

**Project Title:** Mindfulness in Online Multicultural Education

**Sponsoring department and college:** College of Education

**Principal Investigator:** Kathryn McIntosh, PhD, College of Education

**Project collaborator:** Raisa Canete Blazquez, PhD candidate, College of Education

### **Abstract**

This project proposes a study of *mindfulness* as a resource for online students to engage in Multicultural Education and be empowered to learn challenging topics like racism, gender oppression, and privilege. Mindfulness employs a wholeness approach incorporating social, emotional, spiritual and mind/body tools to settle one's attention and calm reactions in order to stay present and engaged. Online students will be taught mindfulness through ten videos and asked to reflect in assignments about its value and how it supports learning. In an era of high anxiety and uncertainty, along with racism at the center of society's struggles, online educators must help develop undergraduates' human capacity for engaging thoughtfully and compassionately in conversations about racism, sexism, and social justice. This research is guided by the following research questions:

- 1) How does online mindfulness help students' understand multicultural content?
- 2) How do aspects of online mindfulness videos help their learning in the following ways (i.e., the instructor, personal examples, mindfulness exercises, texts and sources, multicultural content, future careers/K12 teaching, health and wellness, tool for learning)?

With grounded theory, students' perspectives will be analyzed for how mindfulness supports their learning in the online setting by analyzing their reflection assignments and mid-term evaluations. Findings from a pilot study in an in-person setting showed that Multicultural Education students responded positively to mindfulness as supporting emotional aspects, spiritual connectedness, conceptual content, and physiological aspects to learning, and with this study we intend to find out how to best incorporate mindfulness in online curriculum through use of videos.

### **Statement of Problem or Question**

Students in pre-service teacher education and across OSU through the DPD program are required to study about intersections of gender, race, class, sexual identity and other institutions and systems that perpetuate inequities and privilege in our society. More than ever, educators are grappling with fundamental issues of equity in responding to the global pandemic and in taking up calls for systemic change around racism. In the last decade, scholars have increasingly focused on the importance of incorporating social justice issues in teacher education curricula (Kaur, 2012; Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2016; Shelton & Barnes, 2016; Spratt & Florian, 2015). Within that literature, few studies have highlighted development of a broad array of self-empowerment tools to explore personal experiences and identity in one's teaching to provide a more meaningful education (Ergas, 2017; Kissling, 2014; Mansfield, Beltman, Broadley, & Weatherby-Fell, 2016). Some studies recognize the emotional implications of learning social justice in teacher education programs (Swanson, Rabin, Smith, Briceno, Ervin-Kassab & Sexton, 2019). There is also growing attention and recognition of the importance of body reactions and emotions in teaching and learning (Browning, 2018; Dutro & Cartun, 2016; Hunter, 2011; Reio Jr., 2005). However, existing studies fail to suggest ways to help early undergraduates in Education navigate the emotional work and build empowerment to navigate both the inner landscape and socio-political dimensions of social justice as an intentional pedagogical approach, specifically with online pedagogies.

In this study, we explore how a wholeness approach that “honors the whole of who we are as intellectual, compassionate, authentic human beings who value love, peace, democracy, community, diversity, and hope for humanity” (Rendón, 2009, p. 25) can support the learning of social justice. Mindfulness offers tools to connect with the many parts of ourselves as humans that are often left out in academics. With recent consideration of mindfulness as a tool to deal with stress and anxiety and to improve wellbeing of pre-service teachers (Birchinall, Spendlove, & Buck, 2019; Donahue-Keegan, Villegas-Reimers & Cressey, 2019; Hwang, Barlett, Greben, & Hand, 2017), researchers like Griggs and Tidwell (2015) recognize the importance of teaching mindfully in the context of graduate multicultural education. However, no direct link between mindfulness and the incorporation of social justice and multiculturalism in undergraduate teacher education has been appropriately made.

