Growing Our Culture of Inclusion & Belonging

Belonging @ UMass
Fall 2022
Welcome!

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(they/them/theirs)

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Belonging as an Active Practice

“The academy is not paradise. But learning is a place where paradise can be created. This is education as the practice of freedom.”

bell hooks, 
Teaching to Transgress
An Invitation to Brave Space

by Micky ScottBey Jones

*after Beth Strano

Together we will create brave space. Because there is no such thing as a “safe space” -- We exist in the real world. We all carry scars and we have all caused wounds. In this space We seek to turn down the volume of the outside world, We amplify voices that fight to be heard elsewhere, We call each other to more truth and love. We have the right to start somewhere and continue to grow. We have the responsibility to examine what we think we know. We will not be perfect. This space will not be perfect. It will not always be what we wish it to be. But It will be our brave space together, and We will work on it side by side.
ROOTS: Core Values
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<td>Accountability</td>
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<td>Wisdom</td>
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Opening Reflection:

Others can see evidence of my core values in action at UMass when...
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Others can see evidence of my core values in action at UMass when...

**EQUALITY**
I notice and name who has been denied access, opportunity, and justice. I vocally affirm the inherent worth of all humans.

**AUTHENTICITY**
I share about my personal identities and experiences, so that others feel safe and welcome to share theirs, too.

**GROWTH**
I remember that I am a learner first and always. I seek collaboration and feedback, listening and adjusting with an open heart.
Opening Reflection:

“Others can see evidence of my core values in action at UMass when I...”

- In pairs or small groups:
  - Take turns sharing one of your top Core Values AND one action/behavior associated with this value
  - Notice and name any commonalities or areas of overlap

See how it feels to hold your values top of mind throughout our time together today!
Session Overview

0 1 | What is Culture?
0 2 | Key Cultural Archetypes
0 2 | Culture, Belonging, & the Brain
0 4 | Practice, Apply, Harvest, & Commit
Session Goals

- Build awareness & foundational knowledge
- Establish a baseline of shared language

Guiding Principles

- Exposure > Mastery
- Cultural Humility > Cultural Competency
- Take What Serves, Leave What Doesn’t
What do we mean when we talk about “A Culture of Inclusion and Belonging”?
What IS Culture?

The Culture Wheel

- Greater Community
- Knowledge & Stories
- Values
- Food & Drink
- Language
- Traditions & Rituals
- The Arts
- Techniques & Skills

Visible Signs

- Environment
- Behaviour

Invisible Causes

- Values & Attitudes
- Fundamental Assumptions & Beliefs

The Way We Do Things Round Here
What IS Culture?

Cultural Iceberg Theory (Edward T. Hall)

Like an iceberg, nine-tenths of culture is below the surface

Surface Culture
Most easily seen
Emotional level-low

Shallow Culture
Unspoken Rules
Emotional level-high

Deep Culture
Unconscious Rules
Emotional level-intense

courtesy, contextual, conversational patterns, concept of time, personal space rules of contact, facial expressions, nonverbal communication, body language, touching, eye contact, patterns of handling emotions, notions of modesty, concept of beauty, courtship practices, relationships to animals, notions of leadership, tempo of work, concept of food, ideals of child rearing, theory of disease, social interaction rate, nature of friendships, tone of voice, attitudes toward elders, concept of cleanliness, notions of adolescence, patterns of group decision-making, definition of insanity, preferences for competition or cooperation, tolerance of physical pain, concept of “self”, concept of past and future, definition of obscenity, attitudes toward dependents, problem solving roles in relation to age, sex, class, occupation, kinship, and...
Key Cultural Archetypes: Individualism vs Collectivism

Traits of Individualistic Cultures

- Self-Sufficiency
- Uniqueness
- Autonomy
- Independence

Traits of Collectivistic Culture

- Social rules focus on promoting selflessness
- Working as a group
- Doing what’s best for society
- Families and communities have a central role

Source: VeryWell Mind
Key Cultural Archetypes: Individualism vs Collectivism

Collectivism – Individualism World map

Map Source: Gert Jan Hofstede, Wageningen University, 2014
Independent Reflection

