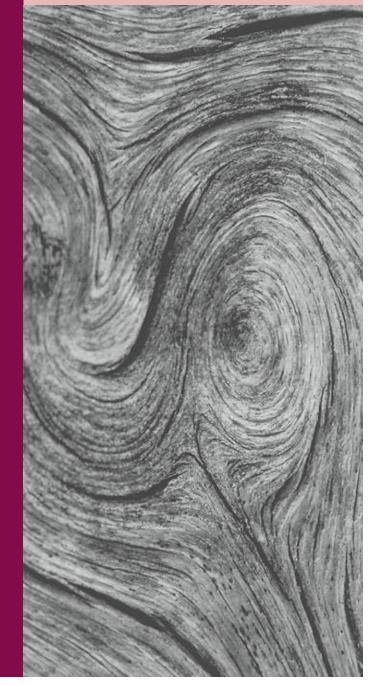# THE
Sophist's BANE

*"*Identifying and exploring questions, reaching beyond perfunctory narratives, and making arguments that challenge rather than assuage the Meno's of the modern world-these are the foci for *The Sophist's Bane*. A more worthy initiative is beyond imagination.*"*

The Sophist's Bane

A Journal of the Society of Professors of Education

The Sophist's Bane

"Can you tell me, Socrates, is virtue teachable?"

Meno asks this question to Socrates in Plato's dialogue, *Meno*, and begins a conversation about universals, teaching, knowledge, and more. Central to understanding Meno's role in the dialogue is his motivation for asking the question in the first place. Simply put, Meno wanted an answer to his question. Further, he wanted Socrates to give him the answer. Quickly. As a sophist, Meno demonstrates a posture and a way of being that are antithetical to searches for wisdom. Sophists reach only for simple answers and how-to applications with the least mount of thinking, arguing, or searching possible. A sophist's bane is to be faced with questions that may not be easily answered. A sophist's bane is to have to think deeply and critically and take the meandering paths associated with complex problems – ones that often are inefficient and unplanned. A sophist's bane is to read articles and essays that discard oversimplifications and champion inquiry simply because it is worth doing.

The Sophist's Bane. The editors have created a forum for a broad array of professors of education that serves as a means through which thinkers can challenge assumptions, delve deeply into complex topics, and not be worried about neatly packaged "answers." While attempting to counteract superficiality and formulaic approaches to inquiry and research, this journal nonetheless intends to be accessible to those who may be outside formal academic settings.

In keeping with the unique title of this journal, articles within it will raise a wide variety of questions that are linked to an even wider variety of topics. What distinguishes this journal from others, however, is that it is not intending easy answers or efficient maps for solving problems. Identifying and exploring questions, reaching beyond the perfunctory narratives, and making arguments that challenge rather than assuage the Meno's of the modern world – these are the foci for *The Sophist's Bane*. A more worthy initiative is beyond imagination.

Deron R. Boyles
Georgia State University

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Welcome

Preamble

Ming Fang He

The Society of Professors of Education was first formed in cooperation with the National Education Association. Among its early presidents were Charles DeGarno and John Dewey. The Society is an interdisciplinary, professional, and academic association open to all persons, both theoreticians and practitioners, engaged in teacher preparation or related activities. Its purpose is to serve the diverse needs and interests of the education professoriate.

In 2012, Professor Jesse Goodman, President of SPE, Professor Jim Garrison, President-Elect of SPE at that time, and other members of SPE invited a panel of women of color to speak at the Society of Professors of Education (SPE) Annual Meeting prior to the AERA Annual Conference in Vancouver, Canada (April 13-17, 2012). The Panel was titled: *Minority Women Professors Venturing on the Landscapes of Education* (Saturday, Apr 14: 1:30-2:45 p.m.; Fairmont Waterfront, Floor Second Level, Princess Louisa Suite). The panelists discussed the following questions raised by Professor Jesse Goodman and other members of SPE:

1. What classes are you teaching and what kinds of inquiries are you engaged in? In what way, if at all, do you think your gender, race, or ethnicity have influenced the ways you teach and the ways you develop your inquiries? In what way have your gender, race, or ethnicity influenced the decisions you make about curriculum you develop for the classes you teach and inquiries you are engaged in?
2. What is the counter narrative you would like to tell as a minority woman professor venturing on the landscapes of education?
3. What has been the biggest struggle you have had to confront as a minority woman professor? To what degree (if at all) do you think your gender, race, or ethnicity play in this struggle?
4. Several professors of color have mentioned the following dilemma: If they aren't successful in their work as an instructor or scholar (e.g., obtaining tenure and/or promotion) they wonder if it is because of their gender, race, or ethnicity, and if they are successful they wonder if it is due to affirmative action policies and thus wonder if their colleagues really believe they deserve this success. Have you ever faced this dilemma and if so, how have you dealt with it?
5. Some women professors express that due to their gender, race, or ethnicity, they do not receive the same respect as their male colleagues from students, staff, or other faculty. Have you ever experienced this lack of respect and if so, how did you deal with it?
6. What advantages, if any, do you think your "minority status" has brought to your work as a professor?
7. In recent years, several educational scholars such as McLaren, Allman, Brosio and others have argued that too much attention has been paid to issues of identity politics among scholars and that these issues must be placed within a Marxist analysis in order to achieve real understanding of schools and societies. As a "minority professor," what do you think of these calls to center our work within the Marxist tradition?
8. What advice would you like to give minority women faculty as they venture on the landscapes of education?

The panel was a great success. Afterwards Professor William Schubert suggested that Professor Sabrina Ross and Professor Ming Fang He guest edit a special issue of *The Sophist's Bane: A Journal of the Society of Professors of Education* to invite the panelists to extend their talks into peer review articles.

Most of the authors in this special issue were panelists. Through this issue, we strive to recapture the powerful ideas engendered from our panel on *Minority Women Professors Venturing on the Landscapes of Education.* We hope to carry on the mission of *The Sophist's Bane* that "explores the lives and work of [minority women] scholars and teachers in the field of education...examines the ways [minority women] professors of education engage in the [struggles] to counteract superficial, commercial and formulaic influences on curriculum and teaching...[and] nurtures a broad conversation [on a wide array of philosophies and ideologies, raises challenging questions, reaches beyond perfunctory narratives, and makes arguments] that challenge rather than assuage the Menos" of the increasingly diversified and contested landscapes of education.

Dangerous Terrain: Reflections of a Black Woman Teacher Educator Working Within Predominantly White Universities

Sabrina Ross, Georgia Southern University

Although I was not completely naïve about some of the challenges with which I would have to contend, I had certainly underestimated just how profoundly racism, sexism, capitalism, and hypocrisy penetrate the deep structure of U.S. higher education. (Denise Taliaferro Baszile, 2006)

Minority women faculty are under-represented in higher education and most are concentrated in positions as adjunct or junior faculty (Stanley, 2006a). As such, we are not predominantly featured on the landscapes of higher education and, perhaps because of our low percentages relative to other faculty, our unique experiences in higher education are shared amongst ourselves, but often unacknowledged in the broader higher education environment (Williams & Evans-Winters, 2005).

As a Black woman hired into a tenure-track line at a predominantly White institution, my presence seems to endorse a commitment to diversity on the part of the University; this commitment is most often expressed in position announcements that include the statement: "minorities and women strongly encouraged to apply." My experiences in predominantly White institutions have taught me, however, that an expressed commitment to hiring diverse faculty does not constitute a genuine commitment to diversity. In the absence of concerted efforts to change university culture in ways that support the nontraditional epistemologies, pedagogies, and forms of inquiry that "diverse" faculty often embrace, stated commitments to diversity amount to little more than rhetoric.

In this paper, I use critical geography to illuminate ways in which my race/ethnicity and gender complicate my efforts to teach for social justice based on my experiences in teacher education programs at two predominantly White universities. My purpose is to call attention to the discrepancies that often exist in academia between the rhetoric and practice of embracing diversity and the consequences that those discrepancies can have on the "diverse" faculty who are so strongly encouraged to apply for positions within predominantly White institutions of higher education. I begin with a brief explanation of critical geography and discuss how it will be used in this article. Next, I articulate connections between my identity as a Black woman and my commitment to social justice education. I then recount experiences with pre-service teachers at two different predominantly White institutions to highlight discrepancies between the rhetoric and practice of commitment to diversity. The final section of this article offers advice for new women faculty of color working within predominantly White institutions as well as suggestions that university administrators can use to cultivate educational environments that extend beyond the rhetoric of commitment to diversity.

Critical Geography

Critical geographies are concerned with connections between space, place, and various markers of identity. Like other critical projects, critical geography has an emancipatory goal of identifying and working to counter structures of oppression occurring within geographic space (Helfenbein, 2010). I use critical geography here to map out my travels on the landscape of higher education as a "diverse" faculty member and to make connections between my race/ethnicity and gender, my pedagogy, and the spaces of both oppression and safety that I have experienced in higher education.

My ways of understanding my lived experiences as a Black woman in U.S. higher education are intimately connected to my knowledge of other historical and contemporary Black women's experiences of racial, gender, and class discrimination, their strategies of survival, and their wisdom cultivated to resist and transcend these intersecting forms of oppression (Collins, 2000). To facilitate the process of mapping out my experiences in higher education, I use geographical metaphors. As art, metaphors go beyond the limited meaning of words by appealing to the senses and emotions; as such, they are capable of bridging the distance between my lived realities as a Black woman and the very different lived realities of others who may read this text. In the section below, I discuss metaphors of higher education that have been evoked by other women faculty of color to convey their experiences in higher education before describing the metaphor of higher education that I use in this project.

Geographic Metaphors of Higher Education Articulated by Women Faculty of Color

Numerous women faculty of color have evoked place-specific metaphors of higher education to illuminate the complexities of their racialized and gendered experiences in academia. Beverly Gordon (1999) likened the academy to a hood – a dangerous urban space where robbery, assault, and "gang" activity were commonplace. Gordon's purpose in evoking this metaphor was to highlight the discrepancies between the illusion and reality of higher education. Discussing her unexpected use of the term "hood" to describe academia, Gorden (199) wrote:

> Now, contrary to normative standards, the hood in which I work is not populated by inner city Black, Latino, or poor Anglo youth. The mean and dangerous streets that I work on are not found in urban centers. My hood is populated with middle class white males, and, increasingly white females, found in institutions of higher learning – the hood I work in is the Academy. (p. 407)

While Gordon's metaphor is humorous, it nevertheless underscores the danger that is contained within the Ivory Tower. Another metaphor of academia that also contains the element of danger is that of the slave plantation. For Black women in particular, exhaustive service expectations and complicated power struggles with White students have encouraged the use of metaphors of slavery to describe academic life (e.g., Paul, 2001; Williams & Evans-Winters, 2005). In a similar vein, Gloria Ladson-Billings (2005) utilized the metaphor of the *Big House* to call attention to the

experiences of Black teacher educators working for social justice within predominantly White institutions. The Big House is a term that references the work of enslaved Blacks that occurred in the home of the slaveholder (i.e., the Big House) as opposed to the agricultural fields of the slave plantation. For Ladson-Billings, the challenge for Black teacher educators interested in social justice was to use their relatively privileged position (compared to field workers) inside the Big House as a means of social transformation. She asks: "How can the Big House, so long a symbol of what is wrong in the society, be transformed to better serve those whom society has long ignored?" (Ladson-Billings, 2005, p. 2).

While my own experiences of working within predominantly White higher education settings have validated both the hood and plantation metaphors, I rely on another geographic metaphor – that of the dangerous terrain – as the starting point for mapping my experiences teaching in higher education. My use of the metaphor of dangerous terrain is taken from Annette Henry's (1993) article "There are no safe places: Pedagogy as powerful and dangerous terrain" in which she discussed the struggles over authority, knowledge, and identity that occur within the predominantly White classrooms that she taught. Countering the feminist concept of classrooms as safe spaces, Henry argued that the issues of power shaping the wider educational environment necessarily came into play in higher education classrooms and rendered the classroom a space fraught with risk and danger. She wrote:

> As a Black feminist teacher educator, I know first-hand that there are no safe places and I am reminded of this reality constantly in my pedagogical practice. Racism and misogyny structure my life and my teaching practice in particular ways. For instance, as a Black woman professor, students contest my credentials more than those of my colleagues. Thus, I discuss them "up front" with the class. I try to devise clear, unambiguous grading systems because students question all that is questionable about my modus operandi. (Henry, 1993, p. 2)

The word *terrain* encourages imagery of broad spatial locations. Henry's notion of dangerous terrain is useful because it conveys both the vastness of the institution of higher education as well as the perils one may encounter during travels through this terrain. Additionally, the word terrain connotes something that must be mastered or struggled through. I envision my own attempts to navigate the tenure track as akin to trekking through an exhaustive mountainous region; my goal is to survive the journey with my sense of self and purpose intact.

A Black Feminist/Womanist Social Justice Educator

I locate my identity and sense of purpose within the margins of the dangerous terrain of higher education, viewing myself as an outsider within the academy (Collins, 2000). Although I work within a predominantly White university, I have never felt fully at home here (Baszile, 2006). In part, my sense of alienation stems from the very different cultural ways of being I perceive between myself and other (mostly White) faculty and administrators.

While I share experiences of racial oppression with Black men and experiences of gender oppression with White women, it is the simultaneous experience of these forms of oppression (Collins, 2000) that informs my sense of purpose and pedagogy. Working within an institution that privileges both Whiteness and maleness, I am keenly aware of ways in which social status and monetary resources are distributed through these markers of identity. As someone who possesses neither Whiteness nor maleness, my understanding of the workings of power is necessary for my survival (Collins, 2000; Lorde, 1984). Thus within the University and within the wider social environment, I am always concerned with relationships of power. I maintain a practice that the late poet and activist Audre Lorde referred to as "watching." Linking the practice of watching relationships of power to experiences of oppression, Lorde (1984) wrote:

> Traditionally, in American society, it is the members of the oppressed, objectified groups who are expected to stretch out and bridge the gap between the actualities of our lives and the consciousness of our oppressor. For in order to survive, those of us for whom oppression is an American as apple pie have always had to be watchers, to become familiar with the language and manners of the oppressor, even sometimes adopting them for some illusion of protection. (p. 114)

Patricia Hill Collins' concept of the matrix of domination is an organizing framework that I use to identify relationships of power and to develop strategies of resistance. Within a given matrix of domination, systems of oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, homophobia, ageism, classism, etc.) operate at macro and micro levels, interacting in ways that grant privileges to some members of society and extract penalties from others based on the individual's positionality. Because all structures of oppression operate simultaneously and reinforce one another, an individual may experience multiple, intersecting forms of oppression or multiple and intersecting forms of privilege, though no one is completely oppressed or completely dominant (Collins, 2000). Breaking through the matrix of domination requires a process of social transformation in which individuals must utilize aspects of privilege that they possess to work against the oppression experienced by others.

Collins (2000) argues that "outsiders within," or marginalized individuals who gain access to institutional power structures but are not coopted by those power structures play an important role in social transformation when they use their liminal positions to facilitate change from the inside out. As someone who identifies with the praxis of Black feminism, I willingly adopt the label of "outsider within" because it is from the unique vantage point of the margins that visions of social transformation can be most successfully articulated (hooks, 1984).

In my teaching, I try to engage students in analysis of structures of oppression that occur within and beyond the formal educational environment. I also encourage critical self-reflection on ways in which their positionality affords them aspects of privilege and marginalization and I challenge them to explore actions they can take to lessen the oppression of others. Teaching in this way allows me to use the educational privilege that I enjoy in the service of social justice. It is my attempt to try and ensure that the individuals who will teach our increasingly diverse public school students are themselves taught well (Dixson & Dingus, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2005). As a Black woman teacher educator, however, social justice education is dangerous terrain (Henry, 1993). In the section that follows, I continue to map my journey in higher education by reflecting on specific teaching experiences at the two predominantly White institutions where I have been employed.

Navigating Dangerous Terrain: Teaching for Social Justice through the Black Female Body

I hold a contradictory relationship with social justice education. While I believe in its benefits for learners, my own teaching of social-justice related courses within predominantly White institutions has been characterized by negative consequences, particularly in my undergraduate courses with pre-service teachers. Within predominantly White educational landscapes, the social markings of race and gender that inscribe my body necessarily influence my interactions with students (Baszile, 2004; Ng, 2004; Williams & Evans-Winters, 2005), usually (where my undergraduate teaching is concerned) in negative ways. For example, I have repeatedly experienced instances of disrespect, incivility, subtle and overt expressions of hostility, and a general resistance to my presence and my teaching similar to the experiences chronicled by other women faculty of color at predominantly White institutions (e.g., Brown, 2002; Dixson & Dingus, 2007; Dlamini, 2002; Ng, 2004; Paul, 2001; Vargas, 2002; Williams & Evans-Winters, 2005). That these negative experiences occur within my own classrooms (and the classrooms of other women faculty of color) to a much greater extent than in the classrooms of my non-minority male and female colleagues demonstrates the power struggles that emanate when Black and Brown bodies teach for social justice within the academic landscape.

In the passage below, Roxana Ng captures the contested nature of the struggles over knowledge and power that occur between minority women of color who teach for social justice and their students at predominantly White institutions; in so doing, Ng (2004) explicitly discusses ways in which these power struggles are embodied. Ng wrote:

> The classroom, especially the university classroom, is not a neutral place. It is a site where knowledge is constructed and contested. It is here that a complex of power relations based on class, gender, race, age, social position, and so on is animated, struggled over, inscribed and reinscribed...Power play is enacted and absorbed by people physically as they assert or challenge authority, and therefore the marks of such confrontations are stored in the body. (as cited in Ng, 2004, p. 12).

My embodied memories of the struggles for power experienced within my undergraduate classrooms support my usage of the metaphor of dangerous terrain to describe my experiences of teaching for social justice within predominantly White contexts. Though the terrain of social justice education is dangerous, the journey through these precarious spaces can be facilitated or thwarted by available support systems. Below, I reflect on teaching experiences within two predominantly White institutions. These experiences, characterized by very different support systems, are significant markers on my map of the academic landscape.

Mountain Climbing with a Safety Harness: Graduate School Teaching Experiences

If social justice education is conceptualized as a mountain range, issues of racism, homophobia, and other intersecting forms of oppression are all mountains along the range that must be scaled for social justice efforts to come to fruition. During my doctoral studies, I was immersed in scholarship and dialogue about critical theory, critical pedagogy, and social justice education; this introduction gave me an academic language with which I could communicate my long-held feelings about culture, social inequality, oppression, and the purposes of education (as opposed to schooling). Although I did not know it at the time, my doctoral program in cultural foundations of education was unique in that the vast majority of the teaching faculty was committed to the praxis of social justice education. They made deliberate attempts to engage in antiracist, antisexist, and anti-homophobic practices and, more importantly, when instances of oppression were inevitably identified within the program, the faculty was willing to address those issues.

One of the antiracist practices engaged by faculty in my doctoral program was to actively recruit racial/ethnic minority doctoral students to teach diversity education courses in our teacher education program. I began teaching the diversity education course during the second year of my doctoral studies. Although I had previous experiences co-teaching undergraduate students, I had never before had sole responsibility for selecting required readings or developing learning materials and assessments for the courses I taught. I honed my skills in these areas while also learning to teach for social justice during required weekly pedagogy seminars.

During these seminars, we critically reflected on texts related to teaching for social justice and shared learning activities that we found useful in our classes. We brainstormed solutions to the difficulties we faced in our classrooms and received encouragement to continually challenge ourselves and our students to examine structures of inequality and our implication in maintaining them. I am grateful for my lack of substantial teaching experience prior to entering my doctoral program. This lack freed me from having to unlearn bureaucratic, regimented, and unimaginative methods of undergraduate teaching and freed me to absorb the radical teaching advice I received and to implement curricula that challenged the status quo. I cannot emphasize enough the peace of mind I found in working in solidarity with like-minded individuals committed to social justice education. As a Black woman attending a predominantly White university with more than its fair share of racial issues, I nevertheless felt that I belonged within my doctoral program. It was for me a homeplace (hooks, 1990), the space where I learned how to teach for social justice as I "lived out" my identity as a social justice educator. Within the safety of that homeplace, I dared to teach courageously because I knew that I was ultimately, safe. As I scaled mountains of racism, homophobia, religious intolerance, etc., the faculty and classmates in my doctoral program were my safety harness. Though I had to do the difficult work of scaling the mountains myself, their support meant that my slips and falls, though painful, would not be fatal.