This gap in the literature is even more apparent in the online context. Given the success in face-to-face mindfulness interventions to decrease stress, anxiety, and depression, some have evaluated the feasibility of web-based mindfulness courses in achieving similar outcomes and improving mental health (Krusche, Cyhlarova, & Williams, 2013; Spijkerman, Pots, & Bohlmeijer, 2016). Other studies have investigated the efficacy of online mindfulness programs in decreasing employee stress while enhancing resiliency and well-being in the workplace (Aikens, Astin, Pelletier, Levanovich, Baase, Park, & Bodnar, 2014). However, little attention has been given to the application of mindfulness techniques in online education. With an increasing demand for virtual educational resources, and in times when stress and uncertainty prevail among undergraduate students, this study recognizes the need for effective approaches to mindfulness in online education, with a particular focus on the learning of social justice and multiculturalism.

Multicultural education can be a transformative educational experience, especially for undergraduate students during emerging adulthood and cognitive development. Many (though not all) are in emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2010), which is a transition between adolescence and adulthood. It is a time when they are exploring who they are and building complex understandings of their identities (Marcia, 1993; Quintana, 2007; Torres, et al., 2009). Many are just beginning to focus on their future profession and are being exposed to diverse populations and social justice conversations for the first time. They need to develop resources and empowerment for engaging compassionately, calmly, and thoughtfully in controversial and activating discussions of racism, sexism, and so on.

Drawing from critical race feminist epistemologies (Prieto and Villenas, 2012; Rendón, 2009), this study investigates the use of mindfulness techniques in online learning and discussing stimulating topics of multiculturalism. Results from a pilot study helped us develop an online curriculum for practicing mindfulness to help deal with the socio-emotional and inner personal work of contemplating life experiences and conversing with others around social justice and multiculturalism. With this study, we will explore the implementation of this curriculum in an online multicultural education class, and evaluate its efficacy on the students' learning experiences for future improvement. It should be noted that the authors identify as Latina and the primary investigator draws from Chicana/Latina Feminist epistemology, is certified in yoga instruction, and has extensive contemplative training.

## Planned intervention to address the problem or question

### Research Questions

- 1) How does the online mindfulness curriculum help students understand multiculturalism content?
- 2) How do aspects of online mindfulness videos help their learning in the following ways (see items a through h below)?
  - a) The mindfulness instructor
  - b) Instructor stories and personal examples
  - c) Mindfulness practices
  - d) Text connections to sources/books
  - e) Connection to content (i.e., racism/multiculturalism)
  - f) Link to future career/workplace (i.e., K12 schools)
  - g) Ideas for own health/wellness
  - h) Tools for Learning processes

### Research Design

This study focuses on the impact of mindfulness videos with online students in a multicultural education course as part of a larger project. The Social Justice and Mindfulness in Multicultural Education (SAMME) project consists of a curriculum redesign (including DPD designation) and analysis of student data to explore how to move beyond traditional approaches that center on analysis, cognition, and rationality and to include a wholeness approach to multicultural education. A pilot study (phase one) was carried out in the on-campus class during winter term of 2020 when the incorporation of mindfulness was being introduced for the second term. The mindfulness was taught face-to-face, and the Ecampus online video instruction has not yet been studied.

The proposed project will focus on Ecampus and the online video components, which were created in summer 2020. This will require an IRB modification to incorporate incentives for participation from Ecampus students. Table 1 depicts the video-based mindfulness curriculum, topics, and activities, which were designed to be taught in the Ecampus course by the primary investigator as a result of the pilot study. This proposal represents phase two of this research project, where we will study the effectiveness of the online mindfulness curriculum, so that the existing videos could be revised based on the findings of this research.

Table 1: Mindfulness Curriculum Week-by-Week (in the Videos)

Week	Topics	Exercises
1	What is Mindfulness? Equity & Empowerment through Access to Well-being	The Breath: Inhales and Exhales
2	Sitting with Discomfort & Recognizing Emotions; Staying in Difficult Conversations	Mindfulness: Body Scan and Noticing the Body

