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# Managing "Hot Moments" in Diverse Classrooms for Inclusive and Equitable Campuses

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Abstract: Classrooms are fundamental components of university campuses. The creation of inclusive and equitable campus environments is incumbent upon the teachers who need to navigate through "hot moments", which typically refers to situations or incidents that generate intense emotions or strong reactions among the students or between the students and teachers. The literature suggests that many "hot moments" occur due to microaggressions in the classroom and that issues of difference, power, and privilege underlie "hot moments". Based on qualitative research done with university teachers in a Dutch institution, our research shows that teacher-described "hot moments" can be analyzed under three interrelated dimensions: individual, interactional, and institutional. We suggest educators and higher education policy makers read through these experiences as a way to better understand the challenges their colleagues face, most often alone as the classroom's leader; in the hope of advancing change efforts to create more inclusive and equitable class environments which will change how minoritized students experience university education.

Keywords: inclusion; education; minoritized students; hot moments; inclusive campuses



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## 1. Introduction

Classrooms are fundamental components of university campuses. Universities typically have dedicated buildings or facilities that house classrooms where students attend lectures, discussions, and other academic activities. These classrooms serve as spaces for formal instruction, where professors deliver lectures, conduct interactive sessions, and engage in teaching and learning activities with students. While technological advancements have expanded the possibilities of remote learning, classrooms remain vital on university campuses due to the unique benefits they offer. The literature suggests that especially in diverse classrooms, teachers play a vital role in creating and maintaining safe campuses. Their influence extends far beyond academic instruction, as they have the opportunity to shape the overall learning environment and contribute to students' well-being. As argued by Harper and Hurtado [1], widespread inequitable campus environments represent one factor that perpetuates such disparities [1], but educators who construct more equitable institutional environments can also facilitate more equitable outcomes [2]. Therefore, it is becoming increasingly important to look into how teachers of higher education institutions can create more equitable campus environments especially for minoritized students who sometimes find themselves in the spotlight of the debates that form "hot moments".

Various educational scholars use the term 'hot moment' to describe these pivotal, emotional moments of discursive tension and difficult dialogue in the classroom. The term "hot moments" in the context of a classroom typically refers to situations or incidents that generate intense emotions or strong reactions among students, or between students

and the instructor. Harlap [3] argues that, in higher education contexts, "hot moments" are generally triggered by microaggressions. Microaggressions can be defined by every day and often unintentional acts related to race, gender, and other forms of difference, that nonetheless corrode the dignity of individuals or groups [3]. Sue et al. [4] describe microaggressions as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults" [4], p. 273. Thus, microaggressions in classroom settings can lead to "hot moments", particularly if a class member confronts or reacts to the perpetrator [5].

Harlap's research on *Preparing University Educators for Hot Moments* describes "hot moments" as pivotal in that they provoke internal and/or interpersonal conflict that threaten to derail teaching and learning. More interestingly she asserts that such tension can exponentially increase learning if processed well, and specifically that teachers are paramount to manage such moments [3], p. 217. Similarly, Young's [5] article, *Dealing with Difficult Classroom Dialogue*, explains such tensions that arise in a classroom when norms, experiences or identities are questioned can become a "lightning rod for cognitive inquiry and insight". That is, the moment when individuals, arriving already shaped cognitively and emotionally by their own life histories, are confronted with an opportunity to reconstruct or enhance their perspective based on classroom stimuli. Actively exploring and switching between different perspectives amongst diverse members triggers cognitive flexibility about difference [6–8].

As social scientists, these findings lead us to question the mechanical dynamics involved in teachers leading a classroom community to stimulate cognitive flexibility and such critical thinking of differences which render safe classroom environments, especially for minoritized students. While we are inspired by The Roestone Collective's research asserting that inclusive environments that are discursively safe spaces "are sites for negotiating difference and challenging oppressions" [9], p. 1348, our experiences as researchers and teachers demonstrate this assertion is much easier said than done. We also consider how minoritized teachers who themselves have to deal with microaggressions in the academia are part of this discursive space.

In this paper we prefer to use the term "minoritized" rather than using terms such as "minorities", "members of minority groups", or "underrepresented minorities" because using "minoritized" makes it clear that being minoritized is about power and equity, not numbers. It gives us a powerful way to promote racial justice by appealing to the common experience of being excluded. We are aware that while using "minoritized" we risk creating a false equivalence that sees all instances of being minoritized as equal and discounting unique forms of oppression by subsuming them under a single term, but we still think that using this term carefully can ensure that its advantages outweigh these risks [10].

To uncover the dynamic teacher encounters faced during classroom "hot moments" or social tensions, we conducted a participatory ethnographic study of a Dutch university, leveraging our positions working and studying for the university. Sarah Ahmed describes in her book on diversity in institutions that often in research the story of arrival is the story of our own encounters [11], p. 6. Such is true of our own fieldwork. Our research team included academic researchers, teachers, a master's student, and university professionals building and facilitating teacher trainings in inclusive education. We see our work contributing to a growing body of academic knowledge critically evaluating the university, using it as a field site, and in essence "bringing our work home," [11], p. 11. Our own hallways and classrooms provided a catalog of intersecting minoritized identities, including ethnic, national, religious, gender, sexual, economic, able body, neuro-diverse, and academic, as well as every nuanced combination of such.

