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Ashley N. Gibson
Baylor University, ashley_gibson1@baylor.edu

Brooke Blevins
Baylor University, brooke_blevins@baylor.edu

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Ashley N. Gibson, Baylor University
Brooke Blevins, Baylor University

"In a fractal conception, I am a cell-sized unit of the human organism, and I have to use my life to leverage a shift in the system by how I am, as much as with the things I do. This means actually being in my life, and it means bringing my values into my daily decision making. Each day should be lived on purpose."–Adrienne Maree Brown (2017, p. 54)

In academic spaces, mentorship is an important part of the learning journey, for both the mentor and their protégé. This paper is a unique account of an instance where a mentor and mentee engage in a reciprocal learning exchange concerning a microaggression. In many cases, reciprocal mentorship relationships require both parties to understand and value that power, accountability, and learning experiences are shared. In this paper, my mentor and I share how we handled a microaggression with the hope that our interaction might become a "model of possibility" in a framework for not only mentorship relationships, but also confronting microaggressions in ways that build authentic learning communities and proactively dismantle social inequities (hooks, 1994, p. 131).

The phenomenon of culturally relevant practices in the virtual classroom space is an emerging and intriguing topic in education. Eventually, there will be multiple entry points in the discourse community around how the COVID-19 pandemic challenges educators to consider equitable teaching and learning modes, both in K–12 spaces and higher education. The challenges of virtual schooling only exacerbate areas of social injustices and inequities that require our attentiveness and critical awareness as educators. Microaggressions are one of those areas. In our "call out" and "cancel" culture, it is common to publicly dismiss someone based on a previous offense (Matei, 2019). But "calling in" requires a lot more vulnerability than public exposure without private communication. Based on my restorative ethic, research, and work in equity and justice spaces with diverse groups, I have learned and know how to effectively "call in" a friend or a colleague (Amstutz, 2005; Jones & Armour, 2013; Olstad & Miller, 2012; Payne & Welch, 2015; Zehr, 2002). When I think about the exchange that took place between Dr. Blevins and myself, Brown's (2017) words resonate with me. In order to create a larger impact through actions, I decided to reach out to my doctoral advisor and call her "in" as opposed to "out" on a microaggression known as erasure.

Erasure is a form of microaggression that involves silencing marginalized voices. In many cases, as was the case with Dr. Blevins, erasure can often be a subconscious act in academic spaces. As an emerging scholar in my field, I consider it an act of antiracism for educators to locate how they dismiss or silence the voices of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). The following discussion details the story of how Dr. Blevins and I navigated the offense of erasure together and how we grew from that challenging moment. First, I will give my account, and then Dr. Blevins will share her perspective. We hope that the story of our experience with microaggressions in higher education can serve to provide language and models of possibility for educators and educational leaders.

Student Perspective

In May of 2020, we were supposed to be looking forward to our second on-campus

immersion as the first online EdD cohort at Baylor University. However, with COVID-19 restrictions, the program leadership knew that an in-person gathering would not be possible, and so we were looking forward to an online immersion experience where we would present our research designs and methodologies, and receive feedback from our advisory committee and peers. At the time these events took place, I was just entering my sixth term as a doctoral student in Baylor's online EdD program. In that term, we continued to work with our assigned faculty advisor to complete Chapter 3 of our Problem of Practice (PoP) Dissertation. My advisor, the second author, and two other faculty advisors led us through the PoP II course and guided us through the writing of our Chapter 3: Methodology. Dr. Blevins is someone whom my cohort mates and I admired and looked to for guidance as we wrote our PoP Dissertation. I was particularly eager to learn about what this would look like for my own work, and I had maintained communication with Dr. Blevins in the months leading up to our PoP coursework. Dr. Blevins was not merely my advisor; she was also one of the lead professors in our program, and she was one of my first professors when I began the Baylor doctoral program. She has probably read my work and gotten to know me as an emerging scholar better than anyone in the program. Based on these interactions, we had grown close in our mentorship relationship, and I valued that connection with her and looked to her as a future colleague.

