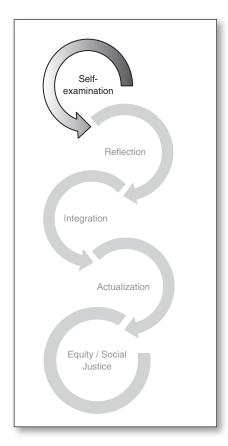# 4

Self-Examination

Step One: Acknowledgment of Bias

Acknowledgment of bias is the first and most difficult step of becoming a culturally considerate educator and creating a culturally considerate school environment. Not unlike the twelve-step model of recovery, acknowledgment of one's addiction to biased beliefs and behaviors can be extremely painful. Awareness and acknowledgment usually don't happen on their own. No miracle occurs, no night-time apparition haunts us into revelation, but usually something does happen to force us to face our deficits. This something often falls into one of four categories: Personal Realization, Interpersonal Conflicts, Professional Crisis, and/or Unexpected Exposure to Social Injustice.

Personal realization may be silent, but is always profound. Examples of personal realization include a family member's

Self-examination

Reflection

Integration

Actualization

Equity / Social Justice

marriage to someone from another country, the birth of a biracial or multiracial grandchild, or discovering that a respected colleague is Muslim or a Republican. Realization that a change in mind-set and emotions must take place in order to sustain the relationship is often a profound experience and a decisive catalyst for embarking upon the journey toward cultural consideration.

Interpersonal conflicts may arise from any of these examples with immediate families, communities, between strangers, or they may arise at work between coworkers. Conflicts resulting from cultural differences, insensitivity, or disdain can be difficult to negotiate and resolve without both/all parties feeling the necessity to do so.

Professional crisis can occur when a solution to conflicts based in bias are so overt as to cause constant friction or fear in the workplace. Name calling, exclusion based upon race or culture, or refusal to confer with, work with, or hire persons of color, sexual minority, or alternate ability can result in sanctions, administrative leave, or even dismissal. At this stage, interventions are often too little too late and the individuals involved are abandoned in deference to the greater good.

Unexpected exposure to social injustice might begin with any of the previous examples but often ends with a personal understanding that something has to change. A sort of private revolution happens after a visceral response to an overt injustice such as witnessing an adult of privilege berate a child based solely on skin color or a family being turned away from a restaurant because the women are wearing traditional head coverings.

Bonnie writes about Acknowledgment of her own Biases

Acknowledgment of one's own biases is not fun. I can't say I enjoy the "A-ha" that comes with realizing my mind is filled with biases, prejudices, and stereotypes. Below I share some I am ashamed of in order to model for you the kinds of thinking one can examine when looking for Personal Realizations.

Writing this book, having conversations with Kim, and traveling around the country for work have caused me to examine the way I treat people.

Because my work has centered on African-American student achievement, I have continually reflected upon my behavior around and with African Americans, but I now realize I did not extend this reflection or cultural consideration to others. Part of this comes from my lack of familiarity in my daily life with people from cultures other than White, African American, and Latino/as. I have some book knowledge but not intimate family knowledge as I have with the mentioned three racial cultures. Another part of this stems from my being enamored by intelligence, power, money, and physical beauty. I'm ashamed to admit most of my definitions of these things stem from how society and the media define them.

What are some examples of when or how I might discount, judge, or undervalue others?

Examples:

While watching a taxi pull up, I notice myself feeling glad that the driver is a "regular Black" guy. To me this means the driver is an African American, not a Man of Color from a foreign country, and I won't have to worry about not being able to understand his accent or confront him over taking a credit card. I feel terrible about this and think about what it means for those children or teachers who walk into my classrooms or workshops desiring to learn from me while I hold these preconceptions and biases about them. I reflect on how poor my accent in Spanish must sound to native speakers and realize I am insensitive and intolerant of others for things I am guilty of myself.

I fear being culturally inconsiderate to Asian people because I fear I will mistake one Asian culture for another and do something inappropriate. I have noticed this causes me to practice avoidance rather than learn what I don't know I don't know.

I find it difficult not to judge White people who misuse the English language. I have no issue with Ebonics or hearing some Black folks drop the past participle, but when White people do the same things and say "have went," it jars me, and I judge. Do I treat them differently because of that? I don't know, but I probably judge them as being less intelligent. At the same time, there are those I know who say "between you and I" which drives me crazy, too. And do I make grammatical errors—of course I do!