3	Integrating Mind & Body; Racial Trauma	Mindfulness: Grounding Exercises
4	Finding Strength and Resilience in the Center	Mindfulness: Centering Practices
5	Belonging: groups/Linking to Ancestors	Mindfulness: Belonging/community
6	Resiliency /Interconnection with Nature	Mindfulness: Body to be Grounded
7	Stabilizing attention; Directing Energy	Mindfulness: Attention and Energy
8	Teaching from the Heart; Practices of Self-Compassion	Mindfulness: Compassion, Heart center
9	Empowerment tools and Agency	Mindfulness: Freedom and Joy
10	Liberatory Practices	Mindfulness: Resiliency and Creativity

Phase Two: Components that are new since the pilot project (phase one) and will be studied if we receive ECRF funding:

- Mindfulness videos (developed for fall 2020)
- Ecampus-supported course redesign (developed for fall 2020)
- DPD designation (developed for fall 2020)
- Increased enrollment (as a result of the above changes, for fall 2020)

### **Project Methods**

The Ecampus section of ED 219 will be the research site for the proposed project. With an increase in student enrollment after it was added to the list of DPD courses, we anticipate that we will have 35 students every term. The expectation is that we will have a total of 105 students (35 each term) during the duration of the Ecampus research fellow program. We have already launched the mindfulness videos as part of the new curriculum of ED 219 in fall 2020, thus we hope to have resources to recruit additional participants from the Ecampus classes for this study. By adding incentives to this project, we hope to increase the number of students who will agree to participate.

Students who enroll in the Ecampus section of ED 219 will automatically be identified as potential participants. Recruitment will take place at the end of the term, when students will be asked to give consent for the use of their assignments as data. This process will be done at the end of the term to avoid interference between their willingness to participate and their evaluation in the class. Recruitment is purposely planned for the end of the term to avoid influencing the way students complete their class assignments, as well as the relationship between the students and the instructors of the classes. Recruitment will happen during the last week of classes when students will be given a link to the Qualtrics survey that will contain the consent forms they will sign if they agree to participate. Given that they will complete their class assignments regardless of their participation in this study, signing the consent form is all that participants will need to do as part of this study.

Student assignments for the course will be used and analyzed as data. The project collaborator is the current instructor for the Ecampus course, and she will be gathering data from the Canvas site after consent is given by participants at the end of the term. She will also ensure that all data comply with the level of confidentiality indicated in the IRB protocols, and take all the necessary steps before making data accessible and initiating data analysis.

As our approved IRB protocols indicate, we will identify the participants by name to determine who is giving consent for the use of their class assignments and to retrieve their assignments, but no other personal information will be collected. To protect students' privacy, each one will be given a code number which will then be used throughout the study with names removed from the data. Only coded/de-identified data will be added to the password protected BOX folder that stores the data collection. In both classes, consent will be given in an authenticated environment (Qualtrics survey) at the end of the term. The Qualtrics survey will open the last week of classes and will close at the end of the term. The instructor will not access it until it closes. The PI will be the only one with access to the consent forms and these will only be released to the rest of the team after final grades have been submitted.

Materials that support the current curriculum, such as class assignments will be analyzed carefully, but there will be no access to student education records or grades involved. Class written assignments will not be altered for the purposes of this study. Assignments will include written reflections, Canvas discussions, weekly reading reflections, final papers on their self-assessment of their learning, mid-term and end-of-term reflections on effectiveness of activities in the course, and reflections on mindfulness activities.

Class assignments are typically used to follow and evaluate students' progress in the class. Mainly composed of written assessments, they reflect the students' understanding of the class content and help the instructor to get a sense of how the class is advancing and to make any decisions in lesson plans. Therefore, all the assignments would be part of the class regardless of the study and the research question. The purpose of this study is to analyze the current videos and mindfulness curriculum to identify potential areas for pedagogical improvement.

For the primary sources of data about mindfulness, we will ask questions to investigate the students' perspectives on how mindfulness supports their learning in the class. Data will come from weekly reflection assignments, and the midterm evaluation. Students will have to answer the following questions:

- 1) Reflection: What self-awareness and concepts did you learn in mindfulness practice this week and their connection to multiculturalism? Also please discuss or tell a story about a specific aspect of mindfulness videos that made an impact this week (e.g., instructor, personal stories, meditative practices, texts, multicultural content, future career links, health/wellness, learning).

