

## SPONSORING DEPARTMENT AND COLLEGE 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 paper studies *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 specific 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 show 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 inequity 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.

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 (Birchinal, 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, and has extensive contemplative training.

## **PLANNED INTERVENTION TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM OR QUESTION**

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- 1) How does online mindfulness help students' understand multiculturalism content ?
- 2) How do aspects of online mindfulness videos help their learning in specific ways?
  - 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

## PROJECT METHODS

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 was 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 were analyzed line by line. A similar process guided 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 earlier iterations of analysis. To focus on theorizing around the data, the themes and categories developed during the analysis will guide a postponed literature review.

## 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. Table 1 shows the number of participants in 2019-2020, and the class and study enrollment for each term.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

	On-Campus		E-campus		TOTAL	
	Consented	Enrolled	Consented	Enrolled	Consented	Enrolled
Fall 2019	8	53	4	27	12	80
Winter 2020	20	54	6	24	26	78
Spring 2020	15	29	6	31	21	60
Fall 2020		70		36		66
<b>TOTAL</b>	43	206	16	118	59	324

The pilot study 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. Table 2 depicts the mindfulness curriculum, topics, and activities, which were taught by the primary investigator. The mindfulness was taught face-to-face and the online video instruction has not yet been studied.

TABLE 2: MINDFULNESS CURRICULUM WEEK-BY-WEEK

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

For data collection, which is ongoing and has IRB approval, we asked questions to investigate the students' perspectives on how it supports their learning in the class. Data came from a reflection assignment, and the midterm evaluation. Students had 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**

To understand the role of mindfulness on online student learning.

To describe how mindfulness shapes online students' learning of multiculturalism.

To analyze curricular aspects of online mindfulness videos in order to continually improve.

### **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.

### **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 it 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.

### **PROJECT TIMELINE**

Winter 2021: Finish IRB modifications + data collection; 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** →including separate Excel spreadsheet.

**Total grant amount requested:** \$22,893.42

#### **Explanation:**

1. Principal Investigator Summer Pay (1 month), Kathryn McIntosh: \$9,183

Since the PI is a 9-month faculty, summer funding is needed to analyze data, write reports, disseminate findings, and seek further funding. This funding is for summer 2022 for analyzing the year of data, and for planning to scale up the project for external funding efforts.

2. Grant Administrator, Spring and Summer 2021, Raisa Canete Blazquez: \$8120

Administrator is needed in the first two terms of the project to organize data, conduct analysis, write reports, disseminate findings, and plan for future iterations of the project. Spring 2021 funding will cover 0.19 FTE that will be added onto an instructor

position in the college to teach the course under study. Summer 2021 funding will cover 0.4 FTE for work on the research.

3. Fringe Benefits for both positions: \$4015.42

OPE for the principal investigator for summer total \$3122.22. OPE for the grant administrator for both terms total \$893.20.

4. Participant incentives: \$1575

Each participant (n=105) during data collection will receive an e-Gift Card to a bookstore such as Amazon. This will encourage an increased number of students to consent to participate. Previously, numbers of Ecampus students who consent to participate have been low per term (e.g., n=6) and an incentive would help us obtain a larger data set for study.

**How funds will be dispersed:**

The funding for the FTE will go to the College of Education (index to be determined) and the college's administration will work with the Business Center to do the payroll.

The college will purchase the gift cards then the grant reimburses for the ones that are used; each term we will purchase a portion of gift cards.

**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.

**A letter of support from your department head or equivalent** → submitted separately

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