My 91-year-old father still comments he doesn't want to go certain places because they are all "old" people there; I take after my father. Even though I am legally a senior citizen, I struggle with my feelings when interacting with the elderly. I am not a patient person, and I need to slow down and be more tolerant of people as they age—just as I am aging!

Reflect upon your judgments of others. How do you combat these biases in order to practice cultural considerateness?

Questions/Reflections

❖ Reflect upon your judgments of others. What examples can you call to mind?

❖ Focus on one example. How might you turn the judgment into a culturally consideration of others?

❖ What "norms" might you develop in a classroom with your students to ensure no student judges another student inappropriately?

❖ Set a goal to alleviate negative judgments of others. Monitor your thought patterns and celebrate your successes.

Kim reflects . . .

Bonnie is hard on herself. Yes, she is my dear friend and respected colleague, but that is precisely why I can assert this knowledge. If she truly is as judgmental as she fears, we would not be friends or colleagues. This does not mean Bonnie is perfect in her attempt to be culturally considerate, but it does mean that she perpetually confronts and considers how she could improve her understanding of and relationships with people who are not like her. She and I have nearly brutally honest conversations about race and culture and aesthetic oppression. We agree on many things; we disagree on others. Regardless, we converse. We want to help make these kinds of conversations safe and productive for others, and therefore, throughout this book, we share and model some of our own conversations and thoughts about cultural consideration and conscientious practice.

Neither Bonnie nor I are without our biases or judgments but we are lifelong learners. Recently we had a conversation about the intersection between bias and boundaries. We talked about how a situation in which the sole Black woman at a school was "scary" to the white female educators, including Bonnie. Knowing how many of Bonnie's good friends are African American, I was unclear as to what she was referring. As we talked, it became clearer to both of us that the traits this woman demonstrated were not culturally based, but they were traits or behaviors that would intimidate most people. Confronting behavior and not culture makes it much easier to have a conversation which results in comfort for all. Negative behavior often results from rigidly holding or randomly blurring boundaries out of fear, anger, or ignorance *about* another's culture. Assuming someone's behavior is *because* of culture results in bias.

Recently I had a few moments of confusion regarding an uncovered bias of my own. A young client was discussing a former therapist.

I am quite fond of Sean, but in all honesty, he is a handful. I automatically assumed he had instigated the friction with his last therapist. I asked him to tell me what didn't work for him during the time he spent with Dr. Dreyfus.

"Well, I found it hard not to stare at his tongue ring," answered Sean who sports three tattoos on both forearms. I thought he was joking and I confess, I laughed heartily.

"I'm serious!" he boomed. "You try talking to somebody about usin' weed when they're sitting there with a mouth full of metal."

"You have a bit of body art of your own. I wonder why that was so distracting?" I asked, still suppressing a laugh.

"Yeah, but I'm not a doctor and don't get a hundred bucks an hour just to listen to people whine," Sean declared, then asked a surprising question. "Do *you* think that's professional?"

I managed to hedge answering Sean and refocus our conversation on his use of "weed," but I realized, no, I did not think that wearing a tongue ring during sessions was professional for a clinician. This caused me to ponder whether this was bias or boundary. As a clinical supervisor, how would I handle it if a supervisee showed up to see clients wearing a tongue ring? Should I handle it at all? I like to think of myself as open and pretty cool, but this cultural consideration confounded me. I generally have no problem with tattoos or piercing as I understand them in the context of the individual. For some clients it might be a signal of self-harm, for others, an expression of individuality, creativity, or allegiance. Apparently my understanding did not extend to therapists wearing tongue rings.

Another layer of this conundrum relates to my belief that the client (student) should always be more visible in the room than the therapist (educator), and a tongue ring, as Sean said, would likely be a distraction from the client/student. If this is true, what does that mean about my scars? Does this mean I should not practice therapy or present workshops because my physical body distracts from the body of knowledge I possess? Why do I think scars are acceptable but tongue rings are not?