There were two other Black women doctoral students who also taught sections of the diversity education course. We often joked about how the students that we taught each semester held surprisingly similar views about and responses to issues of diversity. Truthfully, the time it took me to prepare responses to student critiques and objections decreased each semester because their critiques were usually formulaic. For example, during discussions about historical and present day struggles historically marginalized groups waged for equal access to education, numerous students would object to the need for programs at the state or national level to help underserved populations gain access to college. Many students would reference a family member, friend, or neighbor who was the

victim of reverse discrimination. Often the story involved a "completely unqualified" minority applicant who took a "spot" away from a non-minority who was obviously "better." Sometimes it was a hiring manager who confided to the unfortunate non-minority applicant that although the applicant was clearly more qualified, the hiring manager was forced to give the job to the minority candidate to make a quota. Sometimes it was the student whose great grandfather came to the U.S. with "nothing," but managed to secure financial independence for his family who would ask "Why can't people of color just work hard and do the same thing?"

   I tired of hearing these stock critiques that supported the status quo, but I loved the eagerness of the students to participate even if they were focused on disputing the information I introduced. Honestly, it was not difficult to poke holes in the logic of most of their objections. After all, I really did hear similar arguments each semester and only had to tweak the responses I prepared from previous semesters to apply them to the current semester. I also had other Black women teachers to strategize with as well as a larger group of doctoral students and program faculty available to support me in my teaching efforts. Ultimately, I knew that students would receive more of the "radical" teaching that I provided as they continued through the teacher education program because our department chair and program coordinator made sure that students would not encounter social justice oriented-curriculum until they matriculated. Teaching for social justice in that context made me feel that I was an important part of a broader social justice movement. I have never found it easy to teach for social justice on a predominantly White campus; however, during my doctoral studies and for the two years after graduation that I remained employed at the University, I was empowered to teach courageously because I knew that I was not alone.

Scaling Mountains without a Rope: Social Justice Education in Isolation

   The saying "you don't know what you have until it's gone" appropriately describes my previous teaching experiences. I took my homeplace in the doctoral program for granted, assuming naïvely that any university choosing to include the phrase "social justice" in its mission statement would provide a suitable landing space after I completed my Ph.D. Now in my fifth year at my current place of employment, I am keenly aware of the difference between rhetoric and practice where social justice and commitment to diversity are concerned. Whereas my doctoral program provided a safety harness of formal and informal support for my pursuit of social justice education, I currently practice my social justice work in the absence of formal support systems. To extend the metaphor of mountain climbing, I now find myself scaling mountains without a safety rope.

   My social markings of race and gender necessarily influenced processes of teaching and learning at my previous place of employment. However, there is a qualitatively different dynamic to teaching about issues of social inequality as a Black woman working within a predominantly White institution in the "deep South," where historical struggles over race, gender, and power continue to influence the present (Ross, 2013; Ware, 1992). This dynamic is exacerbated by the absence of support for genuine social justice education that, rather than presenting students with an "everyone is different, everyone is equal" discourse on diversity, actually grapples with issues of social inequality and challenges students to critically reflect on their

own complicity in structures of oppression. The absence of concerted teaching efforts of this type results in an environment where the minority faculty who teach for social justice do so in isolation and the students who enroll in their courses receive the message that issues of diversity and social justice education are insignificant (Brayboy, 2003; Dixson & Dingus, 2007).

   It is within this dangerous terrain that I attempt to engage in social justice education. Without formal support for this difficult work, I rely on the safe space (Collins, 2000) of interaction with other women of color. It is these women who have mentored me, shared stories of struggle and survival, made me laugh, cried with me, and given me reasons for hope when the burdens of teaching for social justice in the deep South have proved too much for me to bear alone. Yet as informal support systems, these women could not alter my teaching load when I was assigned to teach two sections (with caps of thirty-five students each!) of diversity courses each semester in addition to another doctoral course. They could not diversify the teaching faculty so that I was not the first (and frequently only) Black female college instructor that students encountered. Nor could they prevent students in my undergraduate courses from using their teaching evaluations as weapons to punish me. Most significant for my future in academia, the women of color with whom I found a safe space could not prevent my negative undergraduate teaching evaluations from being used in decisions about my tenure and promotion.

   Leery of my precarious positioning within higher education, yet committed to provide the pre-service teachers I came in contact with the best education I could, I challenged them to question prevailing assumptions about race, class, gender, and other social markers. In back to back diversity courses (my first class was 9:30 – 10:45 and my second was 11:00 – 12:15 each Tuesday and Thursday), we explored issues homophobia, English immersion, affirmative action and other "hot topics" as the students referred to them through readings, activities, and films that I thought would engage their interests. I experienced difficulty in these classes, not because of overt student resistance, but because encouraging full participation was like pulling teeth. Most of the time, my attempts to engage them in meaningful dialogue were largely unsuccessful; a handful of students would eagerly exchange ideas with me while the majority of the class remained silent, waiting for the class to end.

   The silence ended unexpectedly and then resumed in my second diversity class as we began discussing the importance of respecting students' home language. I was in the middle of introducing the concept of "code switching" as an empowering skill for students whose home language differed from the language used in the school environment. To be honest, it had been a long day in an even longer semester. I was tired of the seemingly endless cycle of developing undergraduate learning activities and implementing them with little success. I was exhausted from grading the poorly written reflective essays of almost 70 undergraduate students and I was fed up with the polite smiles and silences that most of the students greeted me with each week. Given this context, I was initially thrilled when one of the usually silent students spoke up in response to my talk about students' home languages.

   In a surprisingly loud and confident manner, the student began explaining how her mother was a teacher in a Title I school. Her mother had all sorts of "problems" with students speaking "the wrong way." This student went on to say

how she would be a terrible teacher to let a student leave her classroom using slang like "I is" or "I ain't go no." She declared that the correct thing to do would be to tell the student: "That is not how you speak correctly. You are supposed to say it like this…" Standing there, listening to this student perform what must have been her best impression of "Black language," I felt as if I had reached my limit. Of course, I had heard the logic she presented from students I taught in other diversity courses, but the confidence of this recently silent student, coupled with the nods of agreement that I saw from many of the other students somehow caught me off guard. In contrast to the usual calm way in which I try to challenge student assumptions in class, I angrily asked the class who determined what constituted correct speech and why the language a young child used within her community was wrong if the language was functional within that community? I said a lot more about Lisa Delpit's (1988) concepts of "the culture of power" and "language of power." By the time I was finished, I felt a lot better, but in response to my outburst, the students retreated back into their silence.

I thought a lot about my angry reaction in the days that followed that class. I expected some form of protest from the students for the emotion that I revealed, but I experienced nothing but the usual silence. By the end of the semester, I assumed that my outburst had been forgotten. I was wrong. When I received my student evaluations for the course, they were horrible – the worst I had ever received. The mean scores were bad and the written comments were worse. Students commented that I made education too depressing, that the only thing I discussed was race, that they feared being labeled as racists if they spoke up in my class, and that I had no business teaching.

Prior to working at my current place of employment, I viewed ratings of instruction as one among many ways to improve my teaching. I read them carefully and, where I felt the suggestions were warranted, tried to incorporate them in my teaching. When I read my evaluations from that class, I cried. I thought about all the time preparing for that class required – vital time that I should have been devoting to research and scholarship. All of that time and energy expended with nothing but terrible course evaluations to show for it.

Later, during my annual review, I was asked to "explain" the low ratings. Hadn't I taught diversity courses before? Didn't I co-edit the diversity education text that was still being used at my previous institution? Having to answer these and other questions added insult to the injury of my experiences in the course. Of course I knew the literature on student resistance to social justice-oriented courses and to the women of color who often teach them, but as an untenured junior faculty member, I did not feel empowered to "defend" myself with this literature. Ultimately, the annual review was a painful reminder that the work I felt obligated to do was not formally supported.

More than three years have passed since the teaching experience that I recounted above. I now (thankfully) teach pre-service teachers once per year as opposed to twice each semester. I primarily engage in social justice education with the graduate students that I teach. Based on exceptional advocacy on the part of my mentor and friend, Ming Fang He, high course ratings from the graduate students that I teach, and hard work on my part, I achieved tenure while navigating this dangerous terrain. I am wiser now. While still committed to social justice education, I no longer have the love of undergraduate teaching

that I once did and I am much more tentative about the ways in which I engage the pre-service students that I teach. Perhaps more than anything, I remain bitter about a difficult journey that could have been made much less taxing with formal support.

Humble Advice for New Faculty

Having informal and formal support for social justice education makes the difficult task of educating for change easier to bear for minority women faculty. My advice for new minority women faculty venturing onto the landscapes of higher education would be to choose their landing spaces carefully and to gain as much information as possible about departmental commitment to social justice education, approaches departmental faculty engage when teaching classes on diversity, multicultural education, etc., and whether there are willing and suitable senior faculty mentors available for assistance in acclimating to campus politics and culture. For minority women of color who find themselves teaching for social justice within a hostile environment, the necessity of finding likeminded individuals to commiserate and strategize with cannot be overstated. Informal support systems are necessary to maintain sanity within hostile university environments, but they do not, in and of themselves, foster change. In order to improve the environments within which minority women faculty practice social justice education, changes must be made at the institutional level so that the rhetoric of social justice and diversity can be actualized. The final section of this article provides recommendations for program coordinators, department chairs, and other administrators to assist in making the rhetoric of diversity a reality.

Turning Rhetoric into Reality: Suggestions for University Administrators

Numerous women faculty of color have written about the challenges of teaching for social justice within predominantly White institutions and have offered recommendations that administrators can adopt to ameliorate these challenges. Common among these recommendations is a need for administrators to increase their awareness of minority faculty experiences related to social justice education on predominantly White campuses (Dixson & Dingus, 2007; Stanley, 2006b; Williams & Evans-Winters, 2005). For example, awareness of the additional time and energy resources that are necessary for social justice education can help administrators to make more informed decisions related to workload, teaching assignments, merit pay, and promotion and tenure (Stanley, 2006).

Recognition of the dynamics that come into play when minority women teach about issues of inequality to predominantly White students can also help administrators make more informed decisions when dealing with student complaints and/or negative student evaluations of minority women who teach for social justice (Williams & Evans-Winters, 2005).

Most importantly, knowledge of the experiences of minority women faculty teaching for social justice can be used by university administrators genuinely committed to diversity to initiate or broaden discussions of diversity/ multiculturalism across the campus community. For students enrolled in social justice-oriented courses, such discussions can be used to challenge student assumptions about who should be teaching them and can also play an important role in orienting students to the dispositions they are expected to adopt relative to issues of diversity and social justice (Williams & Evans-Winters, 2005).

For university faculty, discussions of this type initiated by university administrators can communicate university expectations about diversity and can communicate when cultural shifts are needed (Dixson & Dingus, 2007) to actualize social justice rhetoric.

University administrators genuinely committed to diversity should also work to initiate the shifts in culture that they acknowledge are needed by protecting minority women faculty who teach for social justice; such protection can occur at the program level by ensuring that the entire program (as opposed to the lone minority female faculty member), is held accountable for infusing diversity and/or social justice into the curricula (Dixson & Dingus, 2007). University administrators can also provide protection through the hiring of multiple faculty of color to create a more diversified faculty (Stanley, 2006b). In addition to alleviating the isolation and alienation reported by so many minority faculty working within predominantly White institutions, a critical mass (Collins, 2000) of minority faculty working together for social justice can erode the mountains of oppression in higher education, making this dangerous terrain more manageable.

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Teaching Students What They Ought Not Have to Know: (Re)Discovering Education as a Practice of Freedom

Shawn Arango Ricks, Winston-Salem State University

To educate as a practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn that learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin. (hooks, 1994b, p. 13)

This article examines the role of race and gender on my pedagogical style, and the manner in which I engage my students and develop curriculum. Although I have been teaching for over fifteen years, I have noticed subtle differences in my pedagogy as a Black woman educator at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). The environment has pulled out components that perhaps were dormant for years. The rich environment of an HBCU demanded I share more with my students than the current lesson plan. It demanded I share with them *all* the skills they would need to survive. These skills include not only macro skills, such as course content, but also micro level skills such as code-switching, diction, unwritten rules and appearance. An informal process of sharing has been complimented with the creation of a required course for students in my major. This class provides formal mechanism for sharing what students ought not have to learn. What follows is the story of my (re)discovery of education as a practice of freedom. I interrogate my lived experiences and pedagogical style within a theoretical framework, and examine the role of my gender and sex as it relates to both my teaching style and curriculum development. Finally, I compare my experiences to other Black women educators who challenge students to look beyond just getting their degree, but instead focusing on getting an education.

Teaching as a Political Act

As an undergraduate student at a predominantly White institution (PWI), I learned quickly to find allies among the faculty and staff who could assist me in my journey. One such ally saw something in me I had not quite spotted—my passion for teaching. She offered me an opportunity as an undergraduate to act as a teaching assistant for one of her courses. I didn't realize it then, but she was preparing me for a lifelong journey. She was educating as a practice of freedom. I taught with her for several semesters, and fell right in line with an easy style of my own. Although I had not formally studied any pedagogy, I did what I intuitively felt to be right. I taught, and continued to teach, using my whole body. Head to toe.

At the time I knew, organically, that education was important. What I was not aware of was that the historical and political role education has played for Black women both as teachers, and as students. What I viewed as an individual act, my role as a teaching assistant, was actually the beginning of my political statement. That professor, who I will never forget, was investing in me, sharing with me, and *caring* for me in a way no other teacher had. I was learning and claiming my voice, my worth and my place. It was not until much later that I learned about the historical role of education for Black women, both as teachers and students.

The African proverb, "She who learns must also teach," speaks to the importance attached to the role and responsibility of Black women faculty in sharing their knowledge regardless of any oppositions or challenges they may have faced. Education has been an integral part of the survival and liberation of African Americans since their arrival in the Americas in the 1600s (Bennett Jr., 1988; Camp, 2004; Franklin & Moss, 1994; Gaspar & Hine, 1996; Giddings, 1984; Harrison, 2009; Kolchin, 1993; Lerner, 1972; Morgan, 2004; Sterling, 1984; Takaki, 1993). Although education was ruled illegal, slaves recognized the importance and need for basic skills (such as reading and writing) to their freedom and survival. Many slaves risked their lives and created underground schools and systems to teach one another and the next generation. Key in the pursuit of education were slave women who gathered around the riverbank in the evenings to teach students, or stayed up until midnight conducting classes. Apparently they knew, without ever being told, that education would be a "way out" and a "way up." Women slaves faced many atrocities, and found multiple ways to fight back (Bambara,1970; Harrison, 2009). Female slaves chose to resist in more subversive ways, and there are numerous examples of resistance through education, in which slave women, recognizing the importance of reading and writing, found ways to teach others whatever information they learned. Sometimes this information came in less organized gatherings, and other women went as far as to organize schools:

In Natchez, Louisiana, there were two schools taught by colored teachers. One of these was a slave woman who had taught at a midnight school for a year. It was opened at eleven or twelve o'clock at night, and closed at two o'clock a.m. . . . Milla Granson, the teacher, learned to read and write from the children of her indulgent master in her old Kentucky home. Her number of scholars was twelve at a time, and when she had taught these to read and write she dismissed them, and again took her apostolic number and brought them up to the extent of her ability, until she had graduated hundreds. A number of them wrote their own passes and started for Canada. (Lerner, 1973, pp. 32-33)

Milla is just one of examples of how female slaves went to extraordinary length to reach out and change their environments. Her simple, yet terrifyingly brave, act of educating slaves left an impact on hundreds of slaves. Her method of resistance was subversive and methodical, yet very effective.

After slavery, Black women such as Lucy Laney, Nanne Burroughs, Charlotte Hawkins Brown and Mary McCleod Bethune, formed schools and teaching soon became one of the main occupations of Black women. Teaching continued to be a respectable and sought after position for Black women, and in fact, several schools (including institutions of higher education), focused on training women to be teachers. Black women used teaching for more than just a career choice. It was the route to upward mobility. Black women knew the key to their liberation was education. One Black female scholar, from small town in Kentucky, took the history of Black women in education and situated it within a theoretical framework.

Education as the Practice of Freedom

Formally I learned about bell hooks' concept of education as the practice of freedom while in my doctoral program; informally I knew it all my life. From the moment I began shadowing my first mentor, until today, I could not disconnect my students from the life experiences they bring with them to class. According to hooks (1994b), liberation via education is supported by: language (privilege, class), freedom (self-love, belonging, fear, healing), teaching as a political act, and obedience (mind/body split). I became fixated on the concept of the mind/body split, as I saw the impossibility of this task for me, and the long term dangers of trying to educate people who are not encouraged to feel. I began to notice universities rewarding students and teachers who live in their head, but are not connected with their heart. By being void of feelings, those who disconnect their minds from their bodies lose a large part of themselves, and their ability to be free.

As a Black woman professor, I have noticed that education as a practice of freedom is undervalued—to say the least. Teaching *is* a political act. Every time I step in the classroom I am making a political statement. I strive to create conditions in my classrooms where students can (and want to) learn. I listen. I *hear.* I feel. Yet, sometimes these actions are misconstrued, and I am labeled as the "nurturing" professor. This comparison startles me at times when I see images of how "mammie-like" people must perceive me. As a pleasant, non-threatening, nurturing Black woman teacher. This is an ever-present risk. But my teaching and guidance are much more about surface-level nurturing; it is about teaching these kids how to survive.

My push to teach survival skills is met with some push back from all sides--other faculty, students and administration. I keep hearing the same message of "rigor." What I am doing intuitively, which also a high level skill--that is engaging a classroom and creating an environment for true learning--is downplayed as an "easy course." I end up fighting myself, reminding myself, to be true to myself. There is no one I need to validate myself to, or for; yet, all of academe is ultimately about validation and proof.

Not only do I need to teach in manner that "cares for and respects" the souls of my students, but I am also mindful of passing on to my students all the other skills they will need to survive (hooks, 1994b; also Delpit,1988). This has become highlighted during my work at an HBCU. I feel morally and ethically obligated to share with students all the "cultural capital" I can to help them navigate the world. Some of the things I share, often start at home—code switching, for example. But there is so much more that I feel obligated to go into with my students to increase their chances of being successful. Not only I am preparing them for work, I am preparing them to deal with the micro aggressions of individual and institutional racism. That goes way past learning to say "yes ma'am" and "no sir." It is about long term survival. A true Darwinian litmus test.

"I am because we are"

The collectivist nature of Black women as a survival strategy and coping method can be traced back to African proverbs such as "I am because we are" and "it takes a village to raise a child." This commonly known phrase was more than words as I was growing up, they were our mantra. Raised by a single mother, I had more "aunts" than I can remember. Every one of them helped my young mother along her journey. I witnessed the pooling of resources (economic and otherwise) as the way to make it through. It was in that vein that I developed my worldview. This was reinforced during my years in college, when I experienced an unplanned pregnancy. I witnessed the Black community coming together to claim "our" baby, and support her momma. I would never have graduated without the staff member who offered me shelter; the administrator who allowed me to continue to work; and my fellow students who did everything from babysitting to

providing transportation. It was a whole community.

It was by being part of the community that I started this story. The faculty member saw my potential and utilized it. She taught me, without ever saying it, "You are worthy. You have something to offer. I trust you." I began teaching as a junior in college. As her teaching assistant, I sat in classes and graded whatever I could for her. But I was really observing and learning to hone my pedagogical style without realizing it. I was a teacher in training.

I was offered the chance to teach for a year as an instructor at a large predominantly White institution, and I took to my classes like a fish in water. I attempted to engage students in the same style of teaching I had been unofficially trained in. It is a seminar style, which encourages all students to participate, share, and grow. It was a failure. I received horrible reviews as I looked, and felt, uncomfortable trying a familiar method on my own. The students wanted a didactic experience, and over the course of the semester I felt my energy waning. The old message of "give the people what they want" flashed before me and I became a lecturer. My spirit was broken.

In reflection, I realize that what I thought was a failure was just another learning speed bump. I was too young at the time to account for audience, or context, in my teaching style. I had been trained by a Black woman, and worked alongside her in Black/Women's studies courses. This created a different dynamic from my first official collegiate experience, teaching an African and African American studies course as part of a required general education curriculum. Different audience. Different setting. Same Shawn. I had not taken into account the importance of setting. Over the years I continued to teach at a variety of schools-public, private, two-year, four-year, PWI and HBCU. I realize now that although the message stayed the same, I changed my delivery based on the audience. I carefully surveyed my students to gauge where they were and what they could handle. I mentally screened current events for usefulness and purpose. As a Black woman educator, I learned to be aware of perception and delivery *alongside* curriculum.

What I realized from these experiences was that I had developed my view on teaching from the culture of collectivism in which I was raised. This cultural tradition is at the crux of who I am and acts as my moral compass, guiding everything I do. My teaching style, as a reflection of everything I organically am, fits me. Students know that if they see me on the street, in the store or at the gym, I will react/act the same way I do in class. I'm just Shawn. Having my teaching style rejected initially was challenging for me, but ultimately it taught me to believe and trust myself. Everything we know can't be understood—and most can't be explained.