2) Evaluation: How have the mindfulness videos we have been doing in this class helped you to engage in this course?

### **Intended project outcomes**

In this project, we will be answering the research questions stated above to understand the role of mindfulness videos on online student learning. We will focus on the data collected from the reflection and evaluation assignments to describe how mindfulness shapes online students' learning of multiculturalism. We intend to analyze curricular aspects of online mindfulness videos in order to continually improve, therefore benefitting future Ecampus students in this course and beyond.

### **A plan for evaluation and measurement of outcomes**

Research on student evaluations and on reflection assignments will document how students perceive the usefulness and value of mindfulness. Coding and analysis will center on each of the research questions and project outcomes. Multiple investigators will participate in the coding and analysis.

Coding and analysis involves various rounds and iterations to specifically understand students' perspectives on mindfulness, content, videos, and their learning processes.

For data analysis, we will follow a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014) to construct a logically consistent set of inductive themes around the data. Consistent with the principles for building grounded theory, a constant comparative method will be used throughout the analysis of the data, relying on reiterative readings of the data to develop categories and analytic codes. During initial coding, fragments of the data will be analyzed line by line. A similar process will guide a focused coding of the data until reaching theoretical saturation. Analytic note taking will be used to explain and articulate theories that will emerge and to recall previous iterations of analysis. To focus on theorizing around the data, the themes and categories that will be developed during the analysis will guide a postponed literature review.

### **Systematic Coding**

**Phase 1 Coding:** The first reading and coding of the data involve a broad lens directly tied to the research questions, with codes such as: multicultural content, learning processes, components of pedagogical videos, and developing self-awareness. Given the nature of the data (i.e., student assignments posted on Canvas), this phase will primarily include word-by-word and line-by-line coding. Larger entries may involve coding by incidents, which are bigger chunks of data. While coding may begin as initial coding for topics and themes, they may morph into coding for actions and processes. This phase also involves collaborative work across team members to discuss our interpretations, refine analysis, and nuance the coding scheme.

**Phase 2 Coding:** The second phase of coding takes a more focused approach. Coding software (Dedoose) allows the researchers to count the number of instances of each code, count the number of participants who had their excerpts marked with each code, and count the overlaps when excerpts are multiply coded. This analysis also highlights the outlier or non-fitting data that should be examined. By counting, our team can determine how codes are weighted across participants and as represented across the data set. Counting is one way that we will determine dominance of codes and patterns. We will also

undertake axial coding in which we look at relationships across codes, trying to understand how some codes may be a major or minor category. We will develop a coding tree in which we come to understand the overarching patterns and the sub-patterns. Axial coding demonstrates the texture of the dataset, i.e., what is readily visible, what is more hidden, and how patterns overlap and fit together. Another way to determine importance and texture is through theoretical coding in which we analyze our coding scheme with what's available in the literature and how it synergizes with theoretical understanding of other scholars' works. This is the final iteration in this phase so that our team is deeply immersed in our own data and collaboratively constructs our own "unique" understanding of our data before linking to extant literature. This phase also involves regular collaborative work and meetings with the researchers to cross-check, uncover biases, and develop insights together.

Through various phases of analyses including memo-writing, regular collaborative team meetings, and revisits with the data, we will refine the coding schemes and understandings of the data to be able to make assertions in response to our research questions about how online mindfulness videos impacted students' learning, understanding of multicultural content, and the role of the pedagogical tool itself.