These are questions I frankly am still pondering. My higher self knows that the answer lies in the conversation I would have with Dr. Dreyfus if I was his supervisor. It would begin in the form of a reflective question: *Have you ever considered how clients might react to your tongue ring?* But I admit I would be hoping he would not respond with the question I must be prepared to answer myself: *You ever consider how clients might react to your scars?*

Such are the questions we must all be prepared to ask and answer if we are to acknowledge our cultural insensitivity or intolerance. They are not always pretty or easy, but they are necessary if we are to truly confront our biases and maintain our boundaries. It might be suggested that there is a difference between scars and tongue rings because one is by choice, the other by necessity, but bias seldom knows the difference. Skin color, phenotypes, and country of origin are not choices either, but many people are biased each day by perceptions of race and ethnicity.

"Location of the self" is a process in which the clinician initiates a conversation about similarities and differences in their key identities. These identities include race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic circumstances, sexuality and spirituality, and how these facets of identity may influence (positively or negatively) the therapy/counseling process. "Implicit in this communication is the idea that these identities are meaningful and embedded in the work" (Watts-Jones, 2010).

In clinical terms, the "self of the therapist" refers to the personhood of the therapist as experienced *by* the client or as a vehicle of the therapy process by (voluntary or involuntary) action or active response *to* the client content. Both are mindful of the notion that a clinician's presence impacts the therapeutic process.

I am mindful of this in my clinical practice in much the same way I was as a young photographer after I read Susan Sontag's *On Photography* (1977). Our mere presence—as photographer, therapist, educator—influences those with whom we work. Our cultural identities and how they intersect are vital parts of our presence.

Kim shares her cultural biography

I define my culture of origin as Ozarkian. The culture of the Ozarks is generally misunderstood. Often the caricatures of Jed Clampett or the back-to-back cars lining the country music "Strip" in Branson are the first images that come to mind. Those are not my images. I hold images of honeysuckle and holly roses, clear streams, and craggy ravines sheltering deer and bobcats.

I am of Scotch, Irish, German, Swedish, and American Indian heritage. I am drawn to each. My maternal grandmother was the largest influence in my religious heritage, but she identified only as "Christian" and was not affiliated with any church. I was told to say we were Presbyterian when I was growing up because that was the religion of my father's family, but I'm not sure I was ever in a Presbyterian church.

When I was 6 weeks old, I was diagnosed with a condition called congenital hemangioma. While still a serious condition, it would be treated far differently today. In 1958, however, it was life threatening, the treatment was experimental. My surgeons made medical history, and my case was in text books and medical journals. Next to life or death, scars aren't so bad. Since I have had them all of my cognizant life, they, too, are part of my cultural biography.

In addition to my aesthetic considerations, my interest in cultural clarity likely springs from frequent moves throughout my childhood. My father worked for a large firm that built hydro electrical power plants and dams across the United States and overseas. We relocated often. I went to eight different schools in my first eight years of school. I became quite adept at sizing up my new environment, but I was also blessed by the constant of my parents' families in the mountains of southern Missouri, my culture of origin, rich with the twang of oral tradition and homemade fiddles.

The expanse of landscape and lifestyles of the various American small towns in which we lived intrigued me. The Indian reservation of Arizona, the military base of California, and the Mennonite community of Oklahoma all gave me a glimpse of the varied cultures nestled in my own country. As we moved from place to place, I took note of the Navajo women and children selling colorful woven blankets on the side of a dusty desert road contrasted with the Mennonite mothers selling quilts against pristine green pastures on Saturday mornings in the Midwest. Both spoke unfamiliar languages within their families. Navajo women were rarely disobeyed when speaking their native language. Mennonite women rarely spoke at all, but when they did it was often through the eldest son in quiet Germanic words. I remember wanting to stay longer and learn. I remember feeling a familiarity with such communities. Something to do with golden silence and order, colorful patterns and predictability. Above all, clarity. Cultural clarity.

Our family's perpetual moves stopped when I entered junior high school. My mother wanted to be near her family and thought I needed more stability in my teens. My father turned to teaching, an intention of his many years before. My interest in exploring difference turned to advocating for the different. At 16, I became politicized by the Vietnam War, the women's movement, and the aftermath of Watergate. While I believe our professions are often deeply rooted in our personal experiences and inclinations, I did not see clinical work in my vocational future. Unlike Bonnie, I saw myself more the social activist than personal advocate. I viewed injustice on a macro level

rather than allowing myself to contemplate micro maladies. I now realize that my personal history made that difficult for many years. I needed to get my own psychological house in order before I tinkered with anyone else's.