- As a learner, do you tend to thrive in collectivist or individualist educational spaces?
- Has the way you learn best changed over time? How? Why?
Culture, Belonging, and the Brain
Belonging =

Reciprocal…

- Attention
- Affirmation
- Acceptance
- Care
- Support
Culture, Belonging, and the Brain

- Physical Structures = Hardware
- Culture = Software
- Two key functions:
  - Avoid pain
  - Seek pleasure

Source: Hammond, Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain, 2015
Culture, Belonging, and the Brain

Important Systems:

- Reptilian brain: Reticular Activation System (RAS) – “The Watcher”

Source: Hammond, *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*, 2015
Psychological Safety & The Nervous System

Sources: Ergos Institute of Somatic Education / Peter Levine, PhD
Psychological Safety & the Nervous System

Symptoms: Anxiety, panic, hyperactivity, exaggerated startle, inability to relax, restlessness, hyper-vigilance, digestive problems, emotional flooding, chronic pain, sleeplessness, hostility/rage

Symptoms: Depression, flat affect, lethargy, deadness, exhaustion, chronic fatigue, disorientation, disconnection, dissociation, complex syndromes, pain, low blood pressure, poor digestion
Culturally Responsive = Trauma-Informed

- Cortisol stops all learning for 20 minutes and stays in the body for up to 3 hours
- The brain experiences social pain in the much same way it experiences physical pain

Source: Advanced Brain Neuroimaging Topics in Health and Disease, 2014
Culturally Responsive = Trauma-Informed

- Threats to our sense of belonging – actual or perceived – automatically activate our sympathetic nervous system
- Accumulated impact strengthens automatic response ("neurons that fire together, wire together")

On a neurobiological level:
- Oppression & marginalization...
- Accumulated impact of microaggressions...
- Enacting/perpetuating harm...
  
  ALL *function* as trauma in the brain

Invitation, not Obligation

“Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space lies our freedom and power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and freedom.”

Viktor E. Frankl
(attributed)
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<th>Implications for Systems</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assimilation</strong></td>
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<td>=/=</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Inclusion &amp; Belonging</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>Hostility</th>
<th>You should not exist.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exclusion</td>
<td>You are not allowed to be here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilation</td>
<td>You are welcome here...after you’ve changed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tolerance</td>
<td>You are allowed to be here...but keep to yourself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>You are welcome to be here with us.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Celebration</td>
<td>Your being here is great!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>We welcome everyone without barriers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expansion</td>
<td>We will grow and change because of what each one offers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>We repent of what we did to you and will not repeat it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>We are all here together.</td>
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Guided Reflection: Lived Experiences of Belonging

Belonging = Reciprocal Attention, Affirmation, Acceptance, Care, and Support

When have you experienced a true sense of belonging?
Guided Reflection:
When have you experienced a sense of belonging?

- Where were you? Who else was there?
- What did you see, hear, smell, taste, touch?
- Which *emotions* accompany this memory?
- Where and how do you experience this memory in your physical body?
- Notice any other memories that arise. How/why are these connected?
Integration

- What are you harvesting from our time together today?
- What actions will you take as a result of this session?
- Which accountability measures are you putting in place?
Closing Reflection:
What do you seek to embody on this path?

“I am a commitment to...”

Source: Holding Change by adrienne maree brown
Trust the People (a spell)

Trust the people who move toward you and already feel like home.
Trust the people to let you rest.
Trust the people to do everything better than you could have imagined.
Trust the people and they become trustworthy.
Trust that the people are doing their work to trust themselves.
Trust that each breach of trust can deepen trust or clarify boundaries.
Trust the people who revel in pleasure after hard work.
Trust the people who let children teach and remind us how to emote, be still, and laugh.
Trust the people who see and hold your heart.
Trust the people who listen to the whales.
Trust the people and you will become trustworthy.
Trust the people and show them your love.
Trust the people.

Source: *Holding Change* by adrienne maree brown
THANK YOU!

Questions? Comments? Collabs?
Reach out anytime!

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