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Welcome POD Colleagues

The POD Diversity Committee (DC) is proud to launch its inaugural white paper, exemplifying our commitment to generating knowledge about and conducting assessment and evaluation on diversity-related educational development issues and our grants programs.

What the Diversity Committee has Accomplished from 1994 to 2015

In light of the 2015 POD Annual Conference theme “Back to the Future: Critical Reflection and Effective Practice,” we thought it would be fitting to highlight what the DC has accomplished throughout the past 21 years. At its inception in 1994, the DC’s leadership team included a chair, liaison to core, grants coordinator, assessment coordinator and accessibility liaison. Under the leadership of former POD president, Donald H. Wulff, we launched the Diversity Travel Fellowship and the Educational Development Internship Grant, in 1994 and 1996 respectively. These initiatives recognize, honor, and celebrate individuals committed to advancing diversity and inclusion within the field of educational development. In 2015, the co-chairs expanded the DC team to include three new positions - conference coordinator, sponsored session coordinator, and outreach coordinator. We also expanded the functional capacity of the research and scholarship coordinator and the inclusion coordinator to better support new priorities and goals.

Our rich past has also included diversifying the POD membership toward greater inclusion of racial and ethnic constituents, individuals from international universities and historically underrepresented institutions in the United States.

Featured In This White Paper

- Trends on diversity-related sessions at POD conferences from 1977 to 2015
- Strategies for supporting yourself and your colleagues via microresistance
- How contemplative practices can serve efforts to welcome and embrace diversity
- Data on the effectiveness of our grants programs

We welcome your thoughts and reflections, as well as your ideas for our next white paper.

In solidarity,

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Quick Facts

Diversity-Related Sessions at the POD Annual Conferences from 1977 to 2015

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POD has offered over 400 diversity-related sessions from 1977 to 2015 at its annual conference. These sessions primarily focused on gender and race in the 1980s, race and culture in the 1990s, inclusive classroom environments throughout the 2000s, and global and international issues since the turn of the century.

Trends in the data suggest that there is significant growth in the number of diversity-related sessions offered at POD conferences since the organization’s inception. The topics are often complex – inviting faculty developers to think about their work from multiple perspectives. The POD community could benefit from an expansion in terms of the types of diversity-related content (e.g., sessions exploring how socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, and other identities affect teaching and learning) and in the overall number of diversity-related sessions offered at the conference. Approximately nine to 15 percent of the sessions at the annual conference between the years 2011 to 2015 have been explicitly diversity-related. As we look ahead to the next decade, we must make space for discussing what is known and unknown, comfortable and controversial, and celebrate how diversity impacts the work we do.
What are microaggressions?

Scholars define microaggressions as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative . . . slights and insults” (Sue, Derald Wing, et al., "Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life," American Psychologist 62.4 [2007]: 271-286).

What are microresistances?

Microresistances are “incremental daily efforts to challenge white privilege“ as well as other kinds of privilege based on gender, sexuality, class, etc. They help targeted people cope with microaggressions” (Irey, Sayumi, "How Asian American Women Perceive and Move toward Leadership Roles in Community Colleges: A Study of Insider Counter Narratives," PhD Diss., University of Washington, 2013, p. 36).

What can targeted people do in the face of potential microaggressions?

Increase your personal and psychic strength by:

- reminding yourself about what you value (Steele, Claude, Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do [New York: Norton, 2011]),
- practicing self-care; as Audre Lorde wrote, “Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare” (A Burst of Light: Essays [New York: Firebrand, 1988], p. 131).
• taking power poses, especially before potentially stressful situations (Cuddy, Amy, “Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are,” https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are?language=en), and
• thinking about the “bigger fish you have to fry” (Madsen, William, and Kevin Gillespie, Collaborative Helping [Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley, 2014], p. 147-48).