My bachelor's degree was obtained at a small, private Christian college with which I'm still too angry to acknowledge. At the time, this was economic necessity stemming from my parents' divorce. While there, I witnessed religious hypocrisy, gender discrimination, homophobia, and the results of a widespread sexual abuse scandal on campus not unlike that of Penn State today. But I also received a good education in writing, photography, and graphic arts. I became interested in "outsider art," the art of those outside the normative culture, disenfranchised artists who spoke of inaccessibility and inequity through their creations, often looked down upon by those in the formal or established art community. I began to research artists who lived without boundaries or borders.

After college, I visited a friend who was in graduate school in St. Louis. While she was in class, I waited in the large social work library on the campus of Washington University. I began to explore the colossal collection of professional journals spanning topics from rural social work to women in media to multiculturalism. I had found my bliss.

Social work's mission is based on six core values: service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. Social Work standards include "Ethical Responsibilities to the Broader Society" and in "explicit and forceful language" state social workers' obligation to address social justice issues, particularly to vulnerable, disadvantaged, oppressed, and exploited people and groups (Reamer, 2009). The personal and political became professional for me.

Along the way, I campaigned for the Equal Rights Amendment, I advocated for battered women in prison who killed in self-defense, trained by Lenore Walker. I interned and worked at a center for domestic violence and rape survivors. I initiated one of the first counseling groups for survivors of childhood sexual abuse, including one for lesbians, and advocated for interpreters so that Spanish-speaking and deaf women could receive services, relying on the expertise of people such as Suzanne Sgroi, Nicholas Growth, and Eliana Gil. I was trained as a systems family therapist in the styles of Virginia Satir and Salvador Minuchin and provided services to at-risk families and children in the most diverse neighborhoods of St. Louis. Finally, when I felt exhausted by the disregard for clients who were marginalized by

agencies built on helping the marginalized, I left and with two other youthful therapists, started a group practice which later became a training program for counselors, social workers, and creative arts therapists. My professional culture has been shaped by experts such as James Masterson, Claudia Black, Terry Gorski, Christine Courtois, and Colin Ross.

And I have come "full circle" by completing a post-graduate program in expressive arts psychotherapy during which I trained with noted creative therapy mentors such as Cathy Moon, Shawn McNiff, and Pat Allen and alternative healers Michael Harner, Sandra Ingerman, Pat Tuholske, Louis Mehl-Medrona, and Lench Archuleta. In fact, my graduating thesis (2002) was entitled "Full Circle: Countertransference Containment through Mandala-Making (A Case Study of Closure)," and in it I wrote, "Thorough clinical work is predicated on therapist self-awareness and requires attunement and analysis," and quoted Christina Grof (1993) writing, "In the process of removing blocks that keep us from knowing our inner possibilities, we satisfy our intense thirst for wholeness" which in turn, allows us to recognize the wholeness of others.

Bonnie's Cultural Biography

Kim writes at the end of the chapter that students "don't need to know our histories but they will sense our unawareness of them." I agree they will sense our unawareness, but I also think we need to share our histories with our students. Just weeks ago, I observed a teacher sharing with his students how he grew up in their neighborhood, was homeless after his mother died, had joined a gang, and was given the opportunity to leave that life behind, enter college, and be their teacher today. The students connected with him through his history. My cultural history, or biography, is below. You may or may not connect with me through my history, but it does give you insight into why I passionately connect with the work Kim and I do.

A Cultural Biography focuses on those facts and experiences which form your cultural lens. The following is my Cultural Biography.

People often ask me how I, a White woman, became interested in race. The catalyst for my journey began on my 30th birthday in 1976 when I met a Black man who became my husband and the father of my son. Before that, my racial history consisted of White culture. Born in 1946 in an all-White area of southeast Missouri, my family practiced Catholicism and provided me with the idealized childhood of the 1950s. In third grade, I listened to a Divine Word Missionary

speak of the work the church did in New Guinea to convert the population to Catholicism. From that moment on, I wanted nothing more than to be a missionary nun to New Guinea. I corresponded with nuns in New Guinea and kept my vocation at the forefront of my mind throughout elementary and high school. I entered the Sisters of the Holy Spirit at age 17, staying only a few months. This experience was devastating since I gave up a lifelong dream and suffered emotional consequences as a result of my convent experience. Eager to move on, I attended a local college and graduated with a major in English. At 20, I married and at 23 became the mother of a daughter who is one-eighth Cherokee Indian. In 1967, I began teaching in an all-White suburban district, and I taught for nearly a decade before the personal encounter with my future husband changed my focus in life.