Teaching students what they ought not have to know

My latest, and longest, stop has been at an HBCU and I am beginning to recognize a greater, deeper shift in my teaching yet again. I began to allow myself to fully show up for classes. I realize in the past I was, at times, allowing for a "mind/body" split as the professor. I now wonder what role being at an HBCU has had on my teaching. It has been both reaffirming and oppressive simultaneously. I went back to what I knew to be intuitively correct. The environment of an HBCU was taking me back home. It is forcing my teaching style back into a comfortable, intuitive place. As I continue to teach, I realize and accept the role my lived experiences play in the classroom. Having justified my style within a theoretical framework, I felt relieved and validated. As I continued on in my academic career, I began to notice how my lens was affecting curriculum decisions as well. I couldn't help wondering if the environment (of an HBCU) was pulling out of me what might have otherwise lie dormant if I were teaching fulltime at a PWI. What I didn't realize at the time was that my intuition

was supported by generations of Black women who had done similar things, and more recently was supported by research.

As my tenure continues at this HBCU, I noticed myself shifting from informal methods of mentoring and modeling, to a more formalized system. In fact, I created a class primarily to have an opportunity to share with students what they need to know before they enter the workforce and/or graduate school. The class was also formed in response to feedback from the fieldwork supervisors of my students, who reported that the students seemed a little rough around the edges. The greatest irony to me, however, is that this type of mentoring was an integral (and valued) part of the HBCU culture until recently. Mentoring on HBCUs is still occurring, but with the shift in administrative priorities (research and grants) and the changing demographics of our faculty; the landscape at many HBCUs is changing. As I researched, I found my intuitive position to be backed by a theoretical framework, and a rich cultural history of HBCUs.

Now, knowing I was right and acting on it were still two different things. Formally, I knew my students—who spent their last semester in the field—needed more. I created a professional development course. This course has allowed me to share with students a wide array of information, that I was, actually, sharing *anyway*, just more informally and in one-on-one meetings. In this course, we covered everything from practical skills such as writing resumes and letters of intent for graduate school, to clothing, handshakes, eye contact and code-switching.

This course has been a joy to teach. I have broken the class into sections and covered resumes, graduate school applications and preparation, interviewing, etc. In a way, I have found a way to get credit for the mentoring I was doing. The course is a mixed-bag however. As someone who enjoys and embraces individuality, I am always cautious of running the risk of creating students who become "drone" like. Issues of assimilation and acculturation dance through my head. I struggle with it every semester. Issues surrounding hair and names are becoming increasingly complex. Regarding names, I make students aware of the discussions about discrimination based on nontraditional names on resumes. Regarding hair, it's a struggle to encourage men (or women) with dreadlocks to consider alternative hairstyles, at least until they get the job. I even say these things. As a Black woman in education, I feel hypocritical. Am I educating for liberation or assimilation?

The Shifting Landscape of HBCUs

As I struggle with these pragmatic issues, I am reminded that Black women have intuitively known that education would be the path for freedom. In those early slave and free schools, there was less of an emphasis on mastery of information and more focus on sharing the information people would need to know in an effort to survive. A similar philosophy was adopted by historically black colleges and universities when they were founded. Those HBCUs were focused not only on content, but also on creating an environment and sharing information that would help students succeed. Sometimes that information included sharing cultural capital (navigation and survival skills).

As I reflect on my teaching style and worldview, I am reminded that they are sometimes in direct contradiction to the culture of the academy. Not only do I field comments from other professors about their perception of rigor, i.e. if students are not complaining you must be "easy," but students sometimes do not realize the extent to which they have been programmed. As an institution, education has done a great job stealing the joy of learning from many youth. When I get them they have spent twelve to fourteen years mastering a system which privileges rigidity, didactic lectures and rote memorization. As I attempt to push back I stand alone. The students sometimes do not know how to handle the different type of intensity of my courses. When I couple the

sentiment of the students with the privileging of quantitative research on campus, I feel isolated.

Perceptions of rigor and scholarship are not isolated issues. I have wondered, however, if these issues are magnified at HBCUs as the culture shifts from teaching institutions to a more research focus. In a perfect world, there would be a balance between teaching, service and research. Faculty would be evaluated based on their strengths in a particular area. What I am finding is that in an effort to move our institution "forward" we have privileged research over our historical mission. One of the dangers in this shift is the recruitment of faculty based on their ability to conduct research, not the ability to connect with, mentor and/or otherwise prepare students for the world. In addition, the majority of research shared is quantitative. This is what people understand to be "real" research. As an autoethnographic and narrative researcher, I am in the minority, which is pretty ironic given the history of Black women in education. Still fighting. Forever fighting.

Through research, I recognize that many of my experiences have been ongoing challenges for Black women in the academy including: alienation and isolation, cultural taxation, and internalized oppression. If I am going to survive in the academy I need to understand my challenges and develop appropriate coping mechanisms. And that's just what I set out to do.

Alienation and Isolation

It is not surprising to me that the overarching theme of the research regarding challenges facing Black women in academia focuses on feelings of alienation and isolation. Alexander and Mohanty (1997) described these problems of academy as "sense of alienation, dislocation, and marginalization, that often accompanies a racialized location with white institutions" (p. 68). Although a large portion of the research focuses on this phenomenon at PWIs, this feeling is also valid at HBCUs. Billingslea-Brown and Gonzales De Allen (2009) found that HBCUs often privileged race over other identities, continuing to leave Black women feeling alienated and isolated.

In describing issues of alienation and isolation, I am most moved by bell hooks' interpretation. She used the term marginalization to describe the outer edges in which Black women live, and defines it as "part of the whole but outside the main body" (hooks, 1990, p. 149). She emphasized, however, that "despite being located on the margins—an unsafe and risky position for any member of an oppressed group—Black women and other women of color need not consider their place in the academy as one of deprivation solely" (hooks, 1990, p. 149). hooks (1990) stated:

> [M]arginality [is] much more than a site of deprivation; in fact . . . it is also the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance. It was this marginality that I was naming as a central location for the production of a counter-hegemonic discourse that is not just found in words but in habits of being and the way one lives. As such, I was not speaking of a marginality one wishes to lose—to give up or surrender as part of moving into the center—but rather of a site one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one's capacity to resist. It offers to one the possibility of radical perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds. (pp. 149-150)

In this interpretation, hooks has seamlessly crossed over from challenge to coping strategy, cautioning us that issues viewed from a deficit model can cause extreme psychological damage. Instead, reclaiming spaces may provide me the capacity to continue in my efforts to resist, and provide a new lens to see and create new worlds.

Referencing the work of Zora Neal Hurston, E. Frances

White, and bell hooks, Hill Collins provides a theoretical framework (Black Feminist Thought) to support hooks' position that Black women reclaim their spaces and utilize the knowledge found there to re-imagine their worlds. According to Hill Collins, this type of knowledge creation has in fact been happening for generations; it just has not been viewed as "valid knowledge"— both in mainstream culture and in academia. Describing knowledge production and validation, Hill Collins (1990) stated:

These "radical perspectives" are often blocked within academia and not valued as knowledge. In institutions of higher education, knowledge claims have been traditionally validated by White men. Even though Black women have been producing similar knowledge for generations, the suppression of this knowledge through the continuance of a hegemonic discourse ultimately restricts Black women access to the true inner circles of academia. Black women included in the academy (those with "academic credentials") find themselves caught between using their authority to attempt to promote new knowledge claims of Black women, and recognizing their potential status as 'tokens of the academy,' put in place in an attempt to accept a few 'safe' outsiders. (p. 272)

A hegemonic discourse of knowledge production and validation silences women and promotes "the cultural phenomenon of invisibility, both racial and gendered" (Wallace, 2004, p. 225). Women become relegated to the margins, instantly becoming the "other," defined by Lorde (2007) as "the outsider whose experience and tradition is too 'alien' to comprehend" (p. 117).

Cultural Taxation

I was intrigued by Padilla's (1994) concept of "cultural taxation" to describe the extra burden of additional responsibilities placed upon minority faculty because of their racial, ethnic, and/or gender group memberships. Although primarily ascribed to minority faculty working at PWIs, I have found this concept applicable at HBCUs. Black women on HBCUs seem to be getting it done. There are additional responsibilities, such as mentoring large number of students and increased service expectations. These additional expectations can impede career progress and may result in psychological problems.

Internalized Oppression

Second guessing my teaching style may be related to what Evans (2007) has termed the "politics of respectability." Black women often feel additional pressure to prove themselves worthy or better than their colleagues. According to Evans (2007), this viewpoint originates from the understanding that:

…[E]xcellence is at once repressive and compelling: while buying into ideas of excellence reifies the trappings of ego and merit, it is nonetheless necessary to demonstrate that achievement is commonplace in black women's collegiate history so that when other scholars do excel, it is seen as normative rather than exceptional. (p. 210)

Interestingly, I was still caught in the conundrum of seeking liberation via the processes, which oppress and bind.

Learning to Cope

I have learned many ways to cope, some from direct observation and some from reading and talking to colleagues. All the coping methods have a common thread of resistance—never giving up. A pushing back, or against, the grain. I recognize some of these resistance strategies as being rooted in slavery' they include: resiliency, building community, defiance, religion and mentoring (Gregory, 1995, 2001; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001). I situate the coping strategies Black women utilize to survive within a historical, socio-cultural, and political context.

Resiliency

One of the coping strategies I have had to utilize in the academy, and in my life, has been resiliency. I did not realize that what I was doing to survive was grounded in theory, but it was comforting to know I was not alone. In reading about Resiliency theory I discovered:

[It]…focuses on the fact that individuals with multiple risk factors in their lives are able to triumph over their challenges and do well in spite of the predictions of experts. For African American women resilience is the ability to multi-task, to solve problems, to have a feeling of responsibility and able to make a difference (i.e. internal locus of control), and the use of spiritual beliefs as a support. To truly have resilience requires confidence and hard work, as demonstrated by African American women faculty. (Burke et al., 2000, p. 298)

Resiliency theory does an excellent job noting select traits that have created an overarching picture of competence and success to allow Black women to physically stay in academia, but negates to probe further into the underlying mental and physical results of such "resilience." This is an area in need of future research.

Building community

Creating communities is not a new phenomenon for Black women. I started my story describing the role, and importance of, community in helping me to survive. I discovered research that speaks to the creation and importance of communities as a tool for resistance and survival (Brown-Glaude, 2010; Shorter-Gooden, 2004). Evidence of black women establishing communities of resistance can be traced all the way back to slavery when women gathered by the river or in the fields to share strategies, sing spirituals and uplift one another. This strategy has been termed "coalition building" (Gregory, 1995), creating "alternative communities" (Brown-Glaude, 2010), and "support groups" (Gregory, 1995). Regardless of the name, the goal is the same-- survival through sharing of information and knowledge in supportive environments.

Mentoring

Mentoring has played a large role for Black women in academia, both as mentors and as mentees. What is taxing for them as mentors, can be helpful as mentees allowing them to develop "creative strategies to find and develop mentorship opportunities outside their academic units, thereby creating communities of resistance" (Thomas & Hoollenshead, 2001, p. 173), described earlier as necessary and productive. This has been important to me as I seek to find others who view education as a practice of freedom. I have reached across disciplines, and across campuses, to find other Black women with whom I connected. Our support for each other has been irreplaceable.

The challenges facing Black women in academe include isolation/alienation, mentoring, and internalized oppression. In response to these challenges Black women have created communities, networked, exhibited acts of defiance, and utilized their faith. These methods, although helpful, do not address the psychological residue of the resiliency of Black women. Additional coping methods will be necessary to deal with upcoming challenges.

Conclusion

My experiences as a Black woman educator have challenged me to draw upon a personal and historic well spring of knowledge in an effort to survive. As a result of my journey I have grown, personally and professionally. I still work hard to share all that I think my students will need to survive; but I am balancing and protecting my time better. The more I put in my reserve, the more I can ultimately share with others. It is simple math, really-- input and output. Situating my experiences within a historical framework has been helpful. I am more keenly aware of the well-documented history of oppression and resistance faced by Black

women. Equally as important, I am more aware of the creative and subversive ways Black women chose to resist.

From my mother, grandmother, "other" mothers and aunts who nurtured me, cared for me and loved me, to the faculty, staff, and friends who cocooned me, I have had first-hand experiences with the power of community. I recognize now, that as I swim against the tide, I must be ever vigilant of the long term goal—liberation. It is with this goal in mind that I will continue my fight. Challenging the status quo, standing up for differences and believing in the integrity of what I know intuitively to do. I have (re)discovered education as a practice of freedom, and I hope never to forget it.

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Claiming a Reconfiguration of the Center: Authority Teaching from the Edge

Wynnetta Scott-Simmons, Mercer University

*All of my sistahs discuss the importance of recognizing, owning, and claiming our voice. According to Hill Collins (1998), when Black women break their silence individually through autobiographies or narratives, they are adding to, and shifting, the collective voice of Black women. The writing becomes, as it has for me, a counter-hegemonic tool, which nurtures a healing process both individually and collectively. Hill Collins (1998) has discussed the importance of writing about "concrete experiences," stating that "when Black women valorize their own concrete experiences, they claim the **authority** of experience" (p. 48). This **authority** disrupts other discourses which seek to subjugate marginalized groups by denying and/or overlooking the validity of lived experiences. (Ricks, 2012, p.17)*

Paradise Lost

Despite serving as the default expert on matters relating to African American female issues; despite teaching several of the same classes as my colleagues; despite attending the same conferences; and despite serving on many of the same committees, as a result of my culturally divergent experiences, racially conflicting viewpoint, and gender-situated perspective, I often existed, taught from, and spoke from the edge. Contested issues of power, authority, silence, and social justice potentiality experienced by one African American female professor at private Predominantly White Institution (PWI) in the Southeastern United States are captured on these pages. This story is offered as an addition to the growing body of Black feminist research which explores the dynamic and contested intersectionlity of race, gender, authority, silence, cultural capital, social justice pathways, and the teaching-learning-unlearning-relearning (Wink, 2002) continuum orchestrated from both the edge and the center by a minority professor.

The Search for Paradise Found in Locations of Possibility

The academy is not paradise. But learning is a place where paradise can be created. The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. (Hooks, 1994, p. 207)

The college of education hallway was unusually crowded and lively on that winter evening. Students were leaning on walls or had created impromptu seats on the floor. Laughter added a cloak of communal lightheartedness and ease to the scene. Several students were engaged in animated discussions about assignments, group project plans, and upcoming presentations. A few students were merely milling about while others were intent on quietly, yet hurriedly, consuming last-minute meals. Everyone was waiting for the signal to begin the change in classroom occupancy dance – at the usual time doors would open and students would execute their choreographed moves to perfection as they dodged notebooks, avoided stepping on projects, or missed being hit by backpacks thrown obliviously over shoulders. As I navigated the hallway in the midst of this academic episode, I participated in the dance as an unnoticed extra, an unattached outsider.

On this particular evening, I had ventured upstairs from my office, a bit earlier than normal, in order to deposit the materials that would be needed for that evening's class. It was as I approached my assigned classroom that I overheard an uncensored dialogue between two students.

> Well, maybe if we stopped talking about and focusing on race & culture so much the issues would stop being issues?!
> ....You are so right! She's so concerned with things that aren't really issues anymore. Content doesn't know anything about race and culture. And besides, who does she think she is anyway? What makes her think she can teach us anything coming from that perspective?! What authority does she have here?

Despite having their backs to me, I had little trouble recognizing the two students as members of my *Culturally & Educationally Responsive Pedagogy* class. Their words, that evening possessed the power to stop me dead in my tracks. Though fraught with personal negation and professional nullification, my suspended movement in the hallway on that enlightening evening was not solely due to the content of the statements. I was particularly struck by the identities of the speakers. They were two members who, despite their *silenced* voices, had sat seemingly attentive and engaged as they nodded approval of the conveyed message during each of our previous class sessions. Now, aware of this seemingly more forthright opinion, I was forced to examine and determine the underlying significance of their unrestricted and now *unsilenced* message. This new revelation also triggered speculation about the types and uses of silence. Of particular interest was the use of silence in cross-cultural, cross-positional, and cross-racial communication, or lack thereof. How might silence be used to construct or dismantle the potential conceptualization of structures in order to reposition figures, sites or centers of control in favor of the development of opportunities for honest engagement across subjective positions?

In the moment of hearing this honest discussion, had my position and my center been re-framed, re-centered, re-calibrated, and re-authorized? I now wondered, as in the hallway, prior to the change-in-classroom dance, had I been re-characterized as the unattached outsider or was this simply an indication of my new position in the more liberal, post-racial America? The overheard dialogue had prompted in me a series of questions; questions that focused not only on my immediate relationship with my adult students, but also questions relating to the future cross-cultural relationships these adult learners might develop with their students. What level of personal responsibility would they accept, as I was now posing to myself, for the failures of their students if they were unable to or deliberately chose not to recognize *the issues* that prevented them from connecting with their other-cultured students? Or would they retreat to their authoritarian positions of blamelessness, as members of the dominant or authority-culture, opting to instead blame the *other* for failure due to a lack of preparation, ability, or determination rooted in a perceived level of broader cultural ineptitude?

Prior to the disclosure of their frank opinions, I had

perceived the two students to be supportive and accepting recipients of my delivered content; a content which sought to address the varied cultural and academic needs of an ever-increasing diverse student population. This would be the only course in their programs of study that was designed to assist future teachers in increasing their understanding of the ways in which cultures vary in mores, expectations, traditions, and values. Readings were discussed to raise awareness as to the potential cost that may be levied when insensitive mistakes in understanding and knowledge about a child's culture are made by education professionals. Projects were designed to provide an opportunity to bridge the gap between the theory and praxis of learning deeply about other cultures while developing signature sets of pedagogical practices (Shulman, 2005). Students reflected upon ways of transferring that knowledge to the development of instructional practices which engender student engagement and student success while staving off content alienation and social marginalization. Additionally, students were called upon to recognize the professional and ethical call to understand one's own cultural standpoint as it relates to the resultant impact on instructional preferences and student performance expectations. An ultimate transformative goal centered around helping students to recognize, as the bestowed authority in the classroom, the inherent social justice impact of their professional choices; the connection between the acceptance of that bestowed power and their advocacious duty to make or modify instructional choices which are designed to affirm and build upon existing funds of knowledge regardless of the cultural position or academic ability of their students.

After a few introductory weeks of either acquiring or accessing background information on the tenets of Geneva Gay's (2010) Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP), students worked in pairs or small groups to complete the major course assignment, a Cultural Immersion Project (CIP). The CIP project was designed to increase awareness of likely life conditions, cultural practices, and community values for students in a number of geographic areas in and around the main metropolitan city. Groups chose two zip codes, one associated with an affluent and the other associated with an underprivileged community. They were then to complete a thorough demographic report covering, at a minimum, the social / athletic, academic / educational, nutritional, retail/economic, security, religious, cultural, and diversity of population aspects of life in the two zip code areas.

As a whole group, students brainstormed topics to be explored, project goals, hypotheses and questions which would guide their investigations. It was determined that each group would examine census data to determine median household incomes and member composition. They would gather information on the density and type of housing; the number and type of retail establishments in each coded area; the number of libraries; the number and type of advertising; the number and type of restaurants and food markets; recreational facilities; distance to fire and police stations; and the diversity of the population living in each of the coded areas. I added an additional set of requirements to the project. Each group would be required to attend a minimum of two socio-cultural events in each of the zip codes. Restaurants, places of worship, cultural fairs, weddings, and even funerals were offered as an initial list of possible events to consider. The scope of the project was designed to prompt some level of privilege rupture for all of the diverse members of the course who chose to reside at any one site along the cross-cultural gap.

Given the scope of the project I wondered about the degree to which I had misread and misinterpreted the meaning of the silence shown by the two hallway discussants? To what degree had I been the major architect of or complicit in helping to build their silence? What additional factors or elements had contributed to this misinterpretation, or misalignment of the teaching-learning continuum? Was this an example of good (compliant) or bad (resistant) silence (Schultz, 2011); did either serve as a coordinated indication of good (compliant) or bad (resistant) students or good (compliant) or bad (resistant) teaching? Had I, a member of the group often classified as the marginalized other, othered these students through my bestowed position as the authority and power in the classroom? Had I created a new stratified socio-cultural classroom order by reframing and reconfiguring the center? I, just as Ladson-Billings (1996), had never been forced to consider:

> [W]hat the students have withheld from their encounter with issues of race, class, and gender brought to them from the perspective of a person whose race, class, and gender placed her in the lower levels of a hierarchical social structure. (p.80)

Had they purposefully chosen to use silence as a weapon (Ladson-Billings, 1996)? If so, what was the intended type of harm–professional disarmament and sabotage or personal dismissal? Was the conversation an example of a racial, cultural, gendered, or professional microaggression? Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano (2009) defined this mini-assault as a non-verbal or non-voiced assault based in an assumption of negative, or deficit minority value, ability, and perceived intellect. Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, et al (2007) specifically defined racial microaggressions as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color" (p.271). Had these students taken greater exception with the message or the messenger? Was this particular verbalized microaggression an isolated opinion shared between two peers or did the expressed opinion represent a more widespread feeling of authority doubt among numerous members of the class community?