In the findings chapter, we unpack an array of experiences that teachers had while processing "hot moments". It's nuanced, to say the least, as there was a variety of factors that led to different practices, values, and beliefs regarding "hot moments". Our research serves to create a familiar categorization of what "difficult dialogues" look, sound, and

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feel like. Our framework conveys what we gathered as the most common 'hot moment' dynamics across the institutional, the interactional, and the individual dimensions, where experiences are perceived and constructed between, within and around classroom members. We share candid stories from teachers who professed to care deeply for their students' sense of belonging as well as for students' academic growth. In answering teachers' calls for more support, we hope to provide pedagogical workers in higher education a supportive scaffolding of shared experiences, relating to how "hot moments" halt learning for classroom members, or inversely how these moments enable classroom members to feel *safe to* engage.

Our main contention is that classrooms, as major elements of campus environments, have a great influence on the university experience of minoritized students. Thus, we believe that creation of equitable campus environments is also partly incumbent upon the teachers as to how they navigate through "hot moments" where questions of race, ethnicity, clashing political opinions come up and where especially minoritized students do not feel safe.

#### 2. Theoretical Foundations

Jessica Harless, in writing about safe spaces in the college classroom, inspires us to relentlessly expect more from higher education organizations seeking a commitment to wellknown attempts at improving social access [12]. Harless that explains institutions should dually commit to classroom inclusion through "educational safety", creating classrooms as "truly public spaces in which full participation and deliberative action unfold." The concept of the classroom as a safe space that allows for "intellectual danger, the seeds of critical thinking to flourish" inspires us to consider how teachers can lead classroom members feeling 'safe to' engage, rather than 'safe from' engaging, and thus expand critical learning and inclusion. This distinction is important in that educators struggle to find such delicate balance. These authors similarly inspire our approach to view tensions across three dimensions: institutional, interactional, and individual. Their unique insights provide us with differing logics for using such structure to aid our uncovering of significant classroom dynamics that impact how teachers experience and manage social tensions, and most importantly, how these structural dynamics can move classroom members to greater or less critical thought about difference, power, and privilege. Below we would like to explain how we conceptualize these three dimensions in the university context. First, we begin by institutional dimension. A growing gallery of criticism toward academia's capitalist interests, and "a growing and increasingly urgent conversation about contemporary hegemonic practices" is found in global universities influenced by "neo-liberal" capitalist agendas [13]. Also discussed is critical association with it perpetuating oppression based on class, gender, race age, sexuality, citizenship, embodiment, and other social divides. Harless frames the significance of the inclusive classroom within an institutional setting poised toward good [12]. She uses the term "Publicness" inspired by philosophers to explain that higher education is a site of "public" living, engagement with others and conjoint public action [12]. And it is the access to "publicness" that should be an added dimension to how we view a university's teaching and learning.

Safety, described as discursive, emotional, or "dignity" safety is only attained when there's an awareness for equity, power dynamics, and privilege. And so, it will be useful to leverage McCall's [14] intersectionality theory to highlight how the greater structures of power at the institutional level (staff recruitment, exam board, executive board, etc.) are in themselves influencing the power dynamics of the classroom and thus its safety.

As classroom inclusion includes intellectual tension, incited by a focus on differences and similarities, it is also very much related to institutional influence beyond just the organization's culture, but also by evaluating its surrounding local and national appetite for difference. In so doing, this paper leans on Essed and Hoving's [15] research and Ghorashi's [16] research on the Dutch appetite for difference. "Paternalism (minorities need the white majority's help) has been replaced by entitlement racism (the right to offend); the right of freedom of speech has won over the right of protection against discrimination; antidiscrimination

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and antiracism are off the political agenda; references to the need for tolerance, no matter how contested the principle, have disappeared..." [15], p. 18. The cumulation of institutional insight through theoretical research provides insight into the larger values and beliefs impacting the identities and roles of teachers as they work to distinguish differences and leverage intellectual tension. And the current Dutch society which places value on secular beliefs and autonomy, elicits less tolerance and more pressure on groups outside of the norm to conform. "Clearly, this combination of deficit-thinking—stimulated by the welfare state—and the tendency toward culturalization—fueled by the history of pillarization—have been persistent factors of categorical thinking in the Netherlands." [17], p. 106–108. This research will keep in mind such history and present-day institutions impacting the social structure of inclusion in the field.

The second dimension is the interactional dimension. This research leans on Risman's [18] findings of gender as a social structure and the *interaction* between its members that construct it. "The cultural component of the social structure includes the interactional expectations that each of us meet in every social encounter" [18], p. 433. Risman explains that there are cultural expectations and norms related to how distinguished members are supposed to interact [18]. And adding to that complexity, social structure is not experienced as oppressive if these distinguished members (men and women, in her framework) do not see themselves as similarly situated.

It is this reference to the interactional dynamics within each social encounter that inspires a consideration of social encounters within the inclusive classrooms, along with expectations we impose on its members, namely teachers. And like Risman's [18] gender theory, it considers the possibly oppressive dynamics that exist under the guise of situated differences. "We must pay attention both to how structure shapes individual choice and social interaction and to how human agency creates, sustains, and modifies current structure. Action itself may change the immediate or future context" [18], p. 433.