I was superficially cognizant of race before. I attended the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss) in the 1960s and witnessed the segregation of people who did not look like me: for example, segregation at the university, at the Dairy Queen where the windows were marked "Colored Only" and "Whites Only," and at the dentist office. There were grocery lines where I was asked to "move ahead" of the "Colored" women who had been waiting before me in line. Rather than speak out, I simply accepted the protocols of the late '60s in the small Southern town of Oxford. I was in my early twenties, naïve, unaccustomed to being around anyone except Whites, and I am ashamed and embarrassed to say, I went along with the norm, rather than questioning the social and legal justice of what I saw around me. I wrote a thesis on William Faulkner, received an M.A. with honors, and was praised for my performance on my "orals," yet surely would have been given an F in social justice had grades been given for awareness of inequities and the courage to respond to them.

In 1984, the school district where I taught voluntarily desegregated, and the first Black students entered the schools. Since I was married to a Black man, the all-White staff assumed I possessed information about these students that others didn't; however, at the time I knew very little about Black culture or the home culture of these students. These students were largely ignored by the staff and other students, and one sympathetic teacher brought one of the students to me halfway through her first year at the school. She had written a letter to the school board informing them of the invisibility of the Black students. I read her letter and wept. For the first time, I paid attention to what was happening to these children at our high school and decided to form a club for students which we called The Organization for the Appreciation of Black Culture (OABC). This group of students taught me so much of what I didn't know I didn't know about students of color, culture, invisibility, and discrimination. At the same time, I found mentors and studied under folks such as Asa Hilliard and James Banks while reading the works of Geneva Gay, Belinda Williams, and Lisa Delpit. I traveled to the University of Senegal, West Africa, to study African literature.

I wrote a dissertation in which I investigated the impact of the dominant culture on the literary canon and the absence of women and people of color from that canon based on their nondominant place in society. I continued to learn what I "didn't know I didn't know."

Since the mid-'80s, I have facilitated professional development work in the area of equity for several organizations and institutions—as A World of Difference trainer for the Anti-Defamation League, a trainer for the Midwest Equity Center and the St. Louis Desegregation Office, and program planner for the Regional Professional Development Center (RPDC) housed at the University of Missouri-St. Louis where I supported and published the Action Research of teachers in the area of equity and instruction. Today I spend my time writing books and working as a presenter and equity coach in several school districts throughout the country.

In my personal life, I am a mother and the grandmother of a child of mixed ethnicity: Puerto Rican, Mexican, African American, and White. My daughter's husband of two years transitioned from male to female, bringing with it an entirely new set of learning experiences for me, as my daughter chose to stay married. My mother died. And life continues. After living more than 60 years, I have learned that each day brings more of "what I don't know I don't know" and that attempting to live life as a culturally considerate person is a daily learning challenge. Some days I do better.

———————————❧———————————

Consider your Cultural Biography. Consider bulleting experiences that formed your Cultural Biography.

After having read the Cultural Biography above and bulleting your own Cultural Biography, what have you gained from doing this exercise as an exercise in Self-Reflection?

Step Two: Assessment of Current Equity Skills

Assessment of current equity skills is necessary to determine what has been driving our biases and resultant practices. Assessment of current competency begins with a tiny kernel of empathy. Understanding that others might feel differently than we do, have different experiences, or see things from a completely different perspective, requires empathy. Assessing our level of competency or our capacity for consideration of others necessitates we open ourselves to the possibility that we might not be attuned to how our behavior—born of our thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs—affects others.

There are many indices and scales to determine prejudice and cultural competency and schools can never have too many tools, though no source is more important than one's own heart and mind. Educators come to their work knowing how to size up school situations; yet, it is more difficult to dispassionately assess one's self. Assessment must include Thoughts, Beliefs and Attitudes and Behaviors/Actions. Beliefs are rarely proven to be true but are arrived at over time. Information, experience, and culture of origin reinforce beliefs. Because beliefs are difficult to prove, they are also difficult to *dis*prove. Attitudes are thoughts and beliefs manifested. Attitudes are conveyed through words, affect, mannerisms, carriage, dress, and environment. Words may be powerful, but these other expressions can announce attitudes at even higher volumes (Anderson 2010b).