Additionally, their statements had aroused an ever-present question of authority that exists for a number of minority females who work hard to succeed in predominantly white teaching and learning environments. From my personal center of control and authority the axis had been shifted; the veil had been lifted (DuBois, 1935) and the pretentious choreographed classroom dance had been interrupted by a moment of improvisation and an insertion of a new step to consider. In that instant, despite my perceived position of influence, I had been placed in the position of outsider; my authority called into question. I was filled with a sudden sense of segregation, betrayal, self-doubt, and other-*othering;* a unique status held for those who have been *othered* within the preexisting realm of marginalized *other.* I had embarked on a new frontier exploration; one that would certainly test my *othered* powers of access and consensus building through an awakening of cross-cultural, cross-situational, and cross-professional rupture (Gegeo, 2001).

As an African American female professor teaching at a predominantly white institution (PWI), I possess *other*-worldly powers. My powers stem from rights acquired through the

struggles and sacrifices of Black feminists who used the theories and philosophies learned from the dailiness of life (Aptheker, 1989) and the experiences of their marginalized lives to make a way out of no way. Black women posses a strong generational heritage of serving their cultural community as modern day griots and protective yemajas (King, 2005) responsible for preserving rememories (Morrison, 2004) of resistance, survival, and endurance strategies for members. The heritage also includes the tireless pursuit of education and a selfless willingness to serve as educators in their home communities. This dedication spoke to the collective goal and resilience of spirit needed to continue to move the race forward despite the challenges presented by a racialized history of alienation, segregation, marginalization, and isolation.

Black women, fought to carve out a membership, in the initially exclusive White feminist movement, in search of acceptance and recognition. They fought against what Audre Lorde (1984) characterized as "the history of White women who are unable to hear Black women's words, or to maintain a dialogue with us…" (p.66). These trendsetting women created the foundational traditions of the Black feminist movement. Black Feminism places the self at the center–center of meaning, center of definition, center of experiential value. Generational lessons learned and transferred paved the way for the current levels of professional choice and access that I now benefit from. I am able to occupy a number of positions and fill a number of roles as a mere singular figure. I am able to live as an example of a life in variance, divergence, and from a divergent standpoint. I am able to represent concurrence and juxtaposition - not yet arrived and from here by way of there. I am able to live in offset, reside in carved-out spaces and defined places in-between (He, 2003, 2010; He, Scott-Simmons, Haynes, & Tennial, 2010). I subsist and exist, by my mere presence, in a world framed by duality--denied yet triumphant, silenced yet voiced. My double, and at times, multiple consciousness (DuBois, 1903, hooks, 1981; Collins, 1986; King, 1988; White, 1999), framed by a responsiveness to issues related to race and a reaction to issues of gender, provides me with the ability to function with purpose in the center and thrive with authority on the edge. Race does matter (West, 2001), so do gender, class, and culture.

My unique subjectivity provides an equally unique perspective. It is a knowledge that emanates from living through a marginalized double consciousness as an inside-out and an outside-in minority female. My multiplicity of marginality places me in positions of opposition and stances that cause me to move in from the margin and out from the center of life's daily struggles. Yet, even in my marginal state I am able to stand at the claimed center of potential. I stand as the focus of refusal. As an African American female professor, the intersectionality of my varied consciousnesses place me in the unique position to embody the multiplicity that accompanies potential and exemplifies the possibility of exceeding anticipated probabilities.

I am an *othered* realm of possibility; this is fed by and through an insatiable desire to learn from the spaces provided in the margins and on the edges; a space carved in-between which encourages contemplation, awareness, and strategic endurance (Scott-Simmons, 2012). I am also, at times, able to become powerfully invisible as I command silence, not merely as the converse of noise; demand listening not merely as the opposite of speech; and claim authority not merely as the converse of

submission. I possess *other*-worldly powers. White (1999) suggested:

> Few scholars who study black women fail to note that black women suffer a double oppression: that shared by all African Americans and that shared by most women… a consequence of double jeopardy and powerlessness is the black woman's invisibility. (p. 23)

Yet, as the *only* African American female tenure-track member of the faculty on my campus, in the college of education, I am keenly aware of the fact that my other-worldly powers, my life with authority on the edge, also grant me *outsider-within-without* status. Despite the tenuous façade of success in the academy based on presumed accumulated professional capital, my personal narrative often runs counter to the dominant professorial standards (Scott-Simmons, 2012). As the only, I am the de facto *outsider*. As a degreed and recently tenured member of the faculty I have been granted *within* credentials. However, my *authority of experience* (hooks, 1994) had been called into question. I discovered that evening in the hallway that, even in silence, I was *without* tangible authority in the eyes of the very students I sought to influence, as I participated in their journey toward advocacious and empathetic cultural understanding and professional transformation.

Shhh! There's Living Going on Here: Academic Life and the Varied Literacies of Silence

In ancient civilizations literacy was claimed, practiced, and shared among scholars, religious figures, and the elite members of society. Literacy was defined as a familiarity with and understanding of literature and the written word. The concept of literacy, as a form of and tool for communicative skills also takes into account an understanding of the shared practices among a group of people. The concept of literacy has continued to evolve to encompass more than an ability to read and write. The privileging of written word mastery has been modified to also include verbal, visual, and non-verbal expressive methods associated with the communicative ability to convey perceptions, thought, and meaning. This current definition of literacy shines a bit more favorably on non-verbal methods of communication. Silence, within these parameters, would certainly be classified as a communicative tool.

Literate thinking, literate meaning, and literate expression are manifest in different forms framed by social or cultural expectations, practices, or needs. Literacy, the ability to convey and receive coded messages, can be conveyed through the written word, visual images, and through silent forms of expression. Communication through silent expression requires attentive observation, openness to varied possibilities of meaning, and a willingness to use knowledge of social, cultural, and personal values to create thoughtful interpretation of the expressive use.

Philosophies, theories, premises, and belief systems on the subject of silence have been researched and discussed by linguists, anthropologists, scholars, academicians, and even feminists. Sara Maitland (2008) believed in the *interior dimension to silence* and recognized it as a *rich space* rather than a void absent of value. Paulo Freire (1970, 1972, 1998), posited a *culture of silence* as a powerful tool of the oppressed and as a consistent theme in liberation pedagogy. There exists a rich body of research on the topic of silence as it relates to marginalization, institutionalization, self-determination, reflection, and the

complicated, contested process of education. Olsen (1965) shared the contributions to the success and enjoyment of daily life made by silenced people. Fiumara (1990) presented a philosophy of silence as the other side of listening. Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan (1995) shared with readers the racialized lives, and relationships of women and girls, that exists in the spaces between voice and silence. Ladson-Billings (1996) provided a view of silence used weapons in the classroom environment; Hedges & Fishkin (1998), lessons learned through listening to silence by critical feminists; Picard (2002), the nature, world, and phenomenon of silence; Bruce (2003), scholarship on the vital function of writing in the classroom to expose former silences as a pathway to psychological development; Glenn (2004), a rhetoric of silence; Weis & Fine (2005), moving beyond silenced voices in class, race, gender; Sardello (2006), silence as a mystery of wholeness; LeClaire (2009), developing an ability to listen and hear below the noise; and Schultz (2011), a plea for teachers to listen to and learn from the silence in the room and to consider it a form of literate meaning-making and expression of self.

> Nothing worse than silence in a house where
> chatter used to flow like water from a tap.
> Silence – that most dangerous house-guest in
> time of conflict – moved in with Devil and
> She-Devil and befriended them both. Each
> was determined to be the better friend of
> Silence… (Adisa, 1997, p.6)

Nonetheless, there exist levels of fear in and of silence. Silence is not threatened by nor does it respond to any exterior need or desire for justification, explanation, or validation. Silence simply is. It interrupts the power of the echo – the audible, connective proof that a message has been received and is worthy of an equally perceptible response. Silence conveys a powerful and possibly deliberate choice to communicate, without the use of voice or sound. The number of different types of silence exists as proof that it is much more than the absence of sound or noise. Silence, as a reasonably voluntary act may connote a desire to seek a respite from the demands of connection; to create *a room of one's own* (Woolf, 1929) where you are able to become so lost in thought that continuing to think, and examine that thought under the protection of silence, provides the only pathway out. It is in this self-crafted space and place where "the need of coming to some conclusion on a subject that raises all sorts of prejudices and passions" (Woolf, 1929, p.3) demands reflection, contemplation, and exploration of varied interpretations of silence's use and meaning.

A chosen silence, often singular in scope and personal in purpose, represents a purposeful decision not to add to the cacophony of existing sounds. This is a most compelling form of silence. It suggests a keen awareness of self, as well as a discerning take on the correlated circumstances, surroundings, and situational conditions. A silence chosen, for any number of reasons, ultimately conveys a message of autonomy and claims a position of self-defined authority. A chosen silence is related to silences classified as strategic or claimed. Conversely, a denied silence implies some form of control or deprivation of choice. Forced, controlling, acquiesced, or resigned silences exist as options between multiple competing forces. These silences suggest a battle for or loss of control. An accepted silence is an indication of a battle lost and an arrogant silence suggests a refusal to recognize or accept a similar state of defeat. Institutional, social, and cultural silences involve structures or stratified systems of individuals or organizations. Finally, a spiteful silence insinuates

malice of thought and intent. This type of silence has the potential to cause the greatest level of disruption, or challenge to authority, in the classroom setting. Perpetrators of this type of silence make the conscious and deliberate decision to withhold participation, avoid connection, or share divergent perspectives in the hopes of causing some level of disorder, demise, or deficient possibility in a group setting.

I hoped that the uncovered silence, executed by the students in my *Culturally and Educationally Responsive Pedagogy* class, had not ascribed to this final type of silence. This would mean an overt challenge to my position as the center of authority in the classroom. This type of silence would certainly signal a challenge to the traditional classroom power structure made even more tenuous by my marginalized or *othered* group membership.

Un-Silencing the "A" in Authority: "A" is for African American

If radical postmodernist thinking is to have a transformative impact then a critical break with the notion of "authority" as "mastery over" must not simply be a rhetorical device, it must be reflected in habits of being, including styles of writing as well as chosen subject matter. (hook, 1990b)

Power is an individual and social construct. It may be described as the capacity to act on or accomplish a task; the ability to influence the behavior of another person; or as the measure of one's ability to control self and their environment. The concept of power is manifest a bit differently in the classroom setting. Maryellen Weimer (2013), in her book *on Learner-Centered Teaching*, espoused the concept of balance of power, shared governance, as a current instructional and pedagogical goal in the 21st century, student-centered classroom. Lisa Delpit (1988, 1995) raised awareness, in the extended educational community, of the culture of power and the silenced dialogue that exists in every classroom.

Power and authority in the classroom are concepts rarely discussed (Benne, 1970) in an era of constant educational reform, encouraged content differentiation, punitive teacher accountability, and a hyper-sensitivity to meeting divergent needs of the student. Regardless, the age-old notion of authority resting in the hands of the teacher, who stands as the manager of the classroom setting and events, is alive and well in classrooms across the country. Teacher-authority encapsulates the need to be in a position and possess the power, as well as the authority to ask, even require, that students complete specified tasks. The execution of teacher authority has been identified as directly connected with student efficacy – the ability to execute or accomplish a desired or requested task. Benne has identified three main types of authority that exists in the classroom setting: expert, rule, and anthropological. This final type of authority focuses on the development of authority through the exploration and creation of relationships in the environment. French and Raven (1959, 1974) explored and examined classroom interactions and determined that there are five basic forms of teacher authority: attractive/referent, expert, reward, coercive, and position/legitimate.

Attractive/referent authority relies on connections made based on personality or relationship development. There exists a level of familiarity in this type of authority. A personal investment, or deposits into what Covey (1995) called the "emotional bank account" are made in order to facilitate some type of behavioral withdrawal at a later date and time. Murray &

Pianta (2009) surmised that students worked harder for teachers whom they felt were caring or personally invested in their success. Expert authority is earned through the possession and conveyance of content expertise. Teachers who are perceived as well informed, well prepared, knowledgeable, and/or well connected in the field possess expert authority. Expert authority is based on the intrinsic value that a student places on knowledge and knowing. Expert authority is based on a general human deference for intellectual capital; we hold wisdom and expertise in high regard.

Even in the current era of student-focused learning, reward authority remains a hallmark of the typical American classroom. Rewards, such as grades, recognitions, awards, and privileges are used to affect student behavior and monitor student progress. Coercive authority employs the use of disincentives, or the withholding of privileges as a behavior controlling method. This method is used as a means of establishing boundaries and creating a sense of security and fairness for everyone in the learning community. The over use of this type of authority in the teaching-learning environment may result in a reduction of motivation, as well as an increase in hostility. Position/legitimate authority is the final type of authority to be discussed. This form of authority is based in the pragmatic recognition that the teacher, by virtue of their position, is the authority in the room. Unlike the previously outlined forms of teacher-authority, this is not an earned, crafted, or cultivated form of authority. This form of authority places the teacher in the position by default. The teacher holds ultimate responsibility for the organization, management, and governance of the class and the enrolled students. Despite the default nature of the position with this form of authority, it would still be wise to incorporate strands of the previously discussed forms to create an effective teaching-learning environment.

The challenge for educators, particularly minority educators who do not share a common history, background, culture, or language with a majority of the students that they teach, exists in the possible disconnect of authority claimed and authority bestowed. An additional consideration exists in the challenge to not merely reposition authority by using a newly bestowed or acquired voice to silence and marginalize others (hooks, 1990). True teacher-authority must guard against being color-identified. Guarding against cultural essentialism while building upon diverse funds of knowledge, and advocating for the recognition, acceptance, and inclusion of a multiplicity of experientially shaped identities, brings us closer to the creation of learning environments that are locations of possibility.

Variations on a Theme: Cultural Funds of Knowledge

"I'll tell you one thing," Kevin said as we joined the mob in the hallways, "she better be fake."
I asked him what he meant.
"I mean if she's real, she's in big trouble. How long do you think somebody who's really like that is going to last around here?"
Good question.
Stargirl by Jerry Spinelli (2000)

The characters in Jerry Spinelli's *Stargirl* pull the reader into an uncomfortable, yet engaging, story that explores the complicated complexities of human interactions that have the potential to exist within the school setting. The story speaks to our individual and collective battles with conformity, divergence, status, obscurity, difference, indifference, silence, speech, community norms, and personal values. The plotline of *Stargirl*

also exposes the concept of localized school authority, the use of school as a tool for social reproduction, and the solidification of accepted forms of class culture within the school setting. Individual funds of knowledge are examined and valued against those previously earning privileged status in the school setting by those who possess authority. Characters representing the dominant, or standard, viewpoint in this novel possess the ability to use their power and authority to sanction inclusion or to carry out a communal expulsion based on the value placed on information, experiences, or viewpoints. Stargirl discovers that she lacks the requisite funds of knowledge to coexist and therefore earn dominant culture membership.

Funds of knowledge is defined by researchers Luis Moll, Cathy Amanti, Deborah Neff, and Norma Gonzalez (2005) "to refer to the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (p. 133). These shared experiences develop into similar ways of seeing the world, becoming in the world, and existing in the world – cultural capital. In any given social setting the common or familiar set of standards based on established cultural capital translates into a defined set of social resources. These resources, passed from generation to generation, are designed to maintain group integrity, socialization practices, and become an integral part of the dominant culture set of expectations. This is the start to the creation of social, cultural, communal, and long-lasting habits of mind. "Habits of mind become articulated in a specific point of view—the constellation of belief, value judgment, attitude, and feeling that shapes a particular interpretation" (Mezirow, 1991).

According to Bourdieu (2000) the predominant role of education is the one of social reproduction. This serves the ideological purpose of enabling a dominant social class to reproduce its power, wealth and privilege legitimately – embodied, objectified, and institutionalized. School is also an institution which possesses the power and authority to eliminate, to exclude, and to shun. Bourdieu calls this social elimination. It involves the dominant culture's protective need to remove students from access to higher levels of education or to withhold any benefits derived from the receipt of social awards. Elimination is achieved through systematic failure or through self-elimination. Self-elimination occurs when a student realizes they do not possess the requisite social, cultural, linguistic, or experiential capital. Students deliberately choose to opt-out of the educational arena caused by a realization that cultural, lingual, or societal disconnects are likely to prevent any upward movement on the educational, societal, or economic ladder.

Maxine Greene (2001) in *Variations on a Blue Guitar* raises issues and addresses concerns around the important inclusion of the aesthetic in today's classroom. While primarily focused on the use of the arts in the classroom to heighten our levels of consciousness, the call *to learn to notice what is there to be seen* (p.6) might also be applied to a teacher's ability to notice and build upon the funds of knowledge, experience, and principles each student brings with them to the classroom setting. This reconfiguration of the teacher-authority role requires that teachers reposition themselves and decide to coexist in the classroom environment as learner. From this position they open up opportunities to access the prior knowledge, experiences, and student-based funds of knowledge. They are then able to use the unearthed cultural and cognitive resources to craft culturally and educationally responsive lessons. Embodied, objectified, and institutionalized forms of cultural capital are re-configured and re-

centered as the outside or margined member of the classroom community becomes its center.

Margined Life Within: Outsider Life on the Edge

Living as we did—on the edge—we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked from both the outside in and the inside out. We focused our attention on the center as well as the margin. We understood both. This mode of seeing reminded us of the existence of a whole universe, a main body made up of both margin and center. (hooks, 2000, p. xvi)

Awareness of self-determined worth translates into self-declared and self-defined power. Self-declared power cannot be positioned or restrained. This claimed entitlement exists and may be maintained as a stand-alone segment. It may also be used to add strength to the greater whole as a self-contained component. Self-determination is a major thread that is woven through the theoretical strands of Black Feminist Thought (BFT). Black Feminist Thought, as defined by Collins (2000), espouses tenets framed by self defined empowerment, self-determination, self-definition, self-reliance, self expression, and self-naming. The unique experiences of African American women are positioned as a critical alternative to those espoused by members of the dominant culture and also by African American males. African American female narrative experiences are unique in their timbre, their purpose, and their ability to resonate with members of *othered* groups who suffer from and with burdens caused by marginalization – a life lived away from the center. Places and spaces occupied by the marginalized are characterized by much more than mere deprivation. Places away from the center hold the power to become "the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance" (hooks, 1990, p. 341). It is within the spaces *in-between* that the African American women are able to embody dual positions – simultaneously assuming a position as a member of the academy and as a member of their divergent home community.

> This places them in a unique position from which to understand how things are in the Academy from the perspective of an insider who enjoys some degree of power and privilege both professionally and personally as a result of her membership, and who at the same time has an understanding of how things are from the perspective of one who is marginalized with respect to the centre of that power as a result of her gender and race. (Bowell, 2011)

As a minority female raised in a segregated jump rope community (Scott-Simmons, 2008, 2010, 2012) and educated in an all-White environment, my life has been played out on the edge; on the edges of both my home and school communities. I am from a unique claimed space and place that has been "created by the intersection of dominant culture individuality and jump rope community collectivity" (p.26). In both places I held *outsider-within-without* status. I have been afforded the opportunity to subsist and exist in a world framed and furthered by a duality of experience–denied yet triumphant, silenced yet voiced. I have been margined on the edge. Yet, from the edge, and without the constraints of visibility, I have been able to discern, discover, dissect, and determine new lines of sight leading to the conceptualization of locations based in possibility. The edge has been claimed as the new center.

Reconfiguring the Center: Locations of Possibility

Adults have acquired a coherent body of experience—associations, concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses—frames of reference that define their life world. Frames of reference are the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences. They selectively shape and delimit expectations, perceptions, cognition, and feelings. (Mezirow, 1997)

Reconfigure
> *Reconfigures*
>> *Reconfiguring*
>>> *Reconfigured*
>>>> *Reconfiguration*

The word, in each of its forms, hints of change, alteration, and modification. I reconfigure; observe as she reconfigures; participate in the act of reconfiguring; become reconfigured; and cause reconfiguration. As such, I participate in an act of rearrangement, restructuring, and renovation – each a strand in the process of transformation. Personal and communal transformation is one of the goals of education. The alteration, assimilation, and accommodation of new information alongside existing information are designed to have an effect on, or reconfigure, one's frame of reference or point of view. The overheard conversation in the hallway that winter evening served to reconfigure my perspective, alter my point of view, and prompt an exploration into alternative or jointly-conceptualized possibilities leading to transformation within the adult learning environment and interactions between members of divergent cultural groups. The impetus for this exploration was bell hooks' (1984) in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. In her book she repositions the center on a number of topics: feminism, Black feminism, sisterhood, power, the nature of work, and forms of oppression. Subjectivity, specifically Black subjectivity and the re-imagining of Black subjectivity (Newton, 2002) was repositioned and revalued. My ensuing exploration uncovered issues of silence and voice, centrality and subjectivity, habits of mind and funds of knowledge, as well as the concepts of position, power, and authority that exist in the adult teaching and learning community. These concepts serve as the backdrop to possible reconfigurations of the center of the teacher--learner dynamic. They may also serve as the backdrop in the search for explanations that may occur between the content delivery and the reception of that message.