In embracing intellectual tension through differences, teachers are called on to exhume such differences and inherently interact with students in order to do so. And so, considering the possibly oppressive dynamics existing under the guise of situated differences leads this study to refer to McCall's intersectionality method "intra-categorical approach to complexity" [14], pp. 1777–1778. McCall emphasizes the importance of categories in valuing oppression at the broad social group level and for a sense of unity, but quickly cautions to look beyond such broad boundaries and to the more nuanced intersections that more accurately define the everyday experiences and beliefs of those impacted [14]. Through this lens, in inclusive classrooms, teachers therefore are challenged to interact with students in ways that acknowledge their social, group-level histories yet also identify with their more nuanced experiences, their sense of "authenticity" as Jansen et al. [19] describes.

In moving to the *individual dimension* of the inclusive classroom, this research will consider how the agency of its members constrains or enables the inclusive classroom, and how teachers perceive such conditions. Shore et al. [20] defines inclusion as "the degree to which individuals experience treatment from the group that satisfies their need for both belongingness and uniqueness" [20], p. 1265. As if, feeling safely unique also warrants a sense of belonging. It is these tensions within an individual that also help the classroom to thrive as a social structure. The Roestone Collective, citing Rose, describes this environment as a "multi-polar space" that at any time can "ground and deny identity," and "embrace and destabilize" [9], p. 1356. In discussing identity impacting classroom inclusion Hockings' research explores the concepts of voice and space [21]. And specifically, for students "immersed in the search for understanding and knowledge", Hocking's explains interactions between student and teacher "identity" are vital to such engagement. [21], pp. 192, 193. Thus, this research closely considers the notion of teacher "identity", and further explores how this identity is defined as well as a condition of inclusion.

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#### 3. Materials and Methods

This research takes places at a large Dutch research university, founded in the late 19th century, with a student population that matches the rich diversity of the city it is located in at the time of this study—about 30% Western and non-Western migrant students and the remaining 70% are ethnic Dutch [22]. It is forecasted to continue to grow toward more diverse populations including both national and international students from "Western and non-Western" migrant backgrounds, some with and without prior Dutch academic backgrounds.

Previous research asserts that groups made up of individuals with "positive beliefs toward diversity, equity and inclusion" are able to better "deal with and use their differences" [23]. With that in mind, our research initiative focused on university classrooms led by teachers who opted in to creating inclusive classrooms. This qualifier was determined if the teacher took an inclusion workshop designed by the university, or if they simply expressed their vision or passion for an inclusive classroom. Teachers who we interviewed either attended a Mixed Education Classroom in Practice workshop within the University or learned diversity and inclusion (DI) practices through other workshops/classes. This means that our sample was highly aware of DI initiatives and consciously practicing it, and knowledgeable of the term "hot moments".

The primary ethnographer participated to teacher inclusion training given in the University over the course of 12 weeks, led by the university's learning and development team. She assisted these workshops titled "Mixed Classroom in Practice (MCIP)" workshops. This experience provided rich data in line with participant observation [24] and deep understanding of the greater cultural context of the university as well as the power dynamics. It provided the ethnographer access to communication channels and populations that were hard to access. Teachers were aware of the ethnographer's presence as a researcher and agreed to share their anonymous feedback. The training environment was collaborative and interactive, and inductive in asking those who voluntarily participated to candidly share with each other.

The ethnographic study followed a post-modern, constructivist perspective of "hot moments" and classroom inclusion, and so was impacted by the researcher's subjective social interpretation of the data, and consequently warranted a reflexive approach. This study considers the researchers' closeness to the research processes as active participants [25,26]. Primary empirical data was gathered from 24 educators across Social Sciences, Law, Humanities, Behavioral and Movement Sciences, and Business and Administration Faculties.

Findings were gathered via open-ended interviews, in-person and virtual classroom observations, and subjects' self-reflective written journals reflecting on their own classroom "hot moments" as part of the teacher trainings. Interviews took between 45 min to 60 min. Observable events included live classrooms as well as live teacher inclusion training workshops. Extensive document analysis provided artifacts that shed light on the university's institutional strategy, operations, values, and politics surrounding the topics of diversity and inclusion.

The research trajectory was a continuous process of zooming in and zooming out, immersing, and distancing [26]. Cycling between theory and data was part of an ongoing iterative data analysis [27]. Field notes, transcribed audio recordings of events observed and interviews, as well as private and public documents provided a plethora of text to analyze and consequently many themes emerged. Following the Critical Incident Techniques approach for analyzing qualitative data, categorization schemes were created to summarize empirical findings, while maintaining "comprehensiveness, specificity, and validity" [28], p. 344. The coding of data into these themes revealed the most common experiences. The research observations and interviews were conducted both in person and online as it occurred during a national lockdown ordered to curb the 2020 pandemic outbreak of COVID-19. Research conducted online occurred in virtual classrooms and online interview settings. This limited the researchers' ability to observe behaviors in person that might have led to more candid and improvisational reveals. Our use of participants retrospective, self-report entries during inclusion trainings was insightful. Field notes, transcribed audio

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recordings of events observed and interviews, as well as private and public documents provided a plethora of text to analyze. Atlas.ti was utilized to aid in revealing the most pertinent themes and sub-themes that came out of our data.