Bonnie and I sat on my deck recently and discussed the impact of words. It was an early autumn day; in St. Louis, that means hot. The Midwest humidity is beginning to leave for the year and sitting outside at noon is tolerable, but it is still hot. In Missouri, autumn doesn't necessarily mean crisp and cool like it does in the Northeast—or even in Chicago for that matter. We were nibbling on various foods from the local organic grocer and writing this book. The impact of words—how different people respond in disparate ways to the same word—became an important anchor for this chapter. Autumn doesn't mean the same to everyone. Autumn is my favorite season, but not everyone has had a chance to experience the vibrant autumns of Washington State or Vermont.

Bonnie and I intended to combine the titles of our books. The title of her first bestseller, *How to Teach Students Who Don't Look Like You,* receives very positive feedback most of the time. It is accessible; it is honest; it is, above all, exactly what the book is about. The title of my book, *Culturally Considerate School Counseling: Helping Without Bias,* was not a difficult sell to my editor but received questions in the review process and caused some readers to feel offended after publication. I am curious about how words as innocuous as "culturally considerate" could offend anyone. I feel about this as I do about the word "empathy." When Justice Sotomayor was being confirmed, her use of the word "empathy" was called into question. How could she be impartial if she was empathic? My question is how can we be impartial—*unbiased*—if we are NOT empathic?

Knowing one's self entails *acknowledging* not just what one would like to know, but also what is difficult to know . . . including features we tend to project to others (Britzman, 2000). In his essay, *The Ghost in the School Room: A Primer on the Lessons of Shame,* John Tieman

further asks that we consider the key psychological concepts of transference and countertransference and quotes Moore and Fine (1990, p. 196) in defining transference as the "displacement of patterns of feelings, thoughts, and behavior . . . onto another person," and states that the key to any successful interaction is the ability to endure tension without abandoning the interaction (Tieman, 2007).

Resistance as Change Agent

Bonnie describes her feelings on resistance

Kim writes about "Resistance as Change Agent." This is something I need to learn much more about since I don't do well with resistance. I like everybody to get along and agree. Yet I realize the power of resistance as Change Agent; this is an area where I need to work. When I walk into a group, I do not go in expecting resistance to the workshop. I work hard to establish a caring environment and lessen stress and threat. I walk around and attempt to meet each individual; I ask their names and something about them such as where and what they do in the district. I usually facilitate workshops that lead participants through examining their cultural lens and their classroom instruction. As I demonstrate strategies that work, I have them write down the strategies they observe, then we practice some throughout the workshop. I read the body language of the participants and monitor and adjust my presentation based on participants' responses. When the group is a volunteer group, they are usually engaged and demonstrate that through body language and participation. When the group is mandated to attend the workshop, engagement varies from group to group. My strategy then to meet their resistance is humor. Usually humor will soften their body language and create a space for learning. However, if the entire group is resistant due to their history or a particular incident that occurred prior to my entering the picture, I search for other ways to reach them.

Recently, I encountered a resistant group that happened to be a middle school staff. This is unusual because in my experience middle school teachers are easy to work with, having personalities that deal well with change due to the age of the children with whom they work. This is a generalization; yet this has been my experience. However, this middle school staff had a history and was resistant to the topic dealing with diversity. I tried humor; it didn't work. I tried empathy; it didn't work. It was only after I slowed down and decided to work on what they were interested in—themselves—that we made progress. I used an activity that defined for them their learning styles, and they related to it. They liked seeing their colleagues' styles as well as their own. Then I had them share

their stories (personal biographies centering on issues of culture) in groups of five. After doing his, they returned to the workshop energized and behaving as a different group. Their responses to the group included such things as "it was really nice getting to learn something about Jane; I've worked with her for years and never knew her story." And "I liked hearing about all the similarities among us, yet I realized that our stories are so alike that we haven't experienced many different lens [*sic*] with which to see the world." The workshop that day ended not with a group hug, but it did end with the audience less resistant to future work. They individually agreed to implement a strategy and share back in a month how the implementation had gone. We did a final go-around in the room where every one of the 53 participants shared aloud what he or she planned to do. They left with a committed statement and homework to do. It works similarly in the classroom. By learning about each student as an individual and what each student is passionate about in his or her life, the teacher can begin with that passion and melt resistance in the student.