At the beginning of the summer term, our cohort of about 43 doctoral students met during a live synchronous session the first six weeks of the PoP course. We utilized Zoom as our method for live class sessions, so as a cohort we tended to be chatty, familial, and friendly with one another in the Zoom chat and during the live class time. Our advisors, three experienced professors in the Baylor University School of Education, all encouraged, empowered, and guided us through the various stages of writing our PoP dissertations. Still, as a Black woman experiencing the doctoral journey at a predominately White institution, I am constantly aware of the presence of unconscious biases, as well as the ways in which I am overlooked or undermined in the pursuit of a terminal degree. I remain vigilant in my disruption of social inequities because things happen in learning communities that point sharply to how inequitably our society and systems are built. Disrupting microaggressions provides us with experience in using precise language for confronting subtle forms of oppression. The act of accurately naming inequitable encounters with a restorative and reciprocal approach means that we have an opportunity to address the offense, and still remain in accountable and loving communities with one another. This is what critical theorists refer to as theorizing that leads to social action. The dialogical act of addressing microaggressions amongst members in community is an act of consciousness-raising. Critically conscious dialogical engagement with one another is a social activity that helps dismantle outdated ways of being and cooperating, leads to collective change, and produces libration (Alejano-Steele et al., 2011; Allen, 2004; Bartolomé, 2004; Bell, 1995; Hill-Collins, 2019; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

As for the specific microaggressions, on two separate occasions in our evening PoP live sessions, I felt Dr. Blevins had inadvertently committed erasure of my contributions. I have since forgotten the exact moment in class, or what it was I said. I only remember how I felt. I was not angry, only curious. The benefit of constantly policing my own facial expressions, emotions, and mannerisms as a Black

woman, is that I have become more introspective about how I respond to a singular event. I knew all about "calling in" friends and family, but I never thought I would ever be bold enough to call in someone I consider my academic superior. I felt it was a good opportunity for Dr. Blevins and I to make sense of what happened; to make meaning for both of us in the future. As an experienced restorative practice facilitator, I make inquiry my primary habit of mind. I begin by questioning myself, and I decide how to proceed from there. Before emailing Dr. Blevins, I also asked a trusted classmate what she thought, and we both agreed it would be beneficial to act on a "calling in." So I drafted an email to her after class that evening and shared my concerns.

In my email to Dr. Blevins, I shared that based on our relationship as advisor/professor and advisee, I felt comfortable sharing with her how I experienced the EdD program as a Black woman in a virtual classroom space. I did not claim to speak for every BIPOC in this program, nor did I claim to have any superior knowledge or wisdom. What I wanted most for both of us was to share a difficult truth that could potentially shape future interactions between faculty and BIPOC students and, in turn, benefit us, my peers, and faculty in the program. Part of my email read:

> *I shared something tonight in the chat that sparked a convo around reflexivity. Afterward, I noticed that when you shared ideas in response to my thoughts, that you did not credit me, but when another classmate shared a similar thought you thanked him. The thoughts I shared were generalized as part of the overall chat. It makes sense that we may not think about what folks say in the chat as being worth many distinctions—it's such an informal form of discourse. This is why this virtual learning is such an interesting paradigm shift ... (BTW—I am not upset, but I think this is fascinating, and the kind of awareness that can help the EDD program, and BU SOE press forward when it comes to CRP, etc.) However, to use more robust and racially critical terms, these are the sorts of microaggressions, erasure, and unconscious biases that BIPOC faces all the time; the subtleties we pick up on (even without being able to articulate them) and are perhaps worth considering in virtual spaces as much as they are B&M spaces.*

At the time it felt right to be as forthcoming and transparent as I could, and also to lay the most genuine foundation possible for our future as colleagues. I also decided that I wanted to welcome Dr. Blevins as not only an ally in racial justice, but also as a co-conspirator in the process of addressing unconscious biases that manifest in academic spaces (Love, 2019; Wall, 2016). When Dr. Blevins responded to my email, her response reflected receptivity, and the capacity to decenter herself to validate my concerns. The vulnerability in Dr. Blevins's candor confirmed my belief that I had chosen the right way forward. Based on the authenticity in our interaction, I invited Dr. Blevins to offer her perspective on our exchange.

Advisor Perspective

In 2018, Baylor launched our EdD in Learning and Organizational Change (EdD LOC) program. Quickly, the EdD LOC became one of the largest online programs on campus. In addition, the EdD LOC was the most diverse program on campus with over 60% BIPOC, a marked difference from

the University student demographics as a whole (64% White). Despite our diverse student population, as in most institutions of higher education, the Baylor EdD faculty were largely White. As the chair of the department and a lead faculty member in the program, I am painfully aware of the demographic divide between our student population and faculty. Teaching in the EdD program and working with such a beautifully diverse group of students has been one of the highlights of my career. As a result of my work in this program, I have been encouraged, challenged, and stretched in so many new ways. I have grown as an educator, leader, and mentor because of my interactions with the students in our program, including with Ashley. Ashley was a student in the first class I taught in the EdD program, Issues in Diversity. From the beginning, I was impressed with Ashley's deep knowledge of theory and practice in the field of equity, diversity, and inclusion. Ashley was already well versed in many of the ideas we read and discussed in class, but she was always excited to continue to grow and learn. Ashley became an encouragement to me at a time when I was new to online teaching and was worried about how to translate the difficult and sometimes controversial conversations associated with this course into an online space. I remember feeling elated when Ashley told me that she loved the way the content of the course had been "curated." These words of affirmation from a Black woman who was well versed in the content of the course are ones I will never forget. Two semesters later, I had the privilege of becoming Ashley's dissertation advisor, a role in which I continue to serve at this writing.