My examination began with a recognition of the practice of *othering* in the academy. To be characterized as the other, from either side of the racial divide, is to incite separation, exclusion, and disconnection. The practice of othering exists as a major social, cultural, and educational paradigm in a racialized society. This paradigm, due to longstanding racial habits of mind and systems of belief about members from divergent cultural groups, has the potential to lead to diminished expectations based on misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Without a common language, an understanding of varied experiential frames, or commonly valued funds of knowledge. Silence challenges authorities. Coupled with a lack of understanding, on the part of members from the dominant culture, around the multiplicity of consciousnesses that exist for minorities in a racialized society and we have created the perfect conditions for cultural, educational, and social exclusion, dismissal, and marginalization. Divergent centers of expression, understanding, being, and becoming are constructed. Life and experiential living from the margins and the edge are developed and ensconced in the fabric of the teaching-

learning environment. The gap between the educator and the educated is widened. If school is indeed a site of social reproduction, then a forced marginalized life on the edge is also perpetuated for minorities in the greater social environment as well. A reconfiguration of the authoritarian center of the teaching-learning site is a call to action. A shared understanding of situated perspective, a grasp of the need for and an establishment of social justice goals as a relief of the suffering faced by marginalized populations, and a recognition of the ever-present cultural, gendered, and racial elements in play in the classroom will facilitate the reconfiguration of consensus and ultimately the establishment of a plan for maintaining the integrity of the subject – teacher and student. In the tradition of Jürgen Habermas (1989), parties on all sides and at all stages of the learning continuum must first reach consensus on how we determine and what we determine to be knowledge. What type(s) of action(s) are we willing to pursue in order to reach that consensus – instrumental, communicative, impressionistic, or normative? Will we rely upon the data derived from the technical investigation of data? Are we to ascribe to information derived from social interactions? Or will we instead rely upon insights provided through critical self-awareness and the reliance upon situated historical knowledge? Upon whose standpoint are we to position our views, our beliefs, and our goals in the search for culturally responsive educational success? To which theories and philosophies are we to ascribe in our search for acceptance and professional growth?

This exploration resulted in a series of questions that may be used to not only prompt discussion but also frame further exploration. What role does silence play in the adult learning classroom? How is the center defined, claimed, and utilized by educators with and without bestowed authority? What is authority-teaching and is it a mirrored concept to authority-learning? Where, how, and by whom is authority conceptualized as a part of the classroom culture of power? What role might authority-teaching play in bridging or widening the cultural divide? How might the infusion of cultural and professional funds of knowledge by educators with claimed authority encourage or discourage engaged participation? What role, if any, does gender, race, and ethnicity play in an educator's ability to claim and maintain a consistent level of authority teaching? What does it mean to teach from the edge as a minority female educator? What does it mean, as a member of the dominant culture, to receive *edged* knowledge from a marginalized other? How might teaching and learning from the edges prompt a reconfiguration or realignment of the center? What might be the impact of this reconfiguration on the struggles faced by minority females in academia? How might the traditional concept of and battle for power be reconfigured in the classroom setting to produce knowledge and facilitate its use as a tool to end oppression rather than perpetuate it (hooks, 2000)? How, as a minority female professor, might I reframe the message to engender an advocacious awareness among my students of the connections that exist between their integral roles as political figures in the institution of education, the plight of those living and learning from the margins, and the conception of social justice possibilities? Is it possible for professors living on the edge to engender sufficient cross-cultural empathy and advocacious understanding among students living in the dominant center domain to force a reconfiguration of the teaching/learning/living/succeeding paradigm?

This narrative is offered as an addition to the body of Black Feminist research which explores the complex, contested, and ever-shifting experience of a Black female professor teaching,

living, surviving, and succeeding on the edges at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). Despite the challenges, I remain committed to using my position as the experiential authority-center teaching from the margins in order to prompt transformational reconfiguration. The challenge is to develop greater cross-cultural understanding in the communal search of educational environments characterized as *locations of possibility.* I am certain that it is working. They are talking about me in the hallways of the college!

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Confessions of a Latina Professor

Isabel Nuñez, Concordia University, Chicago

Bill, who works for Physical Plant at my university, always knows whether or not I'm teaching when he sees me in the morning. "I see you have class today," he says if I'm wearing a skirt or slacks, "No teaching today?" if I'm wearing jeans. It didn't take many chats over coffee before he noticed the pattern: I *always* dress up for class. I suppose that technically I don't have to. There's no dress code, and my closest friend and colleague wears jeans to teach all the time. Still, it's not something I would ever do, and I suspect that I'm not alone in this.

Law professor and critical legal scholar Patricia J. Williams (1991) wrote a genre-defying book called *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*, a masterful blending of the theoretical and the poetic, the political and the personal. In it, she describes the very different approaches taken by her, an African American woman, and a White male colleague of hers to their apartment hunting when both were new to their faculty and city. Williams made sure to tell potential landlords that she was a lawyer, and she dotted every i and crossed all t's when filling out each of the proper legal forms. Her colleague just as carefully did *not* mention his status as an attorney, and was content to agree to terms with a handshake.

She explained that their contradictory behaviors were actually tailored to achieve the same ends, and why each was successful. Both wanted to make the people they might be renting from feel comfortable with them as tenants, but their race and gender meant that different qualities would be reassuring. As a Black woman, Williams needed to be seen as a reliable professional, someone with whom the landlords would have business-like relationship. As a White man, her colleague wanted to deflect attention from his societal authority and present himself and friendly and non-threatening. Both found great apartments and entered into cordial relationships with their owners.

One can see something of the same pattern with our current and immediate past presidents. Bill Clinton (wisely) chose not to publicize the fact that he was the recipient of a Rhodes Scholarship, perhaps the most prestigious academic prize attainable, because being seen as too smart would not have helped him get elected. Similarly, George W. Bush adopted a new, lower-status dialect somewhere between his Texas governorship, when his pronunciation of "nuclear," for example, was standard, and his presidential campaign, when it had been transformed to "nu-kyoo-ler." Both successfully presented themselves as guys one could comfortably "have a beer with." They reassured by downplaying their power and authority, just the way Williams' White colleague did.

Barack Obama, on the other hand, has made no secret of his intellectual accomplishments, and his speech and diction for most public communications are at a much higher register than his two predecessors. As an African American man, he needs to put the public at ease in different ways than they did. Like Williams in her apartment search, President Obama makes us feel comfortable by assuring us of his credentials and presidential capability. Like Williams and Obama, I as a Latina professor need to behave differently than my White colleagues do in order for my students to be comfortable with me.

Dressing up is the first, but certainly not the only work that I do to shape my students' perceptions of me. Another strategy of reassurance I use is unequivocally establishing my qualifications to teach them. On the first night of class, I ask everyone to share substantially from their life narratives with the rest of the group. This is, to be sure, because of my belief in the importance of knowing who one's students are as people, beyond the demands of the particular course or even of the intellectual realm as a whole (Ayers, 2003). I am also motivated by the desire to build a strong learning community in my classes by facilitating personal connections based on elements of shared (and contrasting) identity among the students (Michie, 2012). And, of course, if I am asking my students to share their stories I must also be willing to share my own.

I tell them about how my parents, both born in Mexico, met in high school, and about being a simultaneous bilingual as an infant when my Spanish-speaking grandparents cared for me during the day. I share how their experiences in Los Angeles schools led them to panic as I approached Kindergarten age, and how as a result we moved to the suburbs and began to speak only in English. My parents were wrong about monolingualism being helpful to my success in school, but the cognitive benefits of bilingualism had already taken root—even if the language itself had disappeared.

I skipped the third grade and my senior year of high school, graduating with a degree in English from the University of Southern California at 19 years old. With dreams of changing the world, I went across town to the UCLA School of Law, but quickly became disillusioned with the potential for transformation through the legislative and judicial progress. I'd started substitute teaching on days that I didn't have classes, and the year after I graduated I began subbing full-time.

On a Thursday in October of that year, I got a call from a principal I subbed for regularly. She explained that there had been a late influx of English-speaking first graders and asked if I'd be willing to take over a classroom of my own. A room that had been used for storage was cleaned out for me, and the following Monday I was in front of 20 6-year-olds—my very first class of students.

My present-day students love this part especially, because this is where I tell them how utterly unprepared I was to be a teacher, how on my very first evaluation—which I still keep in my office—my principal wrote "Did you see when Santos jumped over the table instead of walking around it? What would you have done if you had?" Nope, I did not notice a child jumping over a table when my principal was in the room for an observation. That's how good my classroom management skills were. And that wasn't even the worst part; what was much harder was not knowing what to teach.

Not having trained as a teacher, I was on what's called an emergency credential. These were the early 90s, the days before standardization—and even before standards. What we had instead were several wonderful volumes, still in the bookcase in my office, called the California State Frameworks. There were the California frameworks for language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, etc., and each of them

described a beautifully spiraling multi-year curriculum that would have been great for someone who had taken child development and knew what 6-year-olds were supposed to be able to do—but they were not helpful to me at all. I struggled every day trying to figure out what to teach, and if someone had offered me a standardized curriculum I would have offered them my car out of pure gratitude.

That experience, however, forced me to create my own curriculum, which I did the following summer on the concrete floor of the loft space where I lived, in a huge grid I'd drawn on a length of butcher paper with a pencil and yardstick. My goal for my students was a comprehensive integrated worldview, and no subject was ever taught in isolation. We never again had reading time or math time—it was everything all the time. That second year of teaching first grade and all the years after were a joy—especially the creative intellectual work of curriculum construction.

I had five years to earn a regular teaching credential, so I started taking classes. I was not engaged by my methods courses, but I *loved* a class I took in the social foundations of education. The state kept renewing my emergency credential as long as I sent in transcripts with "EDU" courses, so I took a lot more. At the end of five years, I was very close to a Master's degree in the social foundations of education, but nowhere near a California teaching credential. It was time for a change. I'd spent all my life in Los Angeles, so I decided it should be a big one.

I moved to Tokyo, where I taught English for a few months while applying for newspaper jobs, eventually working for the Mainichi Daily News, the English-language version of a Japanese national daily. My two and a half years in Japan were a lot of fun, but I eventually missed teaching and academia. (I'd started writing papers and presenting at conferences while doing the social foundations coursework.) From there I moved to Birmingham, England, for an M.Phil. (I explain to my students that this is a research degree) in Cultural Studies from the University of Birmingham where the discipline was born.

I started subbing again, and thought it an extraordinary coincidence when I'd teach fractions in a Year 4 classroom on a Tuesday, then go to another Year 4 classroom across the city and teach factions again. When I was asked to take over a classroom of my own--first grade again, except here called Year 1—I discovered that it was no coincidence at all. I was handed two big binders: the National Literacy Strategy and the National Numeracy Strategy. Then I knew what I would be teaching each week for the rest of the year, because England has a National Curriculum.

It wasn't as time-consuming as teaching in Los Angeles, where lesson planning and preparation took pretty much my entire Saturdays. In Birmingham, I could plan for a couple of hours on Saturday and then head for the pub--and there's a lot to be said for that. But it wasn't teaching as I remembered it. It was great to be with 6-year-olds again, who were just as amazing in England as their American counterparts, but I missed the creative intellectual work of curriculum. My thesis was on the development of the National Curriculum under the Thatcher administrations as a means of ideologically furthering a Rightist agenda, specifically by engendering the concepts of individualism and self-reliance in the British psyche.

The contrast between teaching in the U.S. and U.K., and my work around the ideological role of schooling, made me very interested in curriculum. After three years in England, I returned to begin doctoral study in curriculum at the University of Illinois at Chicago. I tell my students of my wonderful experience at UIC, where I encountered many mentors and friends, and even my partner. I also talk about my happiness at the institution they are attending, as well as current research projects, policy work and media appearances.

By the end, it is fair to say, they are a bit overwhelmed. And, as embarrassing as it is to admit—especially in print—this is partly what I'm going for: the sense that my credentials and experience, my right to teach that class, are beyond debate. I am trying to protect myself—perhaps even now, in writing this article—from the accusation of being unworthy, something I feel myself more likely to face as a non-White woman than, say, my partner. A White man, who just earned his Ph. D., and yet he takes the opposite approach with the students he has as a teaching assistant or as contingent faculty, downplaying his authority and presenting himself as a co-journeyer with his students through the particular curriculum.

Now, this is not something I'm proud of—it's not even something that necessarily works. I know that any respect given to me must be earned not through my credentials but by who I am in the classroom. And there are still students who don't, let's say, appreciate me as a teacher no matter what my story is. Yet I still do it; I suppose it's truer to say because it makes *me* comfortable than makes *them* comfortable. I wonder to what degree this is true for Williams and even President Obama?

OK, since we're all now being honest here (who's the *we*, anyway?), authoritatively establishing my qualifications is not my only strategy for self-protection in the classroom. Or, to be fair, it is not the only aspect of my practice that serves multiple purposes, one of which is self-protective. Another is the high standards of mastery to which I hold my students. Now, this might sound odd at the outset. I'm critiquing myself for having high standards for my students? What would I prefer, then, to proudly proclaim my low standards?

I know the arguments that will support my pedagogic stance here. I explain them on the first night of every class. My expectations are based on three nested responsibilities. The first is to the state of Illinois, which will deem my former students highly qualified to teach based in part on the course and grade that will appear on their transcripts. I also have a responsibility to them personally to ensure that their learning in the course is meaningful. As teachers themselves, they always understand when I draw a parallel with their own classrooms: If they passed all their P-12 pupils along whether they learned anything or not, that would *not* mean they liked them, would *not* show they cared about them—it would mean exactly the opposite. Finally, I remind them of *my* responsibility to the children they teach, and how that requires that I make sure they truly develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions that will allow them to serve their pupils well.

Sounds very convincing, doesn't it? Still, I know in my heart that that is not the stance I would hold if I were to become the best teacher I could be. I remember the first night of each of the many classes I took with one of my mentors, Bill Ayers, when he'd announce: "I just want you all to know that everyone here will get an A in this class. I just thought we should get that out of the way so no one worries about it anymore." When I am more highly evolved as an educator and as a human being, I will say the same. My classmates and I still attended class (they were usually held at his beautiful Hyde

Park home, how could we not?), still did the reading, still put time and thought into our written work. Part of it is certainly that Bill is simply a masterful teacher, but part was also that being free of grade concerns was truly intellectually freeing. Besides, we were there because we wanted to learn.

I don't imagine that my own students—despite their matriculation at a less prestigious institution and the fact that I am no Bill Ayers—are so much different than I was. They are with me to learn, and I probably don't have to frighten them about the toughness with which I grade (which is not an exaggeration, it has to be said) to get them to do any work in the class (not the vast majority of them, anyway). What my first-night "grading speech" does do, though, is command respect and provide a go-to reason for any possible dearth of positive regard. It establishes my preferred mode of emotional engagement with the class: I'd rather be respected than liked.

It's not like all my classes hate me. Just the opposite, in fact. Most students genuinely appreciate being challenged and take on some of my obvious passion for the material. The protective function kicks in with those groups and individuals who don't like me, because then I can say that they just didn't want to work hard. There's a ready excuse that doesn't involve a rejection of me personally. You'd be right to think that this may not have anything to do with my being Latina, or with my being a professor. I could be this insecure and be of any race, doing any job; that's true. I do see a pattern, though, in stronger relationships with more diverse and more urban groups, and weaker connections to Whiter cohorts that meet further from the city center.

I already limit my exposure after a difficult start at my small, Lutheran university. In my first two years I taught in the early childhood pre-service program. My students were overwhelmingly young White women of the institutional faith tradition, and *oh my* did they hate me. My evaluations were savage, complaining that I would dare to address issues of race, class, even gender in a methods class when all they wanted was to learn how to teach science to young children. For the past five years I have taught only in the Master's and doctoral programs. Whether it's race-based or purely my personal timidity, I do not want to teach undergrads at my university again.

Some of the ways that I approach content are also self-protective. I rely a great deal on external authority. I spend a fair amount of time critiquing the idea of science as an arbiter of truth and explaining to my students that there is no such thing as objective research—heck, no such thing as objectivity at all. Still, that doesn't stop me from citing scholar after scholar, study after study, in making an argument, especially one that I think is going to be challenging for my students to take in. So far, none of them has called me on it, and I'm knocking my desktop now… For example, in my Linguistics courses, I am often introducing for the first time the sociolinguistic concept that there is no hierarchy of dialects, that every kind of English there is—from the television news to the Appalachian hollow to the inner-city high school, is just as complex, rule-bound and grammatically correct as every other. In doing so, I emphasize the fact that there is no debate on this in the discipline, that there is no linguist ANYWHERE that would agree that an Ebonics speaker's English was "bad."

Still, I'm not all Gradgrind, and I don't usually stay buried in the bunkers for the whole of the term. Once a rapport is established with a group, I share many personal stories with them, and I don't come off terribly well in a fair number of them. As an example, I often tell a particular story when I hear my students lamenting the tendency of young Latinas to forego college, and sometime even a high school diploma, in order to marry and start a family right away. This kind of judgment around Latinas' life choices, often accompanied by very positive intentions, appears often in the educational literature (Bartlett & García, 2011) and usually goes unchallenged.

In asking my students to question this critique, I share a memory of being at a reunion of my father's family when I was in my early 20s. My cousins, most of whom are younger than me, all were there with their husbands and children. I was teaching first grade, an independent professional, and I thought I was so much better than them, so much smarter in the choices I'd made for my life. After talking for a while, hearing them ask if I didn't feel unsettled, unmoored somehow, with voices and faces showing real concern, I began to sense that they felt exactly the same way about me. Not only were they worried about the choices I'd made, they genuinely, with love, pitied me.

I wish I could say that it made an iota of difference in my elitism and ethnocentrism at the time. No, I left that party thinking that my cousins were incredibly misguided and just weird. It was only after another five years had passed, and then another, and yet another, when I was over 35 without a partner, no children on the visible horizon, that I really began to understand what my cousins were feeling for me. And at that time, I realized that they had been right all along. From the present vantage point, happily partnered and parenting, I have the option of forgetting that learning, but I don't want to. I hope that I can always access my cousins' worry for me, not because I think they were truly "right," but because I, truly, was *not*. There is no right way to plan one's life and future, and it is ridiculous for me, or anyone else, to put a value judgment on someone else's choices.

I don't limit my embarrassing stories to tales of my past selves, either. I try to explain some of the complications around moving through society as a non-White person, especially in segregated Chicagoland by sharing about an experience I had recently at Easter weekend. My family and I were at a breakfast restaurant in La Grange, a self-consciously up-and-coming southwestern suburb of Chicago, awkwardly situated between upper-class Hinsdale and working-class Brookfield (where we live). There was someone dressed up as the Easter bunny who was going around to all the tables with children handing out candy from a basket. I waited and waited and waited for the Easter bunny to some over to our table. Finally I felt like I was going to cry and I told Joe, "The Easter bunny is not going to give Maeve any candy because I'm Mexican." He told me to give it a little more time, the restaurant was busy, and eventually the person did come over to our table. Of course then I was just as upset as I was before, still ready to cry because, as I told Joe, "I thought the Easter bunny was racist." The best time we had with this in class was when one of my student deadpanned, "Well, he is White," without missing a beat.

It's a mixed bag, I guess, with costs and benefits to my students and my self from being a Latina professor on the landscape of education. Still, I am probably more honest and vulnerable about these with my students than I am with anyone save family and close friends (and now all of you!). In the end, I honestly believe that diversity for its own sake is good, if for no other reason than it makes the world more interesting. This will probably sound terribly self-serving, but I think my students

gain just from having someone who looks like me teaching them, the visual image alone is currently a positive disruption, and will hopefully be normalized and taken for granted one day.

Of course, I would never say this in a department meeting, and I am generally less open with colleagues than students—at least at my institution. It's not that I encounter overt racism or anything, but it's a very White faculty. The difficulty I've encountered has been subtle, and not ill-intended. When a soon-to-be colleague came in for her job talk, I happened to be very pregnant. I sat in the front row of the classroom with the rest of the faculty members who were attending. She came up, put her hands on the desk in front of me and asked, kindly, "And what do you do here?" Well, I wasn't going to be cleaning her office, if that was what she was wondering. A very *un*kind thought, I know, but just consider my mental accusations against the Easter bunny.

I think I'm a relatively easy "Latina colleague." In outward appearance (dress, dialect, etc.), I'm very culturally mainstream. I work extremely hard. Since I am the one and only Latina professor at the institution, I get to represent my entire demographic for folks, and I imagine that people feel pretty good about their collegial relationships with Latin American women.