Reflections/Questions

❖ Think about where you encounter the most resistance. Why do you think it exists in those areas?
❖ What strategies have you developed to handle resistance to yourself or your ideas?
❖ In the classroom, what do you do to develop relationships with each individual student?
❖ How do you handle resistance in an individual student?
❖ What might you do differently in the future?

Kim responds . . .

Bonnie writes about resistance and describes walking into a room to do a presentation and being surprised when the audience is resistant immediately. Conversely, when I walk into a group, I expect and anticipate resistance. I am prepared for it. I even welcome it. For me, resistance gives energy to a room. It can be difficult, but I appreciate the challenge. I worry a bit when an audience is too engaged, too enthusiastic, or too positive. I don't trust it. In a group of more than five people, *someone* has to disagree with me.

In order to change, we often need something to push against (Einstein and Newton both had some notions about this)—not only because of the amount of energy needed to move mountains (or people) but also because folks generally need to feel it's worth their while to change. Resistance can be a measure of this worth.

When Resistance shows up, he may be late, but he's there and everyone knows it. Agreement arrives on time and with a smile. She doesn't want to bother anyone with her opinion.

What I find more alarming than either resistance or agreement, is Apathy. To me, Apathy is dangerous. Apathy is an invisible but deadly force—rather like carbon dioxide—the result of something potentially toxic. Resistance is difficult to move, but when it lets go, it gets things done. Agreement happily joins in to help. Apathy just sits in the way, watching while both good and bad things happen, refusing to take credit for either.

Whether we anticipate a calm classroom or an unruly and resistant group of our peers, there are some ways in which we can enter a room and set a safe and consistent tone. Bonnie and I established our rules of engagement when we were co-teaching a writing class for women. We share them here and write more about them on page 88.

Rules of Engagement

- Arrive Unencumbered
- Enter with Intent
- Attend to Self-Care
- Respect Others
- Circulate
- Ask Questions
- Leave Satisfied

These rules can also be found on page 138 of the appendix. These parameters came from our individual experiences as educator and group facilitator. They work well in most any circumstance, though you may want to edit and adapt them to fit the needs of your situation. If a school can adopt a consistent schoolwide practice of engagement, even better. Adults and students can all benefit when a positive and peaceable tone is set.

Pollock, Deckman, Mira, and Shalaby (2010) write, "Scholars have offered many important lists of the 'attitudes, knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to work effectively with a diverse student population,'" (Zeichner, 1992), but a recent review of research conducted for the American Educational Research Association makes clear that each teacher education program still proceeds with its own definition of the task. It is no wonder, then, that educators often express confusion about how exactly they should prepare to teach in a diverse and unequal nation."

Philomena Essed (1990) first named "everyday racism" as the re-creation of "structures of racial and ethnic inequality though situated practices" normalized as everyday life (Essed, 2002, pg. 192). Christine Sleeter states that preservice programs themselves provide disjointed multicultural content, dependent upon the individual professor and asserts, "By the time the student taught, they were concerned about surviving in the classroom. Those in primarily white schools had subordinated any interest in multicultural education to demands of their cooperating teachers. Those in urban schools were completely unprepared for the students and the setting and had great difficulty" (C. E. Sleeter, 2001).

Research suggests that many preservice efforts to prepare educators to teach in diverse settings pursue PD on race issues by asking educators to examine themselves personally in order to raise self-awareness of their racial biases, personal histories, privileges, and identities (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Similarly, according to Hollins and Guzman (2005), researchers studying efforts to prepare teachers for diversity predominantly seem to desire, expect, and measure personal changes in a teacher's mind (i.e., reduction in bias, an increase in awareness about privilege) and in a teacher's heart (i.e., a decrease in disdain for families of color or an increase in appreciation for urban schools for communities) more often than in the educator's observable practice. Far less research seems concerned with measuring what teachers are then able to do professionally for students, and even less research seems to measure actual interactions between teachers and students (Pollock et al., 2010).

