The discussion allowed for more student participation and involvement to occur, with another student question, "why the riots?" My response, when blacks commit crimes against another black and are caught, they are punished and convicted. Whereas when a white person is caught even on camera performing a crime against a black, they get off. I further explained that this widens the black community's fractured trust in the political system. Since 2016 ninety unarmed African Americans have died at the hands of police officers. No punishment, no conviction (Carswell, 2020). However, this has changed with the recent murder convictions for George Floyd and Ahmaud Arbery. I also discussed how many times a white person making a false accusation (the Karen's falsification of 911) against a black person can render immediate punishment or death (Coates, 2012).

This exchange was an example of how addressing the perceptions and cultural differences directly created an open, safe environment where individuals trust each other and are respected. It also demonstrated my willingness to allow a free-flowing discussion that I hoped to encourage learning about a sensitive topic. Words can be a test of character and morality, but they can also test one's knowledge. I cannot expect my students to perform well if they do not understand the significance of the material I am presenting or their words' social impact.

As Palmer (2007) stated, a good teacher can evoke a feeling of connectedness to the material they present. Suppose I display a positive attitude towards the material, regardless of the perceived difficulty. In that case, I will encourage my students to embrace their language learning journey rather than shy away from difficult lessons or topics.

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