### **Alignment with OSU's Strategic Plan**

This project specifically addresses the following OSU goals:

1. Faculty actively engaged in public scholarship and outreach
2. Graduates' preparation to work effectively in a diverse society and as global citizens
  - Equity in access and achievement among learners from diverse backgrounds
  - Delivery of innovative curricula by faculty who are recognized for excellence in teaching and research
3. Demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice

This project and its intended outcomes align with the university's distinctive focus on academic excellence in all aspects of learning, discovery and engagement. More than ever, with current events of COVID19 and Black Lives protests, the content of Multicultural Education is essential for undergraduates who aspire to be educators and to fulfill baccalaureate core requirements. We must take seriously the need for tools to support this difficult work with undergraduates as they develop their emergent cognitive capacities and future professions. Traditional approaches to multicultural education do not pay attention to the emotional aspects of learning about social justice and discussing challenging topics while exploring oneself. The need for wholeness approaches, as is the case of mindfulness in this course, bridges a gap in the empirical literature to study (1) online modalities for teaching mindfulness and use of videos, and (2) the integration of social justice, emerging adult development, and socio-emotional tools for the well-being of aspiring teachers and their future K-12 students. We intend for this study and its findings to show the effectiveness of online mindfulness (via videos) in multicultural education and to provide suggestions for its implementation in other content areas.

### **A plan for sharing the outcomes of the research with the OSU community and external audiences**

The results of this study are intended to benefit online teaching and learning with different content areas. We explore how online videos can deliver curriculum such as mindfulness that typically has been delivered face-to-face. We will share the outcomes of this research with the OSU community and

external audiences, hoping that our results from studying online videos of mindfulness as a tool to learn course content will be insightful in other areas and benefit a wide range of online students.

- 1) Online Learning Consortium (OLC)  
The Online Learning Consortium (OLC) sponsors two annual conferences devoted to furthering the OLC mission of creating community and knowledge around quality online, blended, and digital learning while driving innovation. These conferences are known as premiere gatherings for faculty, instructional designers, administrators and others who teach or support those who teach in online and blended learning. With flexibility to adapt to the COVID-19 situation, our tentative plan is to present at either OLC Accelerate in October, 2021 (Washington, DC), or at OLC Innovate in March, 2022 (location tbd).

#### *Online Learning Journal (OLJ)*

The Online Learning Journal (OLJ) is an open, peer-reviewed, quarterly journal. Selected articles from presentations at OLC are included in this journal every year, and there is also a regular submission process. Following our presentation at OLC, we will submit our article for publication in this journal.

- 2) Ecampus Faculty Forum  
We also plan to participate and present our study and results with the OSU community at the Ecampus Faculty Forum in 2022.

There are a number of teacher education journals that we will also target to disseminate findings such as *Journal of Teacher Education*, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, and *Multicultural Perspectives*.

#### **Project timeline**

Winter 2021: Finish IRB modifications; Budget adjustments Spring 2021: Data collection

Summer 2021: Data analysis

Fall 2021: Simultaneous data collection and analysis Winter 2022 Simultaneous data collection and analysis

Spring 2022 Data analysis; dissemination to journals and conferences Summer 2022 Data analysis; dissemination to journals and conferences

#### **Project budget** (see separate Excel spreadsheet)

#### **Collaborators integral to the project's success**

- (1) Kathryn McIntosh, PhD, Associate Professor, College of Education, Language Equity and ESOL/Bilingual Programs: Dr. McIntosh will serve as the Principal Investigator and has been at OSU for 15 years conducting research and teaching. She has taught widely in the areas of social justice, equity, critical pedagogy, and language/literacy education, and she is certified in yoga, mindfulness, and contemplative practices. She is responsible for leading both the research and teaching efforts and for ensuring the ethics and IRB compliance of the study.
- (2) Raisa Canete Blazquez, PhD Candidate, College of Education, Language Equity and Education Policy: Raisa has been at OSU conducting research and teaching for six years. She has taught and participated in course development in the Spanish department, and more recently in Education. In her transition to online teaching, Raisa has completed several Ecampus trainings and workshops. She has been actively involved in research projects for the redesign of ED 219 to meet the requirements for a DPD course, and the Ecampus course development that resulted from that.

Each study team member is qualified to safely and appropriately conduct the activities described above. In



addition to completing required trainings, such as CiTi, they all have previous experience in related college class activities and content, both in terms of teaching and research practices, to be able to participate in this project and the activities involved. Both team members will have access to data (once consent is given), will analyze data, prepare reports and disseminate findings. Both team members will have access to the password-protected BOX folder where data will be kept.

**A letter of support from your department head or equivalent** (please see separate submission)

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