Our research team consisted of two teachers/researchers from Social Sciences Faculty, two diversity officers/trainers who were in charge of Mixed Classroom in Practice workshops and the senior ethnographer who collected the major data. This research was an attempt to do Team Science, where all researchers involved genuinely believed the importance of the need to understand the internal dynamics and workings of "hot moments". The fact that our team included diversity officers/trainers gave us a unique position and access to be able to find informants and access to related documents.

#### 4. Findings: Unpacking Layers of Social Tension in the Classroom

We discovered significant trends in how teachers described group dynamics during classroom "hot moments", with a spectrum of experiences ranging from positive to negative. What also wavered was how they perceived their own ability to leverage social tension for greater student learning, as well as how much value they placed on "hot moments" as learning catalysts. The rest of this chapter aims to unravel these trends into a structure that can be interpreted broadly by other teachers. Many teachers teach alone in classrooms, and like those we observed and spoke to, are spread out across faculties.

Teacher-described classroom "hot moments" were present between classroom members, within individuals, and across institutional dimensions. Thus, we organized findings into a typology of experiences by these three dimensions; interactional, individual, and institutional. As a source of inspiration for other teachers and to respect given complexities, the accounts below also include teachers' reflections on how they did or how they would like to handle "hot moments" in the future, so as to turn them into learning experiences. It's important to note, we do not interpret social levels and the typology themes as mutually exclusive, untethered components. Instead, they exist in tandem and in relation to each other, synergistically influencing the classroom's atmosphere.

## 4.1. The in-between (Interactional Dynamics) as Part of Hot Moment Dynamics

In classrooms tensions arose due to perceived cultural differences between classroom members. Cultural differences relate to background, identities, and ideologies, and, for example, educational norms. In international classrooms, this is highly relevant, as one teacher notes:

I think that hot moments appear when conflicting (cultural) norms and values are involved. It becomes more complex when such norms and values are subconscious, so that teachers and students are not aware of them, which is often the case with cultural norms and values, in particular when people have little experience with being outside their own cultures. For many international students, this is the case. For many, the 'semester abroad' is the first time they need a passport, as quite a number of them told me.—Teacher 8 (Faculty of Humanities)

This teacher gave an example of a hot moment resulting from divergent views on the teacher's role by an international exchange student. Course material needed was out of print. So, the teacher presented other solutions such as students could read the book in the library or make a scan at a university machine.

Then [one of them] started to send very emotional emails, which I regard as the written version of a hot moment. I recognized some emotions she had expressed earlier in class, so I realized the hot moment had been building up. (...) She had asked (by a digital tool) to all students in the class to help her, but nobody had reacted. In particular, the Dutch students did not want to lend their copying cards. Her conclusion was that 'I did not offer her a solution'. (...) The hot moment was the result of a series of events of miscommunication based on clashing educational cultures. [The student] expected a solution from me as the teacher because she held me responsible for the larger problem,

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a book out of print. In her home-culture, possibly teachers are responsible for learning materials under all circumstances. In this case, by making the book available in the library, I felt I had done enough. And I did not feel responsible for the fact that the university machines do not accept all banking cards.—Teacher 8 (Faculty of Humanities)

This teacher explained "the point is to become more sensitive". She would feel more responsible and act quicker in response to problems. She also recognized that even technical or logistical issues contribute to feelings of inclusion and exclusion.

So, if there is a complaint, immediately take it to heart and start a serious talk about it—and take ten minutes or more and really sort of delve into it. Then probably you earlier discover possible confrontations of norms and values—where the real problem is.—Teacher 8 (Faculty of Humanities)

Tension also arose when classroom members felt marginalized or judged during classroom discussions. This was often the case in response to the presentation of minoritized perspectives, as dominant values were often taken for granted. Teachers also struggle with how to manage opposing views from students who traditionally fall within a majority social group outside of the classroom but not within the classroom, such as white, male students or very conservative viewpoints.

It was very interesting that many students had experienced being marginalized or excluded. It started with a right-wing white male who didn't agree with one of the activists [lecturers] who was clearly leftist. And there was a student of color who came to talk to the teacher after class, saying that she really didn't feel safe. Then there were white Dutch students who also felt unsafe. They said they were not treated well because they were blamed for being part of the problem.—Teacher 4 (Faculty of Social Sciences)

This teacher would next time relate the tension to broader societal themes to process emotions.

I think there should be space for oppositional perspectives, but we really have to think about how to communicate those. And then it will still be difficult if you have students sitting there venting opinions which are maybe hurtful... It's really important that students don't get hurt. Yeah. So, I think the students who really feel hurt should be consoled in these contexts {...} translate what's personal to what's happening between students, translate it into social processes, make it bigger, and then maybe it's easier to reflect again.—Teacher 4 (Faculty of Social Sciences)

Another teacher reflected on the positive results from acknowledging a students' controversial perspective despite it being against the teacher's own personal beliefs.

