

Quotes:

“Racism and poverty rob people of mental bandwidth, leaving them with limited cognitive resources to learn and perform to their potential and resulting in the national tragedy of blighted hope and squandered human capacity for creativity and problem-solving.” p. 8

“These students experience scarcity of respect, esteem, safety, and acceptance.” p. 28

“The experience of everyday racism is...relentless.” p. 33

“What makes modern racism so exhausting is, partially, its subtlety.” p. 34

“This is not a problem that non-majority people need to solve. It is for all of us, with majority people in the lead at colleges and universities, to root out this social pollution and clean up the social environment for everyone...Even though it’s easy to take the mundane as just the way it is and will always be, we can, with intention, change our institutional environments to ones in which all students can flourish and develop academically and personally to their fullest potential.” p. 38

“Students who arrive in the college classroom with very limited bandwidth for learning need empathy, flexibility, and high standards. They need expectations to be high and the promise of help and support to be obvious and openly offered. They need instructors and student affairs professionals who are willing to work alongside them until they find a learning and development style that works for them. They need affirmation of effort and assurance that they will be supported.” p. 71

“In a world in which there are serious problems to solve, we can no longer afford to have more than half of our population undereducated and underskilled because their mental bandwidth is being consumed by poverty, racism and other differentisms. Maybe someday all students will arrive at college with their full mental bandwidths intact, but until then, it is our responsibility to help them regain their lost cognitive resources so they can learn and grow and, as adults, live a meaningful life and contribute positively to the future of our society and the world.” p. 121

Notes and Questions for Reflection:

Book: Verschelden, C. (2017). *Bandwidth recovery: Helping students reclaim cognitive resources lost to poverty, racism, and social marginalization*. Stylus Publishing, LLC.

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- Examples of microinvalidations p. 36
 - What do you think of the idea the author discusses of bringing “the struggle out in the open and help majority people develop a cognitive process of their own that involves a measure of empathy that encourages them to try to avoid perpetrating, even unintentionally, actions that feel like microaggressions to our students.” p. 37? How do you or might you go about tackling this suggestion?
- First generation and non-majority students entering “a foreign culture” p.48
- Focus on LGBT students Chapter 9 p. 51
 - What steps have you taken or do you hope to take in this regard? Gender inclusive forms
- Growth mindset beliefs Table 10.1 P. 62
 - Could use in response to students who express fear about whether they will do well
- Increasing motivation by fostering a growth-mindset p. 63
 - *Do you create`opportunities for your students to “make up for initially low performance by putting in extra effort or figuring out how to better solve a problem?” What does that look like for you? Do you have specific boundaries around it?
 - Revisions, redos, second tries, frequent specific feedback, consistent support
 - Do you use “standards-based” grading (no penalty for early on failures, just need to master the content by the end of the semester) to motivate students to keep learning throughout the entire semester? P. 64
 - “What students need is honest and constructive feedback accompanied by assurances that they can reach their learning goals with effort and practice.” p. 65
 - Do you use any/all of the four strategies to build self-efficacy (O’Neal, 2014) p. 66? If yes, what does that look like?
 - Seeing a peer succeed at a task
 - Using verbal persuasion and affirmations
 - Reducing stress and anxiety
 - Using collaborative, conceptual, and creative pedagogies
 - *Strict deadlines or some flexibility? P. 68
 - What do you think of Boucher’s (2016) solution to offer a “two-day grace period on any paper-no questions asked” a policy she instituted based on the argument that “strict deadlines only serve to reproduce the inequalities of access and inclusion that universities are trying so hard to correct.”

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- Would you categorize your syllabi as a ‘high hope’ syllabi offering challenging assignments with support? P. 66
 - Feedback from the instructor at each step
 - Expectations are clear
 - Clarifying questions are encouraged
 - Grading criteria are explicit (such as rubric)
 - Options for group work
 - The amount of time expected is clearly stated
 - Possibly offering scaffolding - a large project divided into manageable pieces p. 67
 - Goals presented in smaller and proximal terms
 - Grace p. 68
- Neurobics p. 64
 - Where might this fit in midwifery curricula? Orientation?
- *Hope and goal setting p. 69-70
 - Do you structure (or want to restructure anything) based on reading that “hope was a better predictor of academic success than intelligence, personality, or previous scholarly achievement”?
 - Is there any place in your curricula where you might ask students to set goals (especially active learning goals vs performance goals) and then work out the strategies to achieve them? Orientation?
- Personal Values Affirmation Exercise pp. 79-82:
 - What do you think about the Personal values affirmation exercise? Where could you imagine incorporating this exercise? (Orientation? A specific class? Extra credit?)
- Seeing the content as personally relevant p. 84:
 - Do you have examples of how you help students connect what they are learning to their everyday life so that they can see the content as personally relevant?
 - 60 second “check in” at the beginning of class by each person: One word for how feeling today, and respond to a question such as: What do you think about ___topic___? What does this week’s content bring up for you? How does this week’s content relate to you, your family or community?
- Representation in Leadership p. 85:
 - Do you have any short and long term strategies to share about how to work towards having the faculty of your institution more closely reflect the racial/ethnic population of students or potential students?

