Example Case (Video)

● You are a GTA for an introductory biology course. It is week 3 of the fall term, and the day before your Wednesday class a critical racial incident takes place on campus. A Corvallis community member published a series of offensive and threatening tweets aimed at students of color and international students at Oregon State. Over the past 24 hours, several response threads containing racist and anti-immigrant sentiments have emerged. Campus safety officials have determined the threats of physical harm are not credible, but the tweets remain a campus-wide topic of discussion.

● As you set up for your class, 6 students of color are engaged in discussion about the tweets. It is clear to you that the students are distressed. As they process, more students arrive and join the discussion. Several students of color, while sharing their fears and related stories, begin to cry. Simultaneously, several white students assert that the tweets are an empty threat and advise their peers to just ignore the tweets, and the problem will go away. The white students’ comments are met with frustration and disbelief.

● When you call the classes’ attention, and begin your lesson, several students of color raise their hand and ask to continue the dialogue. One white student re-asserts that dialogue is pointless, and that the class should ignore the tweets and move on.

● You are unsure of what to do. You question your ability to facilitate dialogue for your students, and feel pressure to keep pace with the demands of the curriculum and course plan.
Practice Case (Training)

- You are a graduate teaching assistant for an undergraduate chemistry lab. The chemistry lab meets once each week for 2 hours, and is designed for active learning. In addition hands-on individual and team projects, each lab includes large group discussion. For each lab discussion, you are provided 3-4 questions by your supervising instructor to initiate reflection. However, discussions are open-ended and students are encouraged to pose and discuss their own questions.

- You have been leading the lab for 5 weeks, and have enjoyed facilitating both the in-class activities and the group discussions. The class seems lively, and conversations seem to flow naturally. At your midterm review, following a formal observation of your teaching, your instructor points out to you gender disparities in class participation. As you discuss, you recognize that activities and discussion are disproportionately filled with men’s voices. Your class is evenly divided between students who identify as men, and students who identify as women. However, 90% of class discussion is comprised of men’s voices.

- With this feedback, you commit to observing your class more closely for patterns of participation related to gender. During your next lab, in addition to a disparity in women’s participation you notice that women who do speak are frequently interrupted, dismissed, or argued with. You attempt to invite new voices. Questions like “Are there any other thoughts?” and “Let’s hear from someone who hasn’t spoken yet?” do not seem to shift the conversation.

- After the lab ends, you are unsure of what to do. You gather with a group of your graduate assistant colleagues to share ideas and deliberate next steps.
Case Analysis (Facilitator Guide)

- **Step 1: Identify biases or inequities**
  - We see that participation in the learning environment is not equitable as the learning outcomes are connected to active engagement with activities and discussion.
  - We also see that women are being marginalized in the classroom, and their participation is being obstructed by the voices of others.

- **Step 2: Take stock of various perspectives**
  - Our impacted students, women and others who may struggle to actively participate.
  - Our students who are actively participating, and who are doing so out of enthusiasm for their own experience and learning.
  - Ourselves, and how these patterns make us feel and how they connect to our own histories with teaching and learning.

- **Step 3: Consider possible challenges and opportunities**
  - Challenges …
    - Our capacity and comfort to broach the conversation and name this pattern, and the our anxiety regarding the risks associated with our mistakes.
    - The pattern may not be clear to the students, or the students may not take issue with the pattern.
  - Opportunities …
    - Opening dialogue could cultivate greater connection, rapport, and engagement.
    - Addressing the pattern could air tension in the classroom, and make room for women’s voices.
    - Addressing the pattern could create a moment of self reflection for students who are using a majority of the air-time in class.
    - This is a moment to learn new facilitation skills - which serves to improve equity in the classroom and help us grow as effective teachers.

- **Step 4: Imagine equitable and just outcomes**
  - Each student receives what they need physically, emotionally, and intellectually to productively engage in their classroom learning experience.
  - Each student feels heard and included.

- **Step 5: Brainstorm immediate-term solutions**
  - Explore and implement new ways for soliciting participation.
  - Name and discuss the pattern you see with the class.
  - Connect one on one with individuals who may be showing up in particularly unproductive ways.
  - Connect one on one with individuals who you would like to see participate more in class, and share how much you value their perspective and contributions.

- **Step 6: Brainstorm long-term solutions**
  - For future terms …
    - Examine and re-evaluation the course design.
    - Examine and re-evaluation assessment strategies, specifically the value and assessment of in class participation.
    - Examine and restructure methods for participation.
    - Examine and redesign syllabus guidelines and expectations.
    - Establish group norms and shared expectations for participation in week 1.
    - Get involved in clubs, organizations, and activities related to the advancement of women in STEM - learn, acquire strategies, and build relationships.

- **Step 7: Craft a plan of action**
  - Let’s see what our students come up with …
Discussion Questions

- What are the equity implications of one gender dominating airtime in class activities and discussion?
- How do the gender dynamics in this classroom reflect gender dynamics in our larger society?
  - What responsibility does a teacher have to confront those dynamics?
  - What could be at teachers potential impact?

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