In terms of the field, though, it's a little more complicated. I know better than to essentialize ethnic identity, but my fear of rejection makes me worry that I don't really "count" as a minority woman. In talking to my students about in-group/out-group boundaries, I sometimes tell the story of my sister's attempt to take a Chicano Studies class as an undergrad at UCLA: not join a club, mind you, take a class. On the first day, the instructor asked everyone to introduce themselves. When Irma admitted that she did not speak Spanish, the other students told her that she was not a Chicana (where they were wrong, since Chicanos are by definition persons of Mexican descent born in Aztlan, or the part of the United States that was once Mexico) and made her cry, and she dropped the class. Maybe someday I'll be like Beverly Tatum (1997), and say that this is what a Latina sounds like. But right now I'm as afraid of being rejected by "my" cultural group as I am of rejection by the White mainstream.

Lately I've been doing a lot more work in the policy area. Now this is certainly because the work is critically important and absolutely urgent. After all, public education is being dismantled before our very eyes. However, another reason may be that being a minority doesn't seem as relevant somehow in this arena. With the exception of a Huffington Post article about the UNO charter school network in Chicago, whose imperialist-colonial approach to the education of Latino children is actually more disturbing to me than its corrupt and thieving financial practices, all of my policy-related publications over the past year or so could have been written by someone of any race or gender.

I also feel comfortable in the group that publishes this journal: the Society of Professors of Education. The name is nice and broad, how could a group so named not be inclusive and welcoming to professors of all cultures and cultural identity complexes?

Besides, while I imagine that many people reading this have been a little surprised by how self-revealing the essay has been, I don't imagine that there are too many people reading who have not related in some way to what I've shared. As Kenji Yoshino (2007) acknowledges in his book *Covering: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights*, we *all* have aspects of our identities that we keep hidden from the wider world. No one feels perfectly comfortable, perfectly entitled, at all times. *Everyone* covers. With this in mind, I'm pretty sure that I'm not the only professor of education who is self-protective.

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Mentor Myself? The Juxtaposition of Identity Development for Women of Color in Higher Education

Brenda Marina, Georgia Southern University

Throughout my teaching career I have agonized over how to better understand myself and use this to more effectively teach my students. And as I work for this understanding, I question, Where do I begin my journey? I have been searching for the connection between the personal me as a Black woman and the pedagogical me as a Black woman teacher. (Brock, 2010, p. xv)

Where Do I Begin

With this reflection, I consider how mentoring was central to establishing my professional identity. I acknowledge this consideration through my story with hints of support from scholarly literature. Throughout this article I discuss the intersections of cultural identity, gender and mentoring relationships for women of color in academia, and more specifically at predominantly white institutions. I also call attention to the nascent concept of *Cultural Contracts* for consideration when forming mentoring relationships. I reflect upon mentoring within and without my praxis*, while* considering my purposes - in teaching, scholarship, service, and in academia. Furthermore, I reflect upon my experiences to ponder why I have chosen mentoring as a maxim per se, or rather how mentoring has chosen me.

In the past, with my position as an assistant dean, I made myself available as a mentor for a higher education administration program at a predominantly white institution (PWI) in the Midwest. For several semesters, I mentored and exposed young women of color to as many opportunities as possible. These you women went to meetings with me, they worked on the development and implementation of conferences, worked with me as co-teachers for a course, and eventually, some have published articles with me. I mouthed and modeled for them what I thought they would need as professional women of color in higher education. I mouthed and modeled what I thought I needed and didn't receive at certain times on my journey up the road of academia. I was also committed and very intentional about infusing my personal and ethical ambitions into our conversations and activities. I agree with Sheldon (2007), who has said that personal convictions form the most effective basis for moral and ethical behavior and that personal and professional ethics should not be separated. My ethical ambitions should lead to ethical action. I should use my influence as a professor, a mentor, and as school leader to promote ethical leadership in higher education administration and student affairs. I must take the lead when I see young women dithering as they seek to progress through academia. Whether or not the process of climbing the proverbial ladder towards the top in academia was fair or easy for me in the past, and whether or not it is fair or easy for me now, it is imperative that I use my *beliefs* as a way to work toward creating spaces that are more equitable and just amongst the bastions of a gendered and racialized educational system.

Continuing this journey, I have moved to a different position in a different locale, but I am still in constant communication with these young women. Some things have changed, but many things have remained the same; I am still contacted and sought out for advice and a listening ear. My mentees can attest to the fact that I expect a high level of quality and integrity in both our personal and professional lives. As I vacillate between the teacher-scholar and service provider persona, which is applauded by my colleagues who make promotion, tenure, and policy decisions, I, being a person who simply cares deeply about living a life of meaning and worth, recall the words of some of my mentees:

Lisa-She was a bit intimidating at first because she strives to be the best and wants the best from those who work with and/or for her…We have the same principal beliefs regarding Higher Education Administrators being that they should encourage ethical behavior, hard work and foster feelings of personal effectiveness and shared leadership with the organization.

Wilma- I was able to be more confident and assertive in my abilities and performance. As far as my personal development, I didn't know a lot of black women in very important positions such as her position. She was assertive and tactful in her position, which is important in professional environments. Also, she was caring and encouraging like when I said "I think a master's degree is good enough", she said "You don't want to just be good, you want to be better".

These young women that I have mentored over the years and the new relationships that have been formed with several doctoral students remind me to work within ambiguity, and to develop the purpose in my work of not just honoring my own version of the practice, praxis, and politics of teaching and research as truth, but to seek to honor the truth that is created and negotiated in relationship with other teacher scholars (Marina & Fonteneau, 2012; Dillard, 2006).

Personal and Professional Self

As a woman of *African ascent*, I want to encourage women to recognize their connections to other women and envision their potential for positive contributions in academia. I digress to mention that the phrase African Ascent, but more specifically, the term *ascent* as a shift in the ideologies that debunks the traditionally held cultural constrictions of language from the well-established canon of western thought (Dillard, 2006). It is typical to hear the phrase *African descent;* the term *descent or descend* ascribes to falling or tumbling down, which has a negative connotation. In contrast, the word ascend can be described as rising up, which has a positive connotation (Marina & Fonteneau, 2012). The term *African Ascent* articulates a reality that is known and based in the roots of African thought and is a culturally constructed social identity for African American women (Dillard, 2006).

While rarely mentioned in educational research, *spirituality* is woven into the ethos of women leaders and

scholars of African ascent. It is my contention that as a woman in the field of education, I must use my head, my heart, and my *spirit* for the profession. This notion is contrary to Western thought, so I must carefully consider how to negotiate the nuances of academia without compromising my identity.

Thinking Back: My introduction to Informal Mentoring

Thinking back to my preschool and elementary school years, I learned at an early age that speech and grammar were of the utmost importance for any type of success. Over the years, I listened to my father's voice change whenever he answered the telephone; his tone was different and his words were eloquent. During these early years I also watched my aunts negotiate business at the check-out counter when they visited the stores downtown. They too consciously and deliberately adjusted their tone of voice and spoke as if they were orators for an elaborate ceremony. My dad worked hard and applied for any and all the on-the-job training he could find. He modeled a strong work ethic, persistence, and, desire for continuous learning. When he obtained a GED, a precedent was set for additional education in our family.

Moving Forward

Moving forward to my middle school years, I remember being called to the counselor's office; he wanted to congratulate me on high test scores, and he encouraged me to take some additional courses related to math and science. Continuing on in high school, I believe the encouragement was the catalyst that propelled me to graduating from high school as one of the top ten students in my graduating class. My father, one African American male guidance counselor, two Caucasian male teachers, and one Caucasian female teacher were my cheerleaders and "informal" mentors who gave me the confidence to move on to the next level. Support and encouragement often come in the form of attentive listening, calm reassurance, kind words about the potential for success, when a protégé is struggling with confidence and identity (Johnson, 2007).

I obtained an Associate's degree in Radiologic Technology and then a Bachelor's degree in Technical Education. As I pursued my master's degree in Higher Education Administration at a predominantly white institution (PWI), I felt a disconnection between the theory and the practice until my internship at the very end of the program. I sought out an African American female for this experience; this proved to be more difficult than I anticipated. There were so few women of color in Higher Education Administration and Student Affairs faculty or leadership positions. I was unsuccessful in finding a female in a leadership position who was not already overcommitted with service projects. African American female graduate students view the role of an African American female mentor as mirroring a more motherly, nurturing, and culturally relevant experience (Patton & Harper, 2003). At the time I wanted to see and experience academia in a different way; at that time I didn't realize that I wanted a more culturally relevant experience. Subsequently, I found an African American male dean in the graduate school that agreed to allow me to complete an internship in that office. We had to complete a "mentor agreement" form and the internship supervisor was labeled as the "mentoring supervisor." I didn't think about the terms at time, but many years later, I came to the conclusion that the terms were both intentional and purposeful.

Some mentorship scholars recommend the use of storytelling as a means of professional socialization (Swap, Leonard, Shields, & Abrams, 2001) and during my internship,

my "mentoring supervisor" spent hours chronicling personal experiences that caused him to become passionate about the recruitment and retention of African American students. It was his passion and his apparent personal conviction that began to shift and re-shape my passion and purpose for my education and life work. This particular mentor sent me to meetings on his behalf; this action opened doors to a new world in higher education.

After one particular meeting for deans and directors, I was approached by two men (one African American, one Caucasian) with inquiries about who I was and why I was in attendance at the meeting. By the time I left, the African American male offered me a graduate assistantship. During this graduate assistantship my supervisor was one of the committee member's that interviewed me for my first real job in the higher education arena. He spoke highly of my work ethic and leadership capabilities. The other gentlemen (Caucasian) that previously asked why I attended a particular meeting hired me for my first university position. As a result, I gained another mentor who modeled leadership and a commitment to service. He was innovative and supportive of my ideas, which enhanced my confidence to seek positions with greater responsibilities. At this juncture, I attributed much of my success to my hard work within a Master's degree program and the three male mentors I just mentioned. As such, I was encouraged to pursue a doctorate degree; my doctoral experience was vastly different.

Back Pedaling

As I journeyed on the doctoral road, I felt as though I was pedaling backwards. I navigated the twists and turns mostly on my own. I was assigned to a Caucasian advisor who did not fully understand my interests, passion, and personal conviction for recruiting and retaining students of color in higher education. Pedaling forward and backwards along the way, I discovered that other graduate students were working on projects with professors, attending and co-presenting at conferences with the professors, and writing scholarly papers and publishing with their major professors. In general, we all had the same professors, so what class did I miss? I sought out another major professor who was knowledgeable about my topic of interest and coincidently, was an African American male. Such experiences have brought me to where I am today.

Why I Mentor Myself

My past experiences can help me explain the phrase "I mentor me:" I have moved from a part-time position as an education coordinator to an assistant dean with teaching privileges, to my current position as an associate professor and director of a higher education administration program. Looking in the rear-view mirror of my mind, I see the men, both African American and Caucasian that mentored me through my academic endeavors and career pursuits. Having a mentor of the same race and gender within the context of predominantly white (PWI) university settings was highlighted by Crawford & Smith (2005) as being vital to the growth and development of African American female graduate students as future professionals (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011).. The relevance of matching mentorship with race and gender can serve to contextualize lived experiences, but the academic outcome is not dependent on it (Blake-Beard, Bayne, Crosby, & Muller, 2011), which, in part, was my experience with very few women as role models and mentors. This realization sparked my passion and purpose which cause me to reach out to young women in general and young women of color in particular that are pursuing careers in education and leadership position; they are me. Similar to one

of my mentors that had a personal conviction to recruit students of color for higher education advancement, I too have a personal conviction to mentor young women that are like me.

Mentoring experiences were found to be crucial for African American female graduate students in any higher educational setting (Johnson, & Huwe, 2003; Scholsser, Knox, Moskovitz, & Hill, 2003; & Patton, 2009). As such, I make myself available; I mentor me. African American mentors are perceived to relate to African American graduate students more than their White counterparts. White mentors, whether they are male or female, are thought to not appreciate the complexity of being an African American woman (Patitu, &Hinton, 2003); and so, I mentor me. African American mentors are perceived by their mentees as having a better level of understanding for them as individuals (Nicols & Tanksley, 2004; Patton & Harper, 2003; Grant, 2012); and so, I mentor me. Finally, at this age and level of my career in academia, I still need a mentor and an encouraging word. When I look around and no one is there, I encourage myself; I literally mentor me.

Women from diverse cultural groupings may have similar gendered interpretations of an experience (Collins, 1993; Johnson-Bailey, 2004); this offers a rationale for selecting a mentor (Rose, 2003) of the same race *and/or* gender. I believe that the "Cultural Contracts" theory (Jackson, 2002) is a framework that helps describe these cultural identification experiences.

Cultural Contracts

In the following section I discuss how the intersection of race, gender, and professional identities affect the experiences of female students of color. More specifically, I articulate the difficulties associated with negotiating and balancing diverse and complex identities in academe. The concept of cultural contracts is used to contextualize mentoring experiences for women of color and to offer additional support in understanding professional and cultural identity development (Harris, 2007). For mentoring relationships in academe, I explore the "why" and "how" female graduate students of color and I (past and present) consider the cultural aspect of a mentoring relationship.

The Cultural Contracts theory expands upon the "negotiation of cultural identity." The negotiation of cultural identity is defined as:

A bargaining process in which two or more individuals consider the exchange of ideas, values, and beliefs.... *Negotiation of cultural identity* is a process in which one considers the gain, loss, or exchange of his or her ability to interpret their own reality or worldview. (Jackson, 1999, p. 10)

Jackson very eloquently described what was happening during my years in graduate school. The Cultural Contracts theory suggests that:

….intercultural relationships may or may not be coordinated, depending upon the dynamics involved (such as power, boundaries, cultural loyalty, group identification, maturity, etc.). This coordination is initiated after an initial negotiation with the self. That is, identities, whether social, cultural or otherwise, have meaning for the individual when they are first negotiated personally. Although an individual may be aware of an ascribed racial identity that defines her as Black, that identification referent takes on significance when its meaning is negotiated within the self. That process is sometimes subconscious and/or happens quickly. After intrapersonal adjustments are made to accept, reject or compromise one's worldview or portions of it, then this ontological orientation is carried into relationships with others, where difference becomes paramount. (Jackson, 2002, p. 361)

According to Jackson (2004), multiple identities are naturally and "constantly being socially constructed and negotiated." The dominant group seemingly remains in power, even in interpersonal interactions. Considering the cultural contracts paradigm, identities are negotiated and coordinated when cultural differences are present. Cultural contract negotiation involves a "conscious and mindful process of shifting one's worldview and/or cultural behaviors" (Jackson, 2002, p. 363). Because of racialized experiences, marginalized individuals will engage in communicative practices (selecting a mentor) "for the sake of preserving, protecting, and defining the self" (p. 363). Here again I point out my experiences for seeking out mentors of color without fully understanding that I was in the midst of preserving who I was, protecting my beliefs, and defining (trying to have some control over) who I was becoming.

Selecting a mentor in academe is likened to a cultural contract negotiation which involves introspection. Even more so, when considering a mentor in predominantly white institutions (PWIs), identity negotiation occurs. Racialized individuals are continually placed in contexts where a cultural contract is warranted when seeking mentorship in PWIs (Gasman, Gerstl-Pepin, Anderson-Thompkins, Rasheed, & Hathaway, 2004). The cultural contract process is an *implicit* agreement that most appropriately addresses how a person chooses to negotiate his or her racial identity in the company of racially different others. Selecting a mentor may become a choice to assimilate without understanding that assimilation may have a direct effect on future choice-making. A shift in any one or any part of one of the cultural aspects of one's cultural identities (e.g. African American) constitutes the "signing" of a cultural contract (Jackson, 2002). Cultural Contracts Theory is a lens through which we can examine and consider the possibly for successful mentoring relationships in academe where difference may be associated with inferiority and marginalization. Although this section is limited to a brief discussion of how and why persons of color select mentors to guard their cultural identities and enhance their professional identities through the strategic use of cultural contract negotiation, I hope that it sheds some light on the difficulties for females of color seeking mentorship in the academy.

At The Crossroads: What Direction Do We Take?

If I consider my formal and informal (Friday, E., & Friday, S., 2002) mentoring relationships, I see that I negotiated cultural contracts. I believe that formally assigned mentors, opposite gendered mentor relationships, and mentors from different racial and ethnic backgrounds can serve a particular purpose with positive outcomes. Most of my informal mentors were males and when I sought out a female for a formal mentoring relationship/assignment during my graduate education, the end result was an opposite gendered relationship. Over the past six years, I have been exposed international conference opportunities, research exchanges, and writing opportunities; however, most of these collaborations come from faculty of color outside of my current institution. Moving from assistant professor to associate professor and from non-tenured status to tenured status, females of color as role

models have been scant (Blackwell, 1989) and for the most part, African American males have again served as my supporters, encouragers and mentors.

Gender can be a major impact factor, yet, the uniqueness of a cultural connection can strengthen a mentoring relationship. The graduate female students of color that I mentor(ed) have often spoken about a strong cultural connection that has increased self-esteem and manifested high levels of confidence. Anyone can mentor and possess or attain keen listening skills, foresight (Bennetts, 2002; Johnson, & Ridley, 2004) and even empathy; however, a cultural connection is not easily duplicated. I believe these students interpreted and considered their choice for a mentor from a cultural and gendered perspective, however, I suggest that these young women knowingly or unknowingly have garnered confidence to lead and serve in academia from a cultural *and* spiritual connection. I consider mentoring as both an intellectual and spiritual endeavor which can transform the inner and outer lives (our personal and professional identities).

As a professor in higher education I am increasingly pressured to acquire funding, produce scholarship, and demonstrate professional service, while addressing the needs of my graduate students (Weil, 2001). As a professor and mentor for Educational Leadership and Higher Education Administration, I must remind myself that have assumed the role of a leader, advocate, and collaborator in a male dominated system to address ethical and equity concerns in the socio-environmental and political contexts (Sefa Dei, 2002) of academia. As an educational leader, I must consider my moral (spiritual) position to deconstruct and reconstruct educational practices and systems (mentoring and the lack thereof) that perpetuate the tolerance for underrepresented populations in academia. Derrick Bell (2002) captured the essence of these considerations when he said:

> Our lives gain purpose and worth when we recognize and confront the evils we encounter-small as well as large- and meet them with a determination to take action even when we are all but certain that our efforts will fail. For in rising to those challenges, there is no failure. Rather, there is a salvation of spirit, of mind, of soul.
> (p. 177)

Concluding Thoughts

A personal and profession identity sprinkled with an ethical ambition is not easily obtained within the walls of the academy and more specifically within a PWI. Approaches to modeling ethical behavior and teaching ethics education have changed little in the past 15 years and an integrated approach across the curriculum that incorporates moral learning theory is uncommon (Pijanowski, 2010). As such, it is important for me to prepare the next generation of educational leaders to see themselves as advocates for woman of color that are pursuing higher education and educational leadership careers. Becoming an ethical leader requires a re-centering of one's life (Sullivan, 2007). As a professor, researcher, and mentor of African ascent, I must take responsibility for social and educational change with my spiritual philosophy; in doing so, I can propel others to bear witness to their own beliefs. I believe that where I have been, where I am, and wherever I go, is for the purpose of mentoring young women. This is done both formally and informally; it is accomplished for the most part through the power of voice. I have shared my experience; I have shared my story and ask the young women that I mentor to do the same.

The personal narratives of African American women and men educators are important to the collective memory and cultural history of a people. African Americans need a repository of stories to help make sense out of dilemmas, crises, and conundrums in academia. I hope that these collective expressions can serve to create intellectual spaces in academe that affirm and support mentoring women of color where mentors of color are absent or scant on university campuses. This reflection is a call for women of color in general and woman of African ascent in particular to reassess their academic impact. I add my voice to the discourse of preparation and praxis for educational leadership, joining many other voices that call for a renewed spiritual grounding of the African identity and consciousness. My voice represents many voices; my narrated experience represents many experiences, and contextualizes how various interpersonal encounters are interpreted from a racial and gendered perspective. "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter" (King, 1968).

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Myself, My Choices, My Praxis:
A Latina's Journey into Academia

Alma Stevenson, Georgia Southern University

As a single footstep will not make a path on the earth, so a single thought will not make a pathway in the mind. To make a deep physical path, we walk again and again. To make a deep mental path, we must think over and over the kind of thoughts we wish to dominate our lives (Henry David Thoreau).

From a Classroom Volunteer to Teacher of Teachers

I was born and raised in northern Mexico. Growing up there, I attended private schools; however, being educated in the private school system did not prevent me from recognizing the unfairness and inequality endured by many people. I earned an undergraduate degree in mass communication from a well-known private university in Mexico. In my undergraduate years in Mexico, I became very interested in how research and literature can support social justice and equity. These explorations allowed me to become aware of my privileges and the unfairness of Mexico's socio-economic and political system. Thus, as a young adult, I became more sensitive and critical regarding the issues that constrained the lives and opportunities of people less fortunate than I. However, this was all in the realm of theory, not experience.

