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Recitation Reflection 1

Getting to know my new group of mentees during the first two weeks of recitation, I am pleased that the participation has been mostly balanced between the group members, though I know that I can continue to develop the quieter group members and harness the more talkative ones. Starting out the first week, I was a bit frustrated with a group member as he mumbled negative comments about our ice breaker activity while sitting right next to me. Even so, I tried to keep the tone of the group light and positive as I learned a little bit more about each group member before moving into the group discussion.

As the group discussed their individual definitions, I asked one group member to volunteer to take down the key points of each definition to make the starting point for the collaborative definition much easier. This part of the discussion went smoothly. Most students enjoyed debating the wording and the aspects of the definition they deemed necessary to include. During the discussion, we had only one small spat where we had one group member, the same one who made negative comments earlier, who seemed to want to argue just for the sake of argument. Despite everyone explicitly saying that they agreed with his point, he continued to push it to the point where multiple members of the group interrupted him to reiterate that they agreed and wanted to include it in the definition. I do not understand completely why he felt the need to continue to argue and dominate this part of the conversation, though he seemed to calm down after this was resolved and continued to contribute to the discussion.

An additional challenge I have identified thus far in working with this group is engaging a particular student who introduced himself to me by saying that he wanted to be able to leave early in order to make it to his next class. Throughout the entire discussion, he was very quiet and I noticed that he was paying more attention to a different class’s blackboard page than the discussion. He contributed some small aspects to the definition with prompting, but I was disappointed that he was so distracted during the group’s otherwise lively and informative deliberations.

At the end of the first recitation, I decided that my goal for the rest of the semester is to foster a more positive and inclusive environment for discussions. Most of the group readily contributes their thoughts and ideas, but there are two or three who can dominate the discussion at times, turning it into a dialogue between the louder group members. I want to develop these more active members to ask and listen before contributing everything that comes to mind. I plan to do this by assigning these members jobs such as recorder which forces them to listen to others and monitor the discussion consistently. I believe that this is more effective than going to quieter members and asking them to contribute more. Being one of the more shy members of a group at times, I know that it is more intimidating to be put on the spot by a mentor to contribute my ideas than to be asked a question by a peer. Additionally, I hope to be an advocate for the quieter members. If I see someone who has not contributed to the group yet but looks like they are trying to add their thoughts, I will ask the rest of the group to stop and listen to make sure that everyone feels that they are heard by the whole group.

Going into the second recitation, I was excited to be able to implement my ideas with the group and have a new discussion, but was quickly disappointed when nearly half of the group indicated that they had not watched *Wounds of Waziristan*. Thus, we had multiple people who could not contribute fully. Most of them worked to add to and respond to others’ ideas but the same group member who did not contribute much during the first recitation sat quietly again and seemed to remove himself from the group, despite my prompting to respond to the ideas presented.

Despite the initial setback, the group jumped into the blog post task with much enthusiasm. Though very little was finished prior to the end of class, they had created a thorough outline of their ideas and had a plan to finish the rest. We all planned to meet the next evening.

Exiting class, I was very happy to have one of the members who had not watched the correct movie (he watched *Four Lions* instead) come to me and ask how he can make up for the mix-up. I explained to him that the main purpose of this is collaboration, so as long as he comes to class prepared and participates fully in the group discussions, he will be successful in this class. He had done a very good job in contributing his ideas the first week, so I told him that if he carried on like that, he would be fine.

The next evening, I attended the group’s meeting. Members had to come and go but everyone showed up and contributed at some point, which pleased me. One of the members used his free time to write a rough draft for the group based on the outline created to make the starting point as a group easier. The group was civil in its discussion and worked hard to edit and add to the draft. I was disappointed that the member who has contributed least throughout the recitation could only stay for a few minutes, but the member who had come to me after class stayed for a while and was very active in the discussion. I was glad to be able to sit to the side and watch as they debated wording and concepts. I did not have to ask anyone to contribute or answer questions about the assignment

Overall, I am very proud of this group. The vast majority of them come to class informed and ready to engage in a productive discussion. They are working to become better students and I know that they are learning from each other. My goal for the rest of the semester is to become more and more irrelevant with each week. I plan to also be more active in communicating to the group what the assignments are prior to each class so that there is no confusion or excuse for someone to come unprepared again. Before next week’s recitation, I also want to ask a more active group member to step into the recorder roll and ask them to ensure that everyone is being included in the discussion in the hopes that I can get the group to start developing and evolving early on.