The class was discussing racism. A [white] student from an African country made a comment. I recognized what he said but other others immediately got at him for 'a racist comment' and actually dismissed what he was saying. And so, I had the feeling I had to stand up for him and to listen because he's really from a different part of the world with a different experience and different history of racism. He felt safe enough to share his original comment, although he perfectly knows that this is perhaps a little tricky or a little fiery in the Netherlands. The point is that he felt safe enough in that group, in that classroom to say what he had to say. He was cut off by a couple of students, and I stood up for him... There was more discussion than would have been if I had not stepped up. It took a little longer and then of course the moment passed. So, I was happy that time stood still for some time and there was a little in-depth thinking. And then I hope that people learn from that. You can't always check that in the moment—but afterward, the atmosphere in class got increasingly better.—Teacher 21 (Business and Administration Faculty)

Another theme concerned the silence of students who did not feel safe and confident enough to present their own, diverging views. The classroom then functions as an echo chamber of one view. And while these tensions were not amplified to teachers during Educ, Sci. 2023, 13, 777 8 of 15

a class, they were shared between classroom members afterward, surfacing in teacher evaluations, or formal ethics complaints.

Silent tensions were often entwined with experiences of cultural difference and/or marginalization and judgment of diverging identities and differences. They often occurred among minoritized students who felt their experiences dismissed, or who felt personally involved, experienced identity threat, or avoided speaking as a representative for a larger group. For them, and for other classroom members who felt unable to share their contrary views, such silent emotional tension inhibited optimal learning.

One teacher from the Faculty of Law recounted a situation where ethnically minoritized students in a dominantly white class felt hurt and insulted by a classroom discussion where other students powerfully asserted a racist argument, quoting criminality statistics. Despite their pain and frustration, they felt stepping up would be useless and felt too vulnerable to take part in this conversation, refraining from explaining the nuance or offering an alternative perspective in class.

Another teacher recounted being accused of racism at the end of a course. The student filed a formal complaint arguing the teacher gave them a low grade due to the student's race, being black. This teacher related how this student seemed disengaged during the entire course and did not respond to her calls for participation. As a result, she tried to react to silence, or disengagement, more proactively and individually approach students who seem to struggle.

I haven't had any extreme cases like this again. Or maybe I solved them earlier but there was a moment in a course that I taught in the Summer, where I thought this might be a similar situation. I just tried to talk to [the student] after class, for instance, and had a quick look asking: 'Is there something that I should know or can you tell me something about—you know—what you're struggling with, or about something that happened in class?'—Teacher 2 (Faculty of Humanities)

Many domains and scientific perspectives are built on one set of ideas or principles that reinforce each other. One teacher called this echo chamber of academic knowledge a "bubble" in her classroom, a layer of insulation that makes it hard to experience differing perspectives. Waking her to this atmosphere was her students' request for content that presents dissenting views, to equip them better to debate outside their bubble.

"Hot moments" characteristics commonly shared were increasing discomfort, shock, or agitation. This often showed up in body language, words, or actions, which impacted classroom dynamics beyond the person(s) initially feeling that way. They were reported in large forms of expression as well as micro-expressions. We heard from teachers that the unsettling nature of these expressions makes "hot moments" even more difficult to address in the moment they occur.

One teacher recounted an incident where four students in a small working group became physically violent when one student felt belittled by another student. The altercation reached a point where security was called to intervene. While this teacher was not present at the actual incident, the classroom learning environment was later impacted by the event with an atmosphere of lingering tension and micro-aggressions. A security guard continued to monitor the classroom for the remainder of the semester. The teacher felt the need to separate these students for the rest of the course. Some of the involved students were "outspoken in nature" as the teacher described. They approached the teacher outside the course to explain "personal problems" that impacted their judgment during the previous physical confrontation. She was unsure how she would handle such tension in the future, and she remains uncertain whether she can moderate such tension into learning.

Another teacher recalled a difficult moment when increasingly rising emotions threatened to disturb the learning climate. In the end, she was able to process the group's tension toward greater understanding of the "other" by spontaneously adding a journal assignment, asking students to reflect and write about their experience in tension. Educ, Sci. 2023, 13, 777 9 of 15

We had this class with refugees and professionals, and everybody was given [introduction] time to speak, and there was just one refugee who didn't say much. And at some point, he said, 'I want to use my five minutes with a presentation, am I allowed to do that?' He had been waiting for his asylum procedure for twelve years. He was completely fed up with everything, he said. So, he had a very shocking presentation on power, corruption, 'democracy doesn't exist,' and 'everybody is corrupt!' (...) Very heavy stuff. A woman from a public administration background started crying and said 'I am so insulted by you... and I don't accept this kind of macho presentation because I am a woman'.

The class was full of tension. And I myself was like, 'oh, my God'. But then I said, you know, we should not just leave this at that. I want to try to understand, where does it come from? So not to look at it from my position, but from the position of the Other, and try to replace yourself in his position. Try to understand this life story. Try to understand his frustration. And then from there, what do you see? So, I gave [students] the assignment to look at it this way. Some could do it in the moment. Some couldn't. They were too emotional. So, I said they don't have to because I think we need to take time, myself included, to reflect and see what happens. Let's do it the next day... The woman came back to class, and they became big friends, hugged each other.—Teacher 9 (Faculty of Social Sciences)

This teacher further reflected on how this situation improved student learning and improved her handling future "hot moments".

This was the most disturbing thing I have ever experienced for the group. But it was the most profound thing also for what we want to reach. To have a kind of safe space, which is daring enough. But then again, because it's so daring, it asks you to be as precise with your assignment, which is to leave your opposition and depart from the Other.—Teacher 9 (Faculty of Social Sciences)

#### 4.2. Hot Moment Dynamics: The within (Individual Teacher Dynamics)

In the previous section, we described "hot moments" as emotional tensions due to diverse social identities that were primarily experienced in the space "between" classroom members. "Hot moments" also existed within the individual as much as they existed between members. We heard description of emotional tension felt in isolation, within a member before, during or after difficult "hot moments". In this section, we focus on findings described as individual dynamics felt within teachers when experiencing "hot moments".