Soon after completing college, I married and moved across the border to El Paso, Texas, a location thoroughly dominated by Mexican American culture and where bilingualism is the norm. From certain points in El Paso, I could actually see Mexico, Texas, and New Mexico. Thus, my transition to the US left me living "in-betweenness" (He, 2006), but without a theoretical understanding of it as such. In retrospect I can see that I was living in between cultures within a larger, hybrid culture in a unique geographic, historical, and sociocultural context. Without knowing it, I was living in Anzaldua's (1987) borderlands, in a hybrid culture that easily assimilated people like me, and that I adapted to with equal ease. I was able to preserve my Mexican culture and at the same time, to adopt some new customs, such as celebrating Thanksgiving. I was living and navigating between two interconnected worlds and cultures. This familiar social context, combined with my relative privilege eased my transition into the United States and would later open doors to me at crucial times.

Given my background, it was not until I enrolled my own children in the public schools of El Paso, Texas that I realized the central importance of public education as the provider of opportunities for all children. The schools of El Paso serve a much more economically diverse population than any school I have ever attended. When I started serving as a volunteer at my daughters' elementary school in the early 1990s, my intention was not to pursue a career in education. Rather, I sought to be an engaged parent and was motivated by a vague curiosity about how children learn. With time, my interest grew beyond the usual, non-instructional, volunteer tasks and I asked to be allowed to provide instructional assistance inside the classrooms. For nearly a decade, as I interacted with students of all sorts, mainstream, English

Language Learners, and special needs, and helped them develop their reading comprehension and English language skills, my curiosity was never satisfied, it only deepened. During these same years, my sister became a very successful bilingual teacher in a low SES school in the same school district. Her dedication to implementing best practices among bilingual and economically disadvantaged children inspired me. Thus, when personal circumstances forced me to start a new career, I had no doubt that I would become a teacher and eventually a professor of education. Nonetheless, my transformation from parent volunteer to a teacher of teachers was neither sudden nor easy.

Becoming a Teacher

The primary circumstance that forced me to start a career was my divorce. Within days my economic status was turned upside down. I went from the comfort of being a middle class mother with no need to work to a single parent with no income and minimal child support. For the first time in my life, I did not know how I would pay the bills. All I knew was that I had three daughters to take care of and a growing desire to become an educator. The child support ended soon after and, within a couple of years I was juggling four jobs: a financially-struggling single mother of three daughters, a full-time elementary school teacher, an adjunct university faculty member, and a Ph.D. student.

It was my previous work as a volunteer in the public school system that allowed this transformation, an experience that I would have never had if I had not been married to a relatively prosperous businessman. In order to pay my bills while working toward certification as a teacher, I needed a job. I began working as a substitute teacher any place or anytime in El Paso. I had the opportunity to substitute in nearly a dozen schools and see the full range from poor to rich communities in the district.

After over a year, my dedication as a volunteer, my reputation as an effective substitute teacher, and my sister's connections in the district allowed me to enter the classroom with a provisional certificate. My sister learned that an elementary classroom position was opening on her campus in an impoverished section of the city. She recommended me to her principal, I was granted an interview, and I got the job! Clearly my relatively privileged background and personal connections opened doors for me – doors that many others would not have even known existed. However, my commitment was not just to myself and my daughters. In the wake of my year substituting at all SES levels, I chose to teach in an economically depressed area where bilingual Latino students, mostly of Mexican descent, predominated. My experiences of teaching struggling readers and English Language Learners would be the framework and focus of all my subsequent academic work.

I was on the right track. I was motivated to succeed in order to set an example for my daughters. Simultaneously, I was going to serve a community which interested me, which I

cared about, and which eventually would become the focus of my research. Starting my job as an elementary teacher and classes for certification reaffirmed my goal of becoming a professor of education. I obtained a master's degree in education and participated in dozens of the professional development sessions offered by the school district. My hard work and commitment caught the attention of my professors at the University of Texas at El Paso, and immediately after I completed my Master's they offered me a job as an adjunct faculty member, teaching Bilingual Education courses for pre-service teachers. It was the opportunity I had been waiting for! I would be paid to make connections between my practice as a teacher and the theories and research that inform good pedagogy. Thus, I accepted this new role without hesitation.

Exploring Academia

Starting to work as an adjunct faculty was not an easy task. My position was an emergency hire on very short notice. I was given a syllabus and told to follow it, but very little other guidance. I remember the first day I taught in Academe. It was a summer session. Aware of my own novice status, and of the fact that I was learning while I was teaching, I feared that my students would not take me seriously. I struggled at times but quickly learned some important lessons about teaching at the college level. One of the most important was my realization of the importance of developing my own curricula and syllabi. I recognized that only by designing my own curricula would I feel confident during my lectures and control over the teaching process. In the end I was successful enough to be asked to teach two different courses the following semester. My part-time teaching at UTEP would continue for four years as I started working toward a doctorate.

Given what I had learned, my main objective during the remaining of my summer vacation was to learn to write curriculum and prepare syllabi. I was fortunate to find a willing mentor in the department chair, a Latina professor in the Bilingual Education program. I learned to ask without being afraid of being perceived as a neophyte who did not know what she was doing. After all, this was one more learning experience.

Before long, a strong symbiotic relationship emerged between my academic roles. My classroom experience as a fourth grade bilingual teacher was a source for practical, hands-on, and meaningful activities that I integrated into my lectures for pre-service teachers. At the same time, my expanding knowledge of research on teaching was informing my classroom practice. My public school teaching experience granted me insight into the struggles of students who had been historically marginalized: Latinos, Blacks, and Native Americans. Meanwhile, I knew that privileged immigrants and children of immigrants like me were likely to survive and even excel in U.S. public schools. This contrast between my personal background and that of my students motivated me to work with immigrants lacking much formal education and/or from economically impoverished backgrounds. Therefore, when I decided to pursue a doctoral degree, I had already defined the focus and purpose of my research.

Doctoral Studies and Entering Academe Full-Time

I entered the doctoral program in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in Literacy, Language, and Culture at New Mexico State University. I began to learn how to use theory to connect my desire for social justice with critical pedagogy via Critical Literacy and New Literacy Studies. I was fortunate to have classmates from a wide variety of countries and cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Every class became an arena for interesting and thoughtful multicultural discussions. The cross-fertilization between my studies and my teaching expanded further and I began not to think of them as separate but as two sides of my praxis.

I still remember that summer morning when I opened my e-mail and saw a message regarding the possibility of working as a full time instructor at New Mexico State University. Even though the position was only for a period of nine months, I did not hesitate. How could I reject an opportunity to teach literacy education? Literacy was the major focus of my doctoral program and I was nearly done. Cutting back to one full-time job while trying to finish my PhD made sense. Moreover, my goal for years had been to become a full time professor; this would allow me to explore what it meant to be a full time professor.

Although my adjunct teaching at UTEP had included attending sporadic meetings and exchanging ideas with tenure-track faculty, I was still considered an outsider. I did not have the time, opportunity, or responsibility to see and understand the whole picture. I did not grasp that being a full-time professor went far beyond course preparation, writing, and attending meetings.

The move into full-time faculty status, as an instructor at NMSU, immediately gave me one of the greatest opportunities a doctoral student in literacy could have: teaching on-site bilingual education pre-service teacher blocks. Suddenly, the symbiosis between the different elements of my professional career became a full synthesis. My training of the undergraduates was to happen in real dual-language public school settings. This was of great worth to me.

I was able to see, first hand, incongruences and mismatches between what my undergraduate students learned in theory and its application in the classroom. I was able to experiment and explore how strategies and approaches featured in teacher education were or were not effective in the school setting. Meanwhile, direct contact with administrators, classroom teachers, and their practice kept me informed of new teaching strategies, approaches, and even policies.

After two years, I simultaneously finished my job and my Ph.D. at New Mexico State University. I knew I was prepared to apply for a tenure track position. However, I was facing a new challenge comparable to my immigration to the US or my divorce. In order to grow in my profession, I would have to move away from my home of over two decades, and away from the bilingual, bicultural "borderlands" that had afforded me relative success and comfort without challenging my self-identity.

From Majority Minority to the Other

Before I immigrated to the US, I was not aware of governmental classification of individuals according to race and ethnicity. If you are born in Mexico, you are Mexican, no hyphens. This is not to say there is not diversity in Mexico and discrimination based upon that diversity. The classism of Mexico has long historical roots and the national heritage of colonialism and exploitation of indigenous peoples generally means: the more indigenous your background is, the fewer opportunities you have. However, Mexican paperwork does not require you to specify your racial or ethnical background. In 1930, the Mexican government stopped including race as part of the census, based on a national ideology of Mestizaje (the mixture of Spanish and Indigenous races) as essential to Mexican national identity, culture, and values (Navarrete, 2005).

When I came to the United States, I first encountered racial and ethnic labels. Although odd, I thought it was reasonable to a certain extent. In any case, it had very little consequence for me as a relatively privileged Latina living in a Latino-dominated border town. I was part of the majority. Even when I started my career as an academic two decades later, I was still in the El Paso, TX / Las Cruces, NM region, the oldest Latino community in the United States. My first six years in higher education were in an environment where Latino professors formed a plurality.

However, my first interview for a tenure-track position brought me to one of the newest regions of the "New Latino Diaspora:" rural South Georgia (Wortham, Murillo, & Hamann, 2002). When I was invited for an interview at Georgia Southern University, my knowledge of the South was little more than the stereotypes of "Gone with the Wind," "The Dukes of Hazzard," humidity, and alligators. My students at NMSU, including one Latina who had traveled in this region, cautioned me about the prejudice and racism they expected I would encounter.

My experiences were not as extreme as my students feared. My interview was pleasant and my prospective colleagues were warm and welcoming. I spent a lot of time thinking about the possibility of relocating to Georgia Southern, and when the job offer came, I accepted it. After moving here, I thankfully found that the community beyond campus was not full of the racism my students described. However, the people were not sure how to place me. My fair-skinned appearance is not obviously Latina, but my accent marked me as a foreigner. When asked, I would say I was from Mexico. Their responses indicated that they had little experience with Mexicans who did not look indigenous. The self-identity that I had carried for decades, largely unexamined in the comfortable boundaries of El Paso, was being challenged by people I had to interact with on a daily basis.

This contrast has forced me to think deeply about defining what it means to be Latina and Mexican in very different contexts, and maintaining my own identity. For the first time I became aware of my ethnic and cultural Otherness (Asher, 2001) and its relevance to my life. I am a woman of color who lives in two worlds, a Mexican who speaks with an accent, and a Latina who is attempting to be accepted into academia. Nonetheless, my experience cannot be simplified into stereotypes and my life cannot be contained within convenient labels.

I have lived both the advantages and the disadvantages of being a minority woman in academia. Reflecting on the twelve years since I first went back to school to become a teacher, I believe that I have sometimes been unappreciated or devalued because of my background. I have felt the denigrations of people who believe that I have been "given" more opportunities than a White person because I am a minority. Other times I have felt admired and depended upon for the same reasons: being a woman of color who is perfectly bilingual and biliterate in Spanish and English. Nonetheless, I have found myself continuously required to demonstrate that while my capabilities as a scholar may be grounded in my experiences as a Mexican; my abilities to theorize, think, and write, extend far beyond that grounding.

When applying for a job I heard colleagues say, "They are probably interviewing you because they need more diversity among their faculty." It might probably be true, but it entirely overlooks the fact that my background brought with it a set of skills and breadth of knowledge that the hiring department needed. So, does this mean that I am not really qualified, and that I am just being favored because of pro-diversity policies? Am I a token? Are we women of color, or minorities in general, tokens? Or, does my lived experience as a bilingual, bicultural woman means that I am particularly capable of some tasks and knowledgeable about some critical issues? I believe that diversity brings more than just a colorful department faculty portrait, but a breadth of expertise that is necessary to meet the needs of a diverse society.

Seeking Mentors, Seeking Tenure

Like any woman of color in academe, I constantly experience cultural misunderstandings, discursive misinterpretations, and social confusions as I move between communities outside and within higher education. I have learned to be cautious when showing respect and sensitivity toward some of my colleagues, since what I understand as caring can be interpreted by others as being weak or unassertive. I also regularly feel the pull and push of colleagues who speak the rhetoric of diversity, but seem threatened by its implementation.

With tenure on the horizon, the tension sparked by each of these obstacles is magnified for me. Unfortunately, clear guidance regarding what is expected is not always forthcoming, and I have to openly and repeatedly inquire about what I need not only to survive, but to succeed in academia. In doing so, I have come to realize that sorting out what matters and what can be dismissed requires the support and guidance of other women and men of color. In this way, I have learned that an official mentor is not as significant as *who your mentors are* – the people with whom you find solidarity. As I have found solidarity and mentorship, I have increasingly gained the necessary confidence to feel like I am walking on solid ground. Meanwhile, I am trying to do the same for younger students and scholars, especially those from historically underrepresented groups, by making linguistic and cultural diversity the focus in all my teaching, service, and research.

Educational Choices: Defining my Praxis

How can I define my praxis? My understanding of praxis is grounded on Marx's definition. I believe in a just and democratic praxis; a reflective relationship between theory and practice, and a commitment to self-transformation and social justice. My praxis reflects my background as an immigrant who understands the challenges of cultural disconnects and values pedagogical principles aiming at integrating students' background and community resources into their learning process (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). However, education is not just an academic endeavor; it is also a political one. I have an obligation to awaken in my students a sociopolitical awareness that will enable them to make change happen in their lives and for the wellbeing of their communities (Freire, 1970/1992).

Thus, my teaching and curricula have always embraced diversity and acknowledged the cultural backgrounds of my students as a means to instill cultural sensitivity among pre-service and in-service teachers. In the same way, I share my own experiences as a classroom teacher and invite my students to examine my experiences and choices as a former school teacher. Following the principles of democracy in education (Dewey, 1987; Freire, 1998, 2005), I use dialogical discussions that invite students to generate their own questions that explore the connections between theory and practice (Freire, 1998, 2005).

Final Thoughts

My story is not a simple story of oppression; it is a story of contrasts, of privilege and struggle. It is a story of overcoming obstacles and making use of advantages for the sake of myself, my daughters, and the students for whom I seek to provide new opportunities. In order to do this, I have to develop a set of skills beyond just teaching, writing, and research. I have to create and preserve a network of relationships that will provide me with the necessary support and guidance, while I do the same for others. Most importantly, it is necessary to preserve who I am: I am Mexican, a Latina, a woman of color. I am an educator who believes in fairness, respect, and social justice. I possess the passion, the tenacity, and the drive to achieve my goals while helping others like me achieve theirs.

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Exploring My Racial and Gender Identity as an Asian Female Professor

Mina Kim, San Francisco State University

Introduction: Who I am and What I am in a Different Cultural Context

In a family-oriented hierarchical society like South Korea, in which women's rights and freedom are heavily controlled and restricted by parents' (particularly father's) choices and decisions, it was not an easy task for me to persuade my parents to accept a plan that I would leave them without marriage to gain a 'doctoral degree' in the U.S. For my parents, it was a big and difficult decision to support. In South Korea, however, there are few parents who would say 'no' when their child shows interest in pursuing a 'doctoral degree', particularly in an English speaking country; as South Korea has been dealing with the "English fever" (Park, 2009) under the pressure of globalization since the late 1980s. However, my parents never knew, until now, that applying to doctoral programs in the U.S. was not the reason why I studied so hard for the GRE (a standardized graduate entrance exam) and TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language: English language proficiency test for non-native speakers wishing to study at U.S. universities). I studied so hard in order to escape the oppressive social restrictions experienced by women in South Korea every day. When you are constantly told who and what you are, and who and what you should be, a psychosis or internal double consciousness develops. I had a profound desire to learn more about myself, Me, a woman, who I am and what I want to do in my life in that society. South Korean society never gave me a chance to look into myself as a woman, to become an individual and independent citizen in society. Before I had a chance to realize or contemplate who I am, Korean society had already developed and formed the images of how Korean women should be, and pressed those images onto each individual. Of course the family is the medium in that function. Even though I graduated from college, I could not make the decisions of what to do with my future career and life. Peoples around me (parents, families, professors, friends, etc.) dictated my life choices, when I needed to get married even who I should marry, if I would pursue a career or stay at home and support my husband, preaching how I should walk, talk and be as a woman in public.

After moving to the United States I experienced a dramatic change from a metropolitan city in South Korea to a small college town in the Midwest. Not too long after I had adjusted to a new environment, I had to face something new other than my gender: it was my ethnicity. Surprisingly, I did not expect that I had to rethink my race right after I came into this new and different social context. When I was in my home country, race or my skin color was not an issue that I was concerned about or had to negotiate. However, I was judged and categorized by my ethnicity in this new social context, and for the first time the word Asian was consistently part of my consciousness. This feeling was very different from what I experienced in my home country. In South Korea I had struggled with sexism, but at least for me, ethnicity was not a concern as there was no difference in appearance among the peoples around me. That was where my journey had started, where I began exploring my gender as well as racial identity in a different cultural context.

In this paper, I address how my experience as an Asian female professor in the field of Early Childhood Education has shaped my occupational identities in North American academia. Not only as an Asian female professor, but also an international faculty, my story presents the struggles and obstacles I have faced in different cultural and professional contexts. In doing so, I employed a narrative inquiry (Lyons & Laboskey, 2002) to present my life journey on how I have survived and negotiated these multiple identities/contexts in a higher education institute.

Teaching and Learning in the Field of Education: Dealing with My Gender and Race

Unsolved Issue: Gender and Early Childhood Education

Interestingly enough I had to deal with gender issues in my doctoral program as I studied early childhood education (ECE). Historically, the field of ECE has been a female dominant profession in society; however, women in the field of education are still a minority in terms of social status to men in the same workforce (Biklen, 1995). The feminization of teaching not only means the gradual increase in the numbers and proportions of women teaching in most school systems, but also embodies female teachers' low status and payment within patriarchal systems (Prentice &Theobald, 1991). Moreover, even within the teaching profession where the labor was reasonably similar for men and women, female teachers predominated the lower grades (primary schools), whereas males worked in the higher (secondary schools) (Carter, 2002). In particular, teachers of children under five are the lowest-paid, least valued, and lowest-status workers in the social structure, because they exercise little control over the profession and implement few meaningful values in a patriarchal society (Rensenbrink, 2001; Weiner & Kallos, 2000). As one way of gaining respect and professional status, a profession should serve powerful groups of people in society (Lanier & Little, 1986 cited in Goodman, 1988, p. 45). From this perspective, teachers serving children-- a powerless group in society-- have few opportunities to be recognized and regarded as professionals in their profession (Goodman, 1988). Even in the doctoral courses, the majority of professors and doctoral students did not seem to feel that ECE had any serious issues to discuss. Whenever any issues in the field were addressed by ECE persons most of them had smiled and were silent, implying that gender equality or equity was not an issue of concern: due to the nature of the field, it had become a less significant issue compared to racial issues, as there were more female scholars in this teaching profession.

Multicultural Education Course and My Ethnicity: What's a Relation?

As soon as I was hired in the ECE program in a teacher education program, I was asked to teach a multicultural education course for both undergraduate and graduate programs. Even though I identified myself as a feminist and I was interested in this topic, I paused for a moment to think if the decision for me to teach this class was based on my research interest or my ethnicity. Not too long after, I found out that previous instructors of the courses were all people of color in the department (e.g. Hispanic or Asian). It could be powerful if minority professors teach multicultural education courses, as they could be seen as a more "appropriate figure" to teach the course as it's more relevant to them and their experience in a white privileged society. It is more than likely that they had experienced prejudice, racism, and discrimination and could connect those personal experiences to social justice issues in their personal and professional lives. Furthermore, it could be an authentic and effective way to engage students in critical discussions in order to make the strong link of social justice to teaching and instruction in education. However, I was still curious and not clear with why the choice of instructor for the course was always based on this assumption even in the teacher education program. Why were white faculty always excluded from teaching this course? I do believe that it would be a great chance for white faculty to teach these courses in order to rethink the meaning of "white privilege," that some might exercise it every day in academia either consciously or unconsciously. At least for me, teaching a multicultural education course was always a great learning opportunity, as I had learned each time from students and been rewarded to see their process of awareness of this important and critical topic in education.

Working Ethics: Not Because I'm Asian, But Because I'm Professional

Even though I was quickly regarded as faculty who could teach multicultural education courses for the department, I had to find a way to prove myself as an early childhood teacher educator in order to be seen as a right fit for the program. I did not want to be seen just as an Asian and international faculty who could teach only multicultural education courses. Even in my multicultural education course, I could not just talk about my personal experience and complain about any discrimination or racism I've experienced. I had to engage students in a critical thinking process so that they could understand "why" we have to talk about multicultural education and its benefits for young children's learning. It was not a class about my personal stories. I had to apply the same approach and discipline to my other courses in ECE.