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- The Danger of low expectations p. 85:
 - How do you communicate high expectations of all students and offer them the support they need to meet them?
- Group work to increase a sense of belonging p. 92:
 - Have you used any of the methods described? Share details please.
 - Having students work out a problem as a group
 - Having students “teach” each other a concept
 - Taking quizzes in groups
 - Exchanging ideas in pairs or triads
- Peer Support p. 94
 - Do any of you have formal peer advisor programs at your schools? Or have ideas about resources for anyone interested in creating one?
- Positive Collegiate Racial Climate p. 96
 - Safe spaces?
 - Examples of how to connect students who may feel like “the only one.”
 - California Assoc. Of Midwives: NARM Prep JumpStart: Insiders' Guide for Student Midwives of Color (5 day retreat for students of color)
- Safe spaces and counter-spaces p. 96-98
 - Did this section help you brainstorm about ways at your institution to create spaces where students of color at predominantly white institutions can get the educational, emotional and cultural support that will help free up bandwidth?
- White students and identity threat when discussing racism p. 99:
 - What did you think of this concept?
 - How might you orient students in such a way as to frame it as a learning experience where they will make mistakes? Examples?
- Upper class connection and wisdom (peer support) p. 100
 - Where could this connection to junior and senior students be made in your programs? Ie. through student interviews or guest speaker panels
- Formal opportunities to discover common ground (helping to “make race less important”) such as late night bull sessions p. 101 or Life reports p. 86-90
 - Is this something that already happens in your programs? If not, could it be incorporated? When do you think these types of strategies are most important?
- Unpacking privilege discussions or courses p. 103-104
 - Where could these be incorporated? Have you had success with it? Do you have fears about doing it?
- Step forward, step back activity p. 104-106
 - Where could this be incorporated? Have you had success with it? Do you have fears about doing it?

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- Need for “effective professional development” for educators and staff
 - What does this look like at your institution? Do you think a new commitment should be made in this regard? What might this look like?
- *Maximize identity safe cues and minimize identity threat p. 108
 - What tangible things have you or your institution done or would you like to do to “change the perception of the space in terms of identity safety” with the goal of reducing students’ worries?
 - Reasoning: “Because identity threat results in a depletion of mental bandwidth that adds to the already significant disadvantages of being part of those groups.”
- “Critical mass” concept p. 108-110
 - Are we doing students a disfavor if they are ‘the only one’ and what can we do to mitigate that identity threat?
 - Sororities or fraternities for students of color, summer bridge programs, race/ethnicity-based student groups p. 113
- How might you or how have you facilitated the type of “real conversations” about power and privilege that are posited as necessary to achieve transformation vs. simply “inclusion into the given.” p. 113
- GSU Case Study p. 114-119
 - “The leaders at GSU make a decision several years ago that they were committed to serving the students in Atlanta and in the state of GA and to improving student outcomes. They did that not by getting different students but by removing institutional barriers- threats to mental bandwidth- to student success...there is more at play [t]here than simply the need for more money, academic support , or guidance. The differential results suggest that the negative effects of poverty and racism deplete students’ mental bandwidth and that these interventions, singly and as a group, helped these specific students recover enough bandwidth to change outcomes significantly.” p. 119
 - What did you take from this example that you hope to incorporate?
 - *What do you think about the gains they made in just 12 years? Does that motivate you to create a 5 and 10 year strategic plan? What would that look like?
- Even though this book refers to undergraduates and college, do you think that most or all of the information is applicable to midwifery students and schools? Is there anything you would add for our context?

General Questions:

- Was there anything in the book that you found especially meaningful or helpful to you?
- Is there something new that you learned that you would like to share or talk about?
- What changes did this book inspire you to make in your syllabi or at your institution?
- What concrete steps will you take this term, this year and in the next 5 years to help make sure you incorporate the lessons you learned?

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