Many teachers expressed uncertainty or ineptitude in handling the tension in the very moment it occurred. Some even froze and were unable to react immediately. The following quote gives a candid description of this emotion.

As a teacher, you have to be very on top of things, and you really have to manage things on the spot. And even in personal relationships, when people say something awkward to me, I just can't react, you know, that kind of reflex I don't have with me. I'm the type, when the situation is gone, I reflect: 'I should have said that he should have said that'. I ruminate. So that's why, as much as I want these hot moments to happen, I fear them a lot. I fear I won't be able to manage them properly.—Teacher 10 (Faculty of Social Sciences)

Feelings of insecurity or fear often resulted from a lack of relevant experience, like the following teacher, who felt insecure because she was unfamiliar with the particular student population. In this case, she is teaching refugees from various countries.

I will admit that I feel very inexperienced with that particular group of students with understanding exactly the nature of their potential conflicts with each other. And I don't really want to ask. I certainly don't want to ask in the class... if they have the same beliefs, political beliefs, or that they are aware of that among each other. But I also sort of want to. I just feel like that's a huge potential [for hot moments]. (...) And I also feel uncertain about it, because I don't myself have a very deep understanding of all sorts of the ins and outs of the ways these conflicts could be.—Teacher 5 (Faculty of Humanities)

The second trend was a feeling of surprise or shock. Teachers expressed feeling unprepared for social tensions. The teachers' stories, however, displayed a range of responses can follow such unsettlement. While some teachers refrained from addressing the situation at all, some addressed the situation in a delayed fashion either at a later moment or directly after a brief pause and immediate reflection.

In a previous example, a teacher witnessed an emotional comment from a refugee class member who raised his voice blaming local public sector workers for neglecting his wellbeing. A public sector worker in the class took great offense and an emotion-filled dispute disrupted. The teacher's own feelings of shock and surprise led her to ask students to complete a journal reflection assignment on the incident. She shared her own dismay with the class and suggested they all needed time to reflect on this moment before discussing it again the next day. She recounted how her reaction led to more significant learning and inclusion.

Teachers were not always able to overcome their surprise and turn the hot moment into a learning opportunity or to reflect on it in the very moment. Another teacher shared a hot moment in class when she was so shocked by a student's dismissive comment that she wanted to "hide under the table". Later she learned that some of the students were deeply insulted by the comment and were not confident or willing to share their opposition publicly. During an interview, the teacher expressed to us regret for not addressing the comment directly with her student when it occurred.

(Next time,) I would dissect at that moment why we feel, or why some people might feel offended by this. Like: 'Our friend said this. I feel that this might have offended some people, and do you have any other ideas as to why?' So, try more to have a pulse of the classroom and then hope that more fruitful discussion will come up—a few more probing, good, clever questions in the moment to really understand why [students] felt bad.—Teacher 10 (Faculty of Social Sciences)

Another internal teacher dynamic shaping how "hot moments" were processed moment was described as the teachers' "intuition" for how other classroom members are experiencing a shared moment. A teacher illustrated this by sharing her approach to a previous class she led with highly controversial content, challenging some cultural norms.

There was such a lively discussion. It was wonderful. And I also presented it in terms of: 'I'm not sure, I just don't know what to think of it. But it is something I think we should discuss'. I had the intuition that maybe for some people it was hurtful. And I—I introduced it that way. I said: 'Maybe it's offensive for some people. But this is exactly what we have to talk about at this point in time in our society'. And then the next day, we had another physical meeting with those students. I have never heard so many intriguing comments by students after a lecture like that. So, it's that type of sensitivity. And then, to dare to do a thing like that—and at the same time contextualize it, so it is in sync with what people are learning and studying.—Teacher 15 (Faculty of Law)

When teachers felt their own identities, preferences, convictions, and norms challenged, it invigorates or caused "hot moments", felt within the teacher, and often described as silently experienced. These were challenging to handle as their arousal collided with the widespread assumption that teachers should be impartial and objective, or even impersonal. Teachers described feeling that their own identities and ethics are often asked to remain repressed while refraining from passing judgment on classroom members. One teacher, who described herself as "passionate about social justice and equality", recalls a class where she divided students into pairs for an introductory interview assignment:

(...) two girls interviewing one another, both Dutch. One girl was black. One girl was white from the north of Holland, which is a farm country. And the blonde girl asked the black girl: 'So what's your favorite hobby?' And the black girl said: 'Oh, I love cooking'. And [the white girl] said: 'Yeah, you look like you're not from here. So do you like foreign cooking?'

So, I was sitting there as the teacher, and all my alarm bells went off. Everything in me was asking: 'What did you just say???' But the black girl just responded and showed no sign of being taken aback or anything. So, when it came to the feedback, I did give feedback on it. I tried to kind of problematize the 'so you're from here?' a little bit. I think both girls looked at me a bit weird...