Increase your social resources by:
• participating in mentoring programs,
• building your network of mentors (Rockquemore, Kerry Ann, “When It Comes to Mentoring, the More the Merrier,” https://chroniclevitae.com/news/326-when-it-comes-to-mentoring-the-more-the-merrier), and

Speak up with communication strategies like:
• Open The Front Door to Communication (OTFD) to make transparent the nature and effects of microaggressions: adapted from Learning Forum (communication steps)
  · Observe: Concrete, factual, and observable (not evaluative)
  · Think: Thoughts based on observation (yours and/or theirs)
  · Feel: Emotions- “I feel (emotion).”
  · Desire: Specific request or inquiries about desired outcome
• Example: “Let’s pause for a moment here. I noticed (Observe) some raised eyebrows and other non-verbals that make me think people might be reacting strongly to something that was said. I think (Think) we need to explore this because I feel uncomfortable (Feeling) moving forward with the discussion. Following our ground rules, I am hoping someone can share (Desire) what they are thinking or feeling right now so we can have a productive conversation about this” (see Obear, Kathy, "How to Facilitate Triggering Situations" http://2010-2012slflc.bgsu.wikispaces.net/file/view/Obear.How+to+facilitate+triggering+situations.pdf).

What can allies do to help colleagues facing microaggressions?

Become more informed and empathetic by:
• raising your awareness of macro and microaggressions (Sue), and
• being on the lookout for your colleagues and offer resistance and/or affirmation if appropriate (Irey).

Step in and speak up, depending on your style and the situation, by:
• supporting your colleague’s efforts at microresistance and self-efficacy (Irey; Miller, William R., and Stephen Rollnick, Motivational Interviewing: Helping People Change [New York, NY : Guilford Press, 2013]),
• giving microaffirmations—i.e., “tiny acts of opening doors to opportunity, gestures of inclusion and caring, and graceful acts of listening” (Scully, Maureen, and Mary Rowe, “Bystander Training within Organizations,” Journal of the International Ombudsman Association 2 [July 2009]: 89-95;
• working behind-the-scenes on behalf of your colleagues (Irey), and
• performing OTFD.
What is contemplative pedagogy?

Contemplative pedagogy utilizes contemplative practices—meditation, journaling and other reflective activities that connect individuals with deep knowing through direct, first-person experiences—to provide students access to holistic learning. Research shows that contemplative practices have great benefits for physical and mental health. By encouraging students to engage in present-moment and inner reflection exercises and experiences, we tap into these benefits in service of learning. Thus, increased abilities to focus attention and regulate emotion, for example, make it possible for students to expand beyond linear, analytic ways of knowing, and to broaden their perspectives, navigate paradox, increase their compassion and sense of connection with others, and discover creative solutions for contemporary issues and problems.

Should "contemplative literacy" be part of general education?

Surprisingly, we expect students to know how to slow down and focus, to relate scholars' ideas to their own experiences, to be able to balance work and personal life, and to have compassion for others—without teaching them these skills. Just as we offer ways of developing visual, quantitative and other literacies through general education courses and experiences, it seems that contemplative literacy is important—especially for institutions committed to developing the whole student.

How do we encourage faculty and students to incorporate "the contemplative" outside of religious or spiritual contexts?

Some institutions and faculty members seem to believe that by using contemplative pedagogy they tread too closely to teaching religion or spirituality, and that these practices should be limited to particular departments or disciplines. The ability to pause and reflect, to check in with oneself in the present moment, however, is not limited to any religious or spiritual traditions. It is true that some contemplative practices originated in particular religious or wisdom traditions. But these often take place outside of any spiritual or religious context and have been adapted for use in secular contexts—including academic institutions, corporations and sports teams. That said, because of the origin of some practices, faculty utilizing contemplative pedagogy must be careful to present practices and approaches in ways that do not inadvertently suggest that students embrace any particular path or tradition.

Are there cultural nuances to "the contemplative" that are more inviting than others for particular diverse groups?

