**BACKGROUND**

Students of public health need to be prepared for the challenges of controversial topics that come up such as:

- reproductive rights
- racism
- sexism
- gun control
- immigration
- safe injection sites
- LGBTQ rights

Students, faculty and institutions are often unprepared and unwilling to open difficult and controversial topics up for debate in the classroom.

1. Students feel afraid of speaking up about their experiences
2. Faculty feel unprepared and fearful of mentioning topics and upsetting students
3. Institutions sometimes will offer training for faculty to mitigate these issues

**METHODS**

- We conducted nine qualitative interviews with Jefferson College of Population Health (JCPH) faculty who teach MPH courses
- Research team developed a codebook based on open coding
- Interviews with faculty were conducted in August & September 2019, they were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim and coded using NVivo12
- Interview guide brought up the following points:
  - training to teach higher education
  - what topics have been the cause of conflict in the classroom
  - strategies on managing difficult conversations in the classroom
  - use of trigger warnings
  - suggestions for training
  - What they appreciate about Jefferson and the JCPH team
- Emergent codes were organized into thematic categories

**RESULTS**

**Training to Teach**

“We were thrown to the wolves to teach in graduate school. That was considered the model. When there was a class that needed to be filled, they just asked them to teach this class. That’s how I learned to teach.”

“A presenter was discussing sexual assault and I had a student get really upset, so they had to excuse themselves and I took them out in the hallway, and said you can stay, you can leave, its not gonna effect your grade, you can take your time out here...”

“One example that I used was from the NYPD stop and frisk database. Can we figure out what’s happening based off of data? Definitely was emotional for some students. Usually the discussion is lively but the room was quiet. A couple students got up and left the room.”

“I came here in part, because it is a teaching institution and it's somewhere where teaching is valued. And so we have a whole center for teaching and learning. They have a brochure of workshops that faculty from across the university can sign up for.”

“I like the personal touch here. We've been lucky, classes are very small. You get to really know the students, and that really helps. You can kind of get to know where everybody, we can provide a lot more individualized attention.”

“I think that program director savvily has most if not all people adjuncts before they're hired full time and so that's a pathway to ensure that they're capable of educating well”

**Examples Shared by Faculty**

**DISCUSSION & LIMITATIONS**

- A lot of effort is put in by the MPH department director and the faculty to sharpen the faculty education skills
- Many faculty said their introduction to teaching was in graduate school with no training and some faculty sought out their own formal training while other benefited from informal training from peers
- Most faculty showed a strong interest and passion for successfully teaching students about these difficult topics
- The department director was mentioned in several interviews and is possibly the reason/inspiration for faculty interest in educational trainings
- Limitations
  - Interviews were conducted by a current JCPH student which may have made faculty hesitant to share personal stories or struggles as an educator
- Only one coder

**NEXT STEPS**

1. Interview students for their perspectives
2. Create space for more group faculty discussions
3. Faculty peer observations and debriefing
4. Increased awareness on student body and student needs
5. 2 required trainings per year for all faculty
6. Recreate this study in other MPH programs and social science higher education programs

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