I did reflect on it afterwards. I thought, I felt the need to say something about it, and I did. It didn't turn into a conversation. And I don't feel it resonated with them. But still, I thought I'm happier to have said it than not to have said it, because it might spark something. . . I do feel that when it doesn't resonate at all, if you then go on about it for too long, you become a bit of a moral teacher, political correctness police, or something. And that's not what I want either.—Teacher 19 (Faculty of Behavioral and Movement Sciences)

In a similar vein another teacher said the below words, to explain how she also thought "political correctness" discourse was in fact was not helping the creation of brave spaces which she was after. Having said this, she also had hesitations above how to manage these moments. She said

Right now, I feel is like there are really two clashing opinions in the class and they try to dominate each other. And then if one becomes brutal, what do you do? You know, what if let's say one of my students raises his arm and says, like, 'You know what? I don't like the headscarf. You know. . . I don't. I mean, I respect them, but I don't like it' And then if another students says, something like, let's say 'What you just say is racist' and then the first student says back 'No I'm not racist, I don't like the sight. I find it unesthetic that is it!' And then as a teacher what do you do? You know, like, it's hard. You know, it's hard because I have also my doubts about how to think. I don't know how to manage this discussion really properly. You know, some students could be really prudent, and then what happens? Where do you draw the line? Because we really want, you know, I don't like the safe space kind of rhetoric. I like brave spaces. More safe space gives me the feeling that it's just. . . Yeah. There's nothing to learn in your safe space, right? So I think we need to create brave spaces. But we should be more equipped to deal with all these kind of debates.—Teacher 18 (Faculty of Humanities)

Although, as the above quotes exemplify, some teachers do not want to be "moral teachers" and would like to encourage that all opinions somehow finds a shelter in the classroom environment'; there were also teachers who did not believe the merit of "brave spaces" on practice. One teacher commented

Well, it also goes back to this whole tension [between safe space/brave space]. And that's I'm struggling with. I think a lot of teachers do want all of those controversial views to pop up in the classrooms. But actually, what kind of views do you want to discuss? Racist views? For instance? No, I don't want that in my classroom. That's not a safe space for people, for other, especially for minoritized students. Right? But of course, you do want them to express a different perspective. So that's what I'm struggling with. But I don't want everything to just be spouted there. There's certain boundaries that you have to create upfront.—Teacher 24 (Faculty of Social Sciences)

## 4.3. Hot Moment Dynamics: The Surround (Institutional Aspects)

Apart from individual, teacher dispositions, and classroom interactions, the institutional context also enabled or constrained "hot moments". Our field study revealed class time and class size greatly affected the emergence of "hot moments" and the approaches teachers use to transition tension towards learning. Additionally, outside the classroom, workshops or inclusion training offered by the university rely on conventional methods to increase bias awareness or DEI concepts were discussed and often considered helpful, a good start. However, teachers asked for more support beyond awareness and advised practices, specifically for advancing their capability to resolve social tensions and conflicts in the moment they occur, or shortly thereafter.

Time was referred to as a commodity for teachers, and they desired more of it to be able to slow down during a lecture and optimally respond to "hot moments".

There are lots of differences between the students. We have age differences. And now that we have the English track, we also have national differences. But I do not really address it in class. It would be nice, but I need more time to do that because I also have to teach [my entire course program]. And you need a different kind of assignments in order to be able to address [diversity].—Teacher 1 (Faculty of Humanities)

One teacher shared how she devotes the first class of a semester solely for students to get to know each other and enable a safe environment. She explained although it does "improve the level of discussion" and facilitate deep learning she called it a "sacrifice" she makes. The word "sacrifice" struck us as important to how constraining time is, and the choices teachers make when faced with creating a safe space over lecturing on the academic subject.

The larger the class, the more difficult it was for teachers to intuitively interpret the tensions felt between and within students.

In the context that I was talking about, with students feeling marginalized among a fairly large group of students, you can't ask from students to speak up or expect them to do that if they don't feel safe to do so. We can't force them to do so.—Teacher 4 (Faculty of Social Sciences)

From students, we heard similar sentiments. During a class observation, one international student expressed that with such large groups, there is "less respect because there is less interaction, more distance and less room to negotiate or debate with between students and teacher". Another international student agreed and stressed the need for smaller classes.

Unsurprisingly, a great need among teachers was conveyed to us during the study—from teachers of all levels and tenures—for institutional support outside of the classroom to advance their skills and learn how to better deal with "hot moments".

[A hot moment] has to be handled properly in order for it to be useful and enhance learning as opposed to just being upsetting. One thing that I would like more of is to actually have some concrete ideas, how do you handle these hot moments? What can you do to facilitate learning and reduce the tension (...) but not necessarily, you know, just to ignore everything or go to a different topic, but actually use it to facilitate the learning?—Teacher 15 (Faculty of Law)

Inclusion training proved to heighten awareness of "hot moments" potential for deeper learning, and for the value of didactic approaches that are likely to increase the occurrence of "hot moments". One teacher explained, "my main take-away was to not hide from hot moments but to actively engage and manage them and use them as a learning opportunity for the students".