Samuel Lucas (2008) argues that "teachers should inquire into students' individual lived experiences rather than use abstract notions about a . . . group to determine how students should be treated. Race, racism, and poverty conspire to affect teacher attitude, hiring practices, and social service delivery." Failure to acknowledge students' race or ethnicity in textbooks or school curricula disenfranchises minority youth in the school experience. The result may be that school is a child's first successes (Venson, 2008). "The self-view of the child of color is undermined when he [*sic*] realizes that the sole authority in the classroom—the teacher—feels that he is not as smart as White kids and isn't capable of catch up. Schools become a traumatic experience. While he wants out, his parents' insistence that he stays in school and does well so that he 'amounts to somebody' haunts him. Unfortunately, the longer he stays in school, the more certain he is that he won't end up 'amounting to somebody'" (Rutstein, 2001, p. 23).

Teachers and other providers may be unaware of their own biases and prejudices or the institutional racism or homophobia that pervades society. Consequently, they may unconsciously hold lower expectations for cultural minority students than for young people who come from more recognizable or acceptable home configurations (Hughes, Newkirk, and Stenhjem, 2010).

Rutstein (2001) suggests that educational leadership should engage in a united effort to adopt the teaching principles of successful schools like Harlem Prep in inner-city New York. These principles are:

1. Teachers believe that all human beings are fundamentally good.

2. Because teachers don't assume they know the capacity of students, they approach all students with high expectations. Sensing their teachers' attitudes, students try hard to succeed.

3. Teachers want to do everything they can to help their students excel. This genuine desire stimulates creative ways to reach and teach.

4. Teachers concentrate on helping students discover and develop their potentialities. By discovering their potential, students develop self-respect and self-worth. They are motivated to learn in order to develop what they have discovered.

5. By exposing their students to the realities underlying the principle of the oneness of humankind, teachers are able to strip away the effects of the shortsighted "four races" concept and introduce students to the reality of the close relationship of everything on our planet. By embracing this principle, students find themselves studying in the rarefied atmosphere of a family.

6. Teachers impress upon their students the importance of service to one's fellow human beings and to the community.

7. Teachers employ an interdisciplinary approach to teaching, which results in students developing a feeling and appreciation for the oneness and interrelatedness of all things.

8. Teachers stress cooperation instead of competition.

Additional solutions are proposed to address the challenge of what must be done to get to the point where education is a viable,

life-giving experience for every student. First, [educators and other professionals should be provided] training on the oneness of humankind and the biological, anthropological, and genetic principles upon which this philosophy is predicated. Second, these professionals would benefit from training on the principle of unity in diversity, which involves both intercultural and multicultural education. Third, those working with youth, irrespective of racial or ethnic background, need to understand the concept of "white privilege" (McIntosh, 1988).

Thus it is when we confront our current levels of aptitude, abilities, and ultimately, our limitations. In the next section, we explore the harsh reality of limitations and ways in which to address and amend them. First, however, we offer considerations for the self-examination phase of our model.

Cultural Considerations for Self-Examination

- Keep a journal of your journey. Record daily interactions with others. Reflect upon your communication: your responses and your feelings. Private self-reflection is the most important factor in increasing insight and affecting personal change. If we are hesitant to listen to our own voice, it is difficult to be considerate of other's. The more we know about ourselves, the less we project onto others. Students benefit from educators who are open to self-exploration and who not only encourage but model self-reflection.

- Define the terms "culture" and "cultural consideration" for yourself. List five things that make you a culturally considerate teacher. List five improvements you already know you could make toward increasing your cultural consideration. Writing to our own prompts reflects we are working on a deeper level and beginning to understand *what we don't know we don't know* and better identify those things we *do* know in order to build upon them.

- Write your cultural history. Find a quiet spot; put on music that calms you; do not think ahead about what you will write; keyboard or write several pages without stopping or checking for sentence structure, punctuation, grammar, etc. Let it pour forth. You will not know where you are going; you will only get there. Free-range writing—foraging for words without artificial ingredients—allows for an unobstructed vision of both our starting point and our future goals. Becoming familiar with our own cultural history gives us greater comfort with the impact history or historic memory may have on our students. Until time travel is conquered, no one just "shows up" in the present. Students don't need to know our histories but they will sense our unawareness of them.

- Share your history with a person you respect. Read each other's histories. Allow each other ten minutes of uninterrupted time to share your story; do not allow the other person to interrupt or question anything. At the end of each of your stories, take the time to kindly talk and share with each other. Another option is to do this in groups of five with your family or colleagues. Follow the same procedure.
- Videotape yourself with your students. Analyze your body language. Pay attention to whether you are consistently engaging and open with all students or whether you need more personal space with some than others. Also take note of how students respond to you as well.