I believe that contemplative practices can be found in all cultural traditions, though they may look different depending on the particular cultural expression. In addition, historical factors may impact how different practices are received. For example, while silent reflection is a very powerful practice, silence has not been positive for all peoples. Some cultural or gender groups have felt silenced, and silence has often been used as punishment in American society. For these reasons, it is important for faculty to acknowledge a problematic history where appropriate. I incorporate silent reflection in all of my classes. But at the beginning
of the semester, I talk about the problems with silence and encourage students to try the practice with the idea of having a different relationship with silence. I also think that faculty members must be open to what constitutes "the contemplative." For some cultures, the contemplative may sound or look different than what one has experienced.

**How might "the contemplative" serve efforts to welcome and embrace diversity?**

By helping students increase their awareness of their feelings, attitudes and assumptions, as well as by enhancing their compassion and sense of connection to others, contemplative practices are very important for diversity efforts. Several practices come to mind, including Where I’m From poems, in which students learn about each other—and the ways they are the same and different—through sharing poems they write about a different time in their life. Another exercise is Just Like Me, in which students hold in their awareness various aspects of what it means to be human, as a list of human experiences is read.

**How might contemplative practices be used for faculty research?**

In my dance history classes, I have students walk the labyrinth on campus as a metaphor for doing research. I want them to have an embodied experience of the ways research seems to take them closer to and away from their initial thinking about a topic as they continue to explore and learn. One goal of that exercise is to keep them motivated, as research often takes twists and turns as a scholar works. Faculty can use this reminder, as well. In addition, journaling, silent reflection, and contemplating a question by holding it within and seeing what arises, are ways that faculty can combine their thinking and parsing for deeper, more holistic knowing.

**What other questions should be asked?**

Do I have a practice, and if so, what is it?
How might contemplative pedagogy serve my course objectives?
What is the source of my resistance to contemplative practices and pedagogy?
Who else on my campus is interested in contemplative pedagogy?
New Data on Past Recipients of the Donald H. Wulff Diversity Travel Fellowship

A survey was administered to the 2014 fellowship recipients using Qualtrics (n=6). The fellows were graduate students as well as faculty and administrators in higher education at a variety of institutional types. Four fellows were members of POD for at least two to four years prior to receiving the travel fellowship; none of the recipients had served on a POD committee or had presented at a POD conference. Since receiving the fellowship for the 2014 conference, two respondents have served in leadership roles on the Diversity Committee while one has volunteered with POD in an informal capacity. Two of the recipients are presenting at the 2015 POD Conference. Most of the recipients stated they built networks in the areas of professional and organizational development as a result of receiving the grant, better understood the importance of diversity in educational development, and generated new ideas about the role of a faculty developer:

“I had been on the line about whether faculty development was “my thing”… I identified with a couple cross-disciplinary areas and wasn’t sure if I wanted to claim a strong identity as someone who does the faculty/organization thing. Attending POD basically made me say ’yup, I want to do this for my career’.”

“I attended the conference just after becoming Co-Director of my institution’s Teaching and Learning Center. At the conference I learned a variety of ways other institutions approach faculty development. I shared that information with my Co-Director and we discussed it with our Provost. Those discussions helped shape our 2014-2015 planning for the Center.”

How the Educational Development Internship Grant Can Make a Difference

“The grant provided me with an opportunity to expand my faculty development knowledge by conducting research on “flipping” classrooms and developing resources for faculty regarding inclusion of diverse and first-generation college students in online courses….I have always been interested in the field of educational development. The internship was a great reinforcement of my commitment to this work” (Jenene Cook, 2014 POD DC Educational Development Internship Grant intern).

“The most obvious benefit of Jenene’s work is that she built the foundation for an entirely new aspect of Stonehill’s curriculum and, with that, helped reinforce the CTL’s importance to the College. Furthermore, she contributed in meaningful ways to the CTL’s and the College’s diversity mission. Her willingness to embrace the idea of putting inclusiveness at the heart of our online course development conversations allowed us to engage more faculty in questions about classroom diversity” (Dr. Stacy Grooters, former Director, Center for Teaching and Learning, Stonehill College, internship supervisor).