However, unexpectedly, teacher inclusion training only strengthened the need for more support. More specifically, teachers explicitly asked for support, not in the form of conventional training workshops, but instead in the form of story-sharing gatherings among a "community" of fellow teachers. This common description made an important imprint in our data, as a call for an organizational resource group providing connection, validation, and comradery. As one teacher explained:

I think [teacher inclusion] training has to go together with storytelling workshops where people talk about their experience and share it... As teachers, we do things all by ourselves. We think we're doing it well. Or maybe I'm not very sure about a situation sometimes (...) Storytelling workshops could also tell the story of something that we did and are proud of.—Teacher 9 (Faculty of Social Sciences)

It was evident, as this quote highlights, that such gatherings are also an opportunity to grow their frame of reference, and to prepare for future "hot moments".

Those kinds of tips based on other teachers' experiences are really valuable. We don't get to exchange these kinds of stories with each other. So, we also don't have these learning moments among ourselves. I think that they get lost in the routine of doing things, our

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jobs...because everybody has different strategies and some of them really fit you (...) So maybe it could help me to just foresee what could come and be prepared. So, when things happen. I'm not completely in awe.—Teacher 10 (Faculty of Social Sciences)

#### 5. Discussion and Conclusions

Overall, this study's empirical data uncovered three themes related to how teachers encounter "hot moments". First, a majority of teachers felt discomfort when faced with social tension, even the most experienced educators. Second, there are clear trends in how teachers at this university experience "hot moments", yet how they handle such moments are highly individual and personal. And third, a majority of teachers asked for extra support to help advance their own capability to manage "hot moments", despite their experience level teaching and facing such social tensions. On that last point, teachers overwhelmingly called for support in the shape of communal, "storytelling" events, not conventional training.

As our findings corroborate, it's not uncommon for educators to have trepidation when confronted with oppositional tensions related to naturally shifting social identities and beliefs [3,29] Differences between students and/or teachers are not permanent in the classroom, nor are they polarized, although such "permanent othering" might be a catalyst to such tensions [29]. And so, with differences in a constant state of change, our findings assert practices fostering inclusion are also fluid, not only from classroom to classroom but over time. We see this as a need for teachers to be highly engaged in understanding social identities, power dynamics and prepared to deal with various discomforts upon tensions.

Our research shows that educators are uncomfortable with difficult social tensions in their classrooms and as a result may diffuse or avoid emotions by deferring students to instead focus on academic knowledge and logic. Yet emotional "hot moments" are innate among learning groups, and as Young [5] asserts, cognitive advancements can't be made without careful consideration for the emotional dimension of their students. During our field study, we were not surprised by such discomfort, but instead interested in the paradigm of teachers being both highly motivated to create inclusive classrooms while simultaneously experiencing heightened discomfort in handling these "hot moments", despite their experience levels. Our data demonstrates that in the heat of the moment, when social tensions arise and learning opportunities are present, an instructor's heightened awareness for diversity and inclusion is simply not enough to process tension towards inclusive learning and greater critical reflection of differences.

To process such tensions in the moment calls for skills that need persistent honing. What makes this task complicated is that difference, as in the social differences that cause tension, is not static [29] and therefore the constitution of "hot moments" cannot be assumed and scribed into a manual for how to best manage them. Teachers need the skills to "work difference" [29], and yet we assert these skills need to be localized to their classroom setting, meriting improvisational traits, and perhaps a well of experiences best described by Ellsworth and Miller [29] with "dizzying images of difference for a more empowered society". We suggest greater alignment with academically studied mechanics, "reflection-in-action" and storytelling, to aid teachers in developing and processing "hot moments".

In our candid discussion with teachers, we often heard a call for support in the form of stories and communal gatherings with other teachers. "Hot moments" were hard, some teachers valued them while others avoided them, and yet all wanted more ideas for how to handle those unplanned, spontaneous moments.

We detailed a significant trend of experiences expressed and shared among teachers during our fieldwork. Our typology of hot moment experiences is detailed across ten themes, and further delineated across three social dimensions. Risman's theory on gender as a social structure lends us an analytical lens in which to categorize hot moment themes, that is according to classroom social dimensions in which inclusion is undeniably embedded [18]. Categorizing teachers' hot moment experiences into three social dimensions (interactional, individual, institutional) helps to illustrate an evergreen, relational complexity involved in

attaining classroom inclusion. These categories tell a story of "hot moments" from different vantage points: starting with the teacher's own internal dialogue, to the tensions between members, and then spotlighting the impact institutional powers possess in shaping how teachers experience "hot moments".

We learned from Yanow and Tsoukas that improvising a response to surprising feedback warrants preparation as well as in-the-moment, cognitive flexibility [30]. In the context of classroom "hot moments", we apply their assertion as teachers being able to discursively meet classroom members, cognitively and emotionally, where they are in that unique moment in time. Doing this whilst amongst social tension purely unique to that moment, constructed by classroom members, will warrant improvisation. The stories shared within this research provide such preparatory material to teachers, localized in a Dutch institution. More research illuminating experiences in different locations could add to the growing dialogue, helping teachers to maintain that delicate balance Harless describes as creating classrooms "safe to" engage about social differences, rather than "safe from" [12].

Additionally, in gathering a strong sample of similar sentiments across the three dimensions of social structure present in the classroom, we began to understand the high likelihood of teachers facing such challenges. We suggest educators and higher education policy makers read through these experiences as a way to better understand the challenges their colleagues face, most often alone as the classroom's leader; in the hope to advance change efforts to create more inclusive and equitable class environments which will change how minoritized students experience university education.

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