When I received the email Ashley sent after class that evening, I was immediately heartbroken that Ashley felt silenced in class. At the same time, I was so grateful that Ashley was willing to share her concerns with me. In responding to Ashley, I wrote:

> *Thank you for sharing!! I am glad you can reach out and feel like I will be receptive. I am always in a state of becoming, so I am grateful for you continuing to help me grow. I certainly didn't mean to commit erasure or neglect your comment. To be honest I wasn't reading the chat when I was talking about reflexivity, it was only when people were leaving the conversation tonight that I scrolled back through and saw your comment about the hermeneutic cycle and reflexivity — and I was like oh wow, I got it right according to Ashley. I apologize that I did not see your comment when I was talking to be able to give you a shout out. My goal is always to affirm my students in their thinking and great ideas and I apologize that I was not able to do that for you. I'll work to do better. But please, continue to speak up! I also realize that's much easier said than done. It's so hard in this big space. It's asking a lot of people—especially people who already are marginalized in academic spaces. We are all becoming and all figuring out how to make this process more humane and life giving. Thanks for bringing this to my attention. And please know it wasn't intentional. And that I will certainly work to do better in the future.*

Ashley's vulnerability in sharing her experience and calling me in was so important for our relationship. It opened up a space for a shared dialogue in which I could be equally vulnerable in sharing my missteps and lack of awareness. Her explicit confrontation of this microaggression caused me to reflect deeply on my own

power and privilege and the ways that I may unintentionally silence my students or commit acts of erasure. As Ashley's doctoral advisor, professor, and the chair of the department, it is imperative that I continually reflect on the way that my positionality may create unequal power relationships that lead to microaggressions.

Discussion and Conclusion

In sharing our story, our hope is that we can explain the unique power dynamics that exist between advisor and mentee, but also provide a hopeful possibility for addressing microaggressions in a way that leads to conscious raising and restoration. While advising/mentoring can serve as an impetus for deep, personal change, in some cases, mentorship may reflect imbalanced relationships of power (Haring, 1999). However, through critically conscious reflection and ongoing dialogue, like the one described above, this advising/mentoring relationship may be humanizing, reflexive, and reciprocal in nature (Freire, 1970).

A critically conscious reciprocal approach to mentoring focuses on how traditional power dynamics between mentors and mentees can be broken through dialogical and reflexive practices. A critically conscious reciprocal mentoring relationship positions the mentor and mentee as co-constructors of reality, encourages creativity, promotes critical thinking, and cultivates critical reflection and action through genuine care (Burbules, 1993; Freire, 1970; Noddings, 1984; Talbert et al., 2020; Wall, 2016; Wetzel et al., 2017). Freire notes, "I engage in dialogue because I recognize the social and not merely the individualistic character of the process of knowing. In this sense, dialogue presents itself as an indispensable component of the process of both learning and knowing" (as cited in Freire & Macedo, 1995, p. 379). As such, dialogical encounters are essential in building solidarity among involved parties and cultivating critically conscious reciprocal relationships (Magill et al., 2019; Wall, 2016). The dialogical experience described above was essential in building solidarity between Ashley and Dr. Blevins. This experience was only possible because of the reflexivity of both parties and their willingness and vulnerability to engage in difficult conversations. Reflexivity is the ongoing process of examining one's own beliefs, assumptions, and actions and how these influence our experiences and relationships in the world. A reflexive and reciprocal mentor-mentee relationship is one that utilizes problem-posing, dialogic, and consciousness–raising practices to disrupt a one-sided, banking model of relation (Freire, 1970). Critical conscious reciprocal mentoring relationships work to transform dialogue from the individual and toward the collective (Talbert et al., 2020; Wall, 2016; Wetzel et al., 2017); however, critically conscious reciprocal mentoring relationships are not the norm, nor are they easily cultivated. Rather, the qualities essential for these relationships are taught, shared, learned, and consciously cultivated through the context of various mentoring relationships (Sugimoto, 2012; Wall, 2016). Through restorative practices. including shared dialogue and vulnerability, we represent two people who are working to live each day with purpose by bringing our values into daily decision making and using our lives to leverage a shift in the system (Brown, 2017).

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