At a State University in the west coast, I've been mainly working with graduate students who are in-service teachers in the field of ECE. While I advised graduate students, I realized how we, as practitioners, often look at teaching only as a skill or technique that could be improved without deep insights and reflections on our own beliefs, practices, and even our identities. Therefore, I decided that I needed to work harder to explicitly challenge our students' beliefs and perspectives on the basic concepts within early childhood education. I did this kind of deep philosophical work with students in my courses on curriculum and play.

I had developed a course entitled, *Early Childhood Education Curriculum in a Pluralistic Society*, and there I questioned students about their educational philosophies. Some were speechless and some simply referenced Piaget or Vygotsky's theories. When I challenged them with questions such as, "How do you see the relevance of child development for early childhood curriculum?" and "How do child developmental theories influence and shape your educational beliefs and perspectives?" there was always silence in classroom. Although for more than two decades there has been a history of questioning the relationship and relevance between child development and early childhood curriculum (File, 2012), most early childhood teacher education programs have failed to shine a critical light on this issue (File, Mueller, & Wisneski, 2012; Cannella, 1997). This pattern appears to be the reason why these graduate students felt confronted as I contested the fundamental belief that child development is, somehow, equivalent to or wholly overlapping with early childhood curriculum.

I asked my students to write an essay discussing their educational beliefs or philosophies for their first written assignment. The comments from students on this assignment were very interesting. What I found significant was that the majority of students felt challenged in generating their ideas yet enjoyed this challenge so much. Many of them confessed that no one had asked them about their educational philosophies in the field of ECE before, and they realized how important it was to articulate their own educational beliefs as teachers and professionals. In turn, they started pondering why teachers of young children were never asked about our educational philosophies. This became a great eye-opening moment and I could clearly see how this assignment helped these graduate students develop a critical lens on the ECE field, as well as their own teaching practice.

As I have seen students' develop more critical thinking in this curriculum course, I have adapted a similar strategy in my other class, *Children's Play Development in School and Community*. Even though the idea of play-based curriculum has long been implemented in our field, I have noticed that many practitioners did not seem to know how to define play, or how to incorporate play in complex and multifaceted ways into their curriculum. Our in-service teachers seemed to understand play only as a format for children's learning. What I hoped to emphasize about the importance of play is that it is an inquiry process within children's learning (Jones & Cooper, 2006). Therefore, in this course I challenged and engaged students into rethinking their play curriculum to analyze how the play curriculum promoted children's inquiry process in different learning domains. As with the curriculum course where I began the semester with a discussion on educational philosophy, our introductory discussion about how they defined play gave our graduate students a moment to revisit the concept of play in their practice, and allowed them the structure and space to engage in exercising critical thinking to view their daily practice.

Mingle with Minorities: Working with Marginalized Students

Dealing with racial and ethnic issues in my teaching was not only related to course choices, but also connected to student advising. I am teaching in one of the most diverse cities in the country, and our student population truly reflects that diversity. Moreover, due to our geographical location, many international students come to the program from Asia to study

early childhood education. Obviously, as I went through a similar path to gain a degree in a linguistically and culturally different country, I often observed that these international students had an affinity for me rather than any other domestic professors in the program. Not only with visa related issues, but also could advise students on academic matters as well as personal issues, which were often associated with the success in the program. It was very pleasant to work with international students, as I knew their difficulties and hardships more than anyone else. I know we all tried so hard to survive in an academia in spite of the language and cultural barriers, which was not an easy task at all. Thus, I ended up advising more international students than other colleagues. Even though it was a mutual agreement among my colleagues that I would work with international students and they would benefit from working with me, I have noticed that my colleagues have misinterpreted my intention. Colleagues believed and expressed that I should, or have to, work with *all* international students in the program. This assumption was usually made when we had discussed advising students with their master thesis. I have heard that many native English speaking faculty complained about international students' academic writing skills, and I could not stop thinking that this might be a reason why they assumed (or wished) me to take more international students as they often got lost in the program due to challenges in academic writing. It seemed that both international students and domestic faculty were missing out on an opportunity to learn about the importance of culture in education by giving up a chance to work together.

Not Only In This Social Context: Dealing with Race in the International Context

As briefly mentioned, one of great benefits of working at a university on the west coast of the United States was the closeness in distance with Asian countries. More opportunities were given as other universities and governments would like to reach out to the institute where I'm working at to build a partnership. Because I am an international faculty and Asian professor, it was relatively easy to get connected, as I do have cultural awareness, understanding, and experience with globalization as well as internationalization, which has been prevalent throughout most of Asian countries. As I grew up in a similar culture, I was the one who provided full support for this international relationship work, and helped liaisons start up their work easily so that they could connect and work more with my institution. For the past three years, I had a great chance to work with a Chinese city government, which would like to provide an influential early childhood teacher training program in their city. However, as long as the partnerships were growing, the Chinese side started requesting that they would like to work with *"white"* professors, rather than Asian professors. It did not mean that they wanted me to resign from the director position, but to staff and bring more white professionals into any of the teacher training programs they proposed. The Chinese government could submit this irrational request because they had the image of U.S. as a "white people's country," and did not pay attention to the diversity of the United States. At the same time, interestingly enough, it was common to see that international faculty were much more interested in the Chinese projects more than domestic faculty, who were busy and engaged with domestic projects and work.

Conclusion: Where Am I and Where do I go?

Reviewing my professional path related to my gender and ethnicity, I do see I have benefited from them: Because I'm a woman I could raise my voice on female teachers' gendered identities relatively easily to support their professionalism in this patriarchal society. It is so unfortunate to see that teachers of young children (infants, toddlers, and preschoolers) are regarded as semi-professionals (better than baby sitters?), and I do believe that feminist scholarship would be keen to support female teachers who are not often treated as educators in the profession. Secondly, because I am an Asian, I could gain more supports and encouragements from Asian communities and easily get connected to any other Asian institute for international partnership work. Therefore, even though it was not easy to survive as an international faculty, I would say that it was worth the struggle in order to survive in academia.

However, I also know the issues addressed above will never be resolved throughout my career and I'll be struggling and trying to figure out how I will negotiate my gender and racial identities to meet the needs of my professional work. Interestingly, the longer I live in this society, the more I feel differences rather than similarities between others and me. I now know it will be an endless journey for me to explore how I can convert my gender and racial identities into my scholarly work to make it more beneficial for students and educators I serve.

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A Distinct Few: Preparing the Monocultural for the Multicultural in the U.S. South

Sonia Janis, The University of Georgia

My Gendered and Racial Self

I am a multiracial woman who is venturing on the landscapes of a professorship in education. I realize that qualifying myself as multiracial begs further explanation. Allow me to explain. I am not White. I am not Black. I am mixed. I am one half Polish, one-quarter Russian, and one-quarter Japanese. This racial and ethnic identity shapes how I view and interact in the world, but it is not always the way others understand my being. As a multiracial woman, I cross racial divides in my social and political surroundings. I am back, forth, and in-between these divides, entrenched in a mixture that excludes me on a daily, if not hourly, basis, sometimes by force, and other times by choice (Seller & Weis, 2005). Before I entered a professorship, I perceived academia to be a more liberating place for women and people of color to work than public schools. My experience thus far has invoked unpredicted feelings of detachment from the cultures and communities to which I am committed. Because my "pedagogical work is simultaneously autobiographical and political," I have connected my teaching with the cultures and communities from which I feel alienated as I become a university faculty member (Pinar, 2004, p. 4). The responses from my students to these changes create new forms of disconnect. These responses reveal ways my gendered and racial identities, as a professor of education, could be understood.

Though I personally and politically consider myself a multiracial woman, my overwhelmingly white phenotypic appearance causes most white people, including the vast majority of the undergraduate and graduate students I teach, to believe that I am White. Whether of my choosing or an-other's imposition, I know that I teach as a phenotypic White woman existing in-between embedded notions of race and gender in the U. S. South (Livingston, 2013). Perceptions and misperceptions around my gendered and racial understandings of self and others coupled with my students' gendered and racial understanding of themselves and others create a myriad of deep complexities. Some of the complexities are related to my gender and race. Some of the complexities are related to my students' gender and race. Distinguishing between the perceptions and misperceptions that are due to race or gender, in comparison to those that are not, is not possible. "The self is gendered and racialized as well, yet these 'aspects' do not 'add up' to one, total, complete self" (Pinar, 2004, p. 56). I do not intend to abdicate the whole selves each of us embodies to only certain aspects. Making distinctions between the aspects and the whole of self is one impenetrable aspect of the interactions I have with my students that I have not unraveled. Interpreting interactions with my students through the lens of gender and race will complicate the conversations within professorships of education (Pinar). It may allow these spaces to be more open, fair and just for all members of faculties. I will try to unveil some of these complexities by teasing through some of the nuances of my interactions with my students.

Through this unveiling, I realize that the types of gendered and racial prejudices I experience do not mirror other women of color on the landscapes of education. "The oppression of women knows no ethnic nor racial boundaries, true, but that does not mean it is identical within those differences" (Lorde, 2007, p. 70). My experiences, and these interpretations of them, are limited in their scope and application. They do not, however, limit the possibilities for understanding and appreciating each other's lived experiences for the ways they enhance departments, schools and colleges of education.

Contextualizing My Teaching and Inquiry

Before I can begin exploring the racial and gendered interactions I encounter with my students, I will contextualize my experiences within the flagship state university where I work. I teach at a research one university that was established in 1785 in the state of Georgia, which is geographically, culturally, politically and socially located deep in the U.S. South. Ignoring the Southern-ness of my teaching space would not fully capture the contextualized complexities of my work. There is a "Southern epistemology" evident in the nuances of my daily interactions with the community and students (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991, p.10). "There are constant daily reminders of this Southern epistemology as one dwells in the South" (Reynolds, 2012, x). It is driving past fields of cotton, which were once worked by the hands of slaves. It is a bumper sticker displaying, "I am a Pageant Mom." It is a school board member selling Confederate flag belt buckles to children at a local festival. It is the inability to buy a Chick-fil-A biscuit on a Sunday morning. It is a university student justifying racist ideologies behind the cloak of Southern Baptist Christianity. In this Southern place, I teach what it means to be a social studies teacher. Without recognizing that placed aspects of my position, the complexities of being a multiracial woman professor of education are not fully realized.

I live a gendered and racial identity as a multiracial woman. I also live a teacher's identity. My professional teacher's identity began when I was a 20-year-old student teacher in Madison, Wisconsin. Fourteen years later, that identity has existed in many professional and geographical realms of public education in the United States. With each new position, Britzman's (2003) encapsulation of the teacher's identity becomes clearer. She explains, "…No teaching identity is ever singular or without contradictions; the teacher's identity expresses a cacophony of calls" (Britzman, 2003, p. 223). She recognizes the contradictions and complexities within which each teacher, no matter where s/he is placed, is called to exist. I am currently teaching and inquiring on the landscapes of education in the role of Clinical Assistant Professor. Unlike most of my colleagues, to whom the title disclaimer clinical is

not attached, my contracted time does not include any research; but rather, my contracted time is allocated to teaching and service. As a first year faculty member, I have found little time, outside my contracted time, to allocate to inquiries beyond my teaching and service responsibilities. My teaching and service have become my inquiry.

Teaching and service are my spaces for researching and inquiring into what it means to prepare powerful and effective social studies teachers in the 21st century. I value this positioning because I did not study to become a teacher educator as a full-time doctoral candidate at a research one university. I completed my doctorate coursework and dissertation while I was a practicing teacher and administrator in a public school. My teaching informed my inquiry when I was a public school practitioner writing a dissertation, and my teaching continues to inform my inquiry now. Without experience as a public school teacher and administrator, I would not be able to legitimately understand the landscapes to which I hope my students are able to teach courageously only months after completing their coursework (He, Haynes, Janis, Ward, Pantin, & Mikell, 2013).

I am a faculty member in a Social Studies Education Program. Within the first few weeks of taking on this role, it became abundantly clear that Ladson-Billings (2003) was accurate in stating, "I am sad to report that at the college and university level, social studies education remains as frozen in its old paradigms as it was in the late 1960s" (p. 5). More specifically, Howard (2003) explains, "…Issues pertaining to race and more importantly racism have been conspicuously absent from most of the discourse, research and scholarship within the social studies" (p. 28). I was surprised by the paradigms of social studies curriculum and pedagogy evident in the programmatic structures and practices when I became a faculty member. I was also surprised by the lack of discourse around race and racism amongst teacher educators preparing social studies teachers. The discipline itself, social studies, begs itself to engage with race and racism due to its direct ties to expansive social, historical, political and economic dilemmas. Despite my surprise at the aging paradigms and the missing discourses, I was clear in my beliefs about what it would mean for me to teach and to learn social studies with the students in my courses.

Transitioning While Transforming My Teaching Space

As the end of my first year as a faculty member comes to a close, I am only beginning to realize that transitioning from being a teacher in public schools to becoming a teacher educator is a multi-faceted transition. "For those who leave this world to enter teacher education, their first culture shock may well occur with the realization of the overwhelming complexity of the teacher's work and the myriad ways this complexity is masked and misunderstood" (Britzman, 2003, p. 27). I have only begun to unravel the culture shock that I experienced as I moved from a public school teacher and administrator to a teacher educator.

Though I continue to understand how to make my curriculum and pedagogy meaningful for my students, there were some aspects of my teacher education work I knew needed revision. The context of the learning I was creating with my students was detached from schools, but I wanted my students to experience schools as a context for the course curriculum. Though not an expert on schools, I am the one with past experience in schools, who is humbled and challenged with each new experience in schools. I believe it is worthwhile for

my students to engage with and work to understand life in schools. "Those researchers who critically study school life in classrooms, as well as those who live their lives there, understand the tensions--engendered by curriculum and its practice--between received knowledge and lived experience" (Britzman, 2003, p. 59). I wanted my students to experience, be challenged by, and try to understand those tensions as an element of their development into teachers.

I decided to change the setting of my courses to make relevant connections between the theory and practice of social studies teaching. My "deeply held beliefs and particular purposes for their teaching" motivated me to realize that the context of my classes on a university campus was incongruent with the learning I was trying to create (Heilman, 2010, p. 12). Through deliberation with my program colleagues and a local school's administration, we identified a new classroom. As Ella Baker advised, I have "cast down [my] bucket" where I live and work (cited in Anyon, 2006, p. 25) by situating my university social studies education classroom in a local high school. This "casting of my bucket" has unleashed a myriad of unpredictable circumstances and complications. Nevertheless, my students' meaningful learning experiences could not be replicated on a university campus. The transformation in the lives and learning of my students transcends to the community of high school students my students encounter.

Through the "casting of my bucket," I have brought two culturally distinct communities of education together around purposes related to powerful and effective social studies. My students are representatives from a university that is 72% White, 8% Black or African American, 4% Hispanic or Latino. The students in the high school are representatives from a district that is 19% White, 53% Black or African American, and 22% Hispanic or Latino (The University of Georgia, 2013). 77.80% of the students in this school district receive a free and/or reduced lunch, which is the public school indicator of levels of poverty within students' households (PAB Handbook, 2013). Through this partnership, a bridge "for teachers and students alike to understand what it means in a racialized society to be effective citizens" is built (Tyson, 2003, p. 24). With these two distinct groups of students in close proximity to one another, there are recognizable cultural understandings my students are grappling with before entering a classroom full time. These understandings are necessary because "for the foreseeable future, the vast majority of teachers will be White while the student population will grow increasingly diverse" (Howard, 2006, p. 4). This "demographic imperative" for teacher educators, in which the teaching profession is mono-cultural while P-12 students are becoming more multi-cultural, is the pervasive frame through which I understand my responsibilities (Sleeter, 2005).

As I "work against the grain" and "wrestle with [my] own doubts," I have hope that this work will make "a difference in the fabric of social responsibility" (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 28). Transitioning from a public school teacher to a teacher educator did not relinquish my responsibilities to students in P-12 classrooms. Those responsibilities are lived through the understandings my undergraduate and graduate students translate into their own curricular and pedagogical practices. I do not relegate my responsibilities to my students' and their students to another professor, university course or professional development exercise. By situating my pedagogical decisions within the "demographic imperative," I am living personal convictions, while invoking professional unrest.

The Monocultural Meet the Multicultural

The professional unrest derives from a new expectation that my students encounter by becoming part of this high school space. By stepping into a new cultural space, avoiding a thoughtful analysis of their positioning is nearly impossible.

Without the ability to critically examine one's own perspectives, pre-service teachers may be left to look on changing school environments as spectators, increasingly removed from the students they are preparing to teach and the contexts in which they will work. As spectators, pre-service teachers are unlikely to internalize issues of social justice, civic responsibility, and diversity (McCrary, 2010, p. 169). My students are no longer spectators of students in public high schools in the United States, they are engaged participants in an U.S. high school. The participant role inherently engenders "the inner work of personal transformation [that] has been the missing piece in the preparation of White teachers" (Howard, 2006, p. 6). Part of that inner work of personal transformation includes uncovering and dismantling the belief that "diversity [is] a deficit to be overcome," which leads to "fears about students who are different from themselves" (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 6). Through engaged participation, the students are asked to learn who the students are, create meaningful learning experiences for them, and implement such experiences. The cycle of interaction, creation and implementation helps them begin to "see and feel self-efficacy as citizens and participants who can indeed make positive change in their surroundings," which includes children who are different from them (Amthor & Heilman, 2010, p. 147). Feeling self-efficacy, witnessing positive impacts, and doing the inner work of personal transformation, as an outpouring of direct interactions with students, represent some of the diverse forms of learning my students' experience. These can be challenging for my students who were raised and schooled in ways that privileged them without educating them. To my dismay, a distinct few of my students resist the learning.

When my students encounter this new cultural space, they experience discomfort with themselves and their previous ways of knowing who they are as students and who they might become as teachers. They are asked to "analyze, interpret, critique, compare and connect various ideas and multiple perspectives to one another" in a space where they come in direct contact with perspectives that are different from their own (Cochran-Smith, 2010, xv). Most poignantly, they are asked to consider the perspectives of students of color with less economic means than which they were raised. The students of color are not hypothetical beings, but children with names and faces, children whom my students are also building relationships with. This distinct few of my students feel threatened because they are "uncomfortable with themselves racially, [and they] feel threatened by individuals who are racially different" (Branch, 2003, p. 103). Feeling threatened by children of color is a response I want to dismantle prior to their student teaching, job search and first teaching assignment. To understand the uncomfortable feelings, I offer readings, discussions, and reflections around understanding their own racial positioning and how that relates to their relationship with students. These are meant to open spaces to expose and explore race-related issues my White students are often socialized to avoid (Branch, 2003). Despite my best efforts, the distinct few remain convinced that White privilege and race, in general, have nothing to do with them. Rather than valuing the powerful

learning experiences they are participating in, the few question, challenge, and try to circumvent each stage of the learning process. Lorde (2007) offers me an explanation, "Mainstream communication does not want women, particularly white women, responding to racism" (p. 128). This explanation reminds me of the racial and gendered position I embody with each interaction I have with my students. It is not a coincidence that the distinct few, who are unwilling to digress from their privileged, intolerant, and inflexible ways of knowing, are White males. I have not uncovered how to convince White males, who do not recognize White privilege, that they are also extending an oppressive social norm in relationship to me. They unknowingly proliferate a social norm that dictates phenotypic White women should not address racism. The racial and gendered aspects of myself a few of my students cannot respect is problematic. Confounding this problem are the exact notions they are avoiding. In their efforts to circumvent the expectations of the courses, the few are either avoiding the students or avoiding learning to teach. Either avoidance is impossible to ignore because my students claim they want to teach children in secondary schools.

Through the active participation in the schools with secondary students, my students often learn through misunderstanding. For the distinct few misunderstanding is unwanted. For the other students the misunderstanding is uncomfortable, but valued. I hope for all of them that the misunderstandings that they experience allow them to recognize the privileges they are accustomed. I echo Blumenfeld-Jones' (2010) assertion that "Only in the face of misunderstanding, does an individual realize that she or he has been interpreting life's events all along" (p. 101). I hope that my students' misunderstanding helps them realize that privileges they may have experienced are not equally dispersed across communities and societies. Despite my hopes and efforts across a fifteen-week semester, the few remain unwilling to realize that misunderstanding is designed to encourage their development into a culturally competent teacher (Howard, 2006). It is not an imposition, threat, or even a mistake.

Reflection versus Deflection

I know that the "mistakes, misrepresentations, confusion, conflicts and little gifts of error are all crucial to the stuff of understanding and constructing knowledge" (Britzman, 2003, p. 2). I am glad that my students encounter mistakes because they help them to construct knowledge about what it means to teach to learn. I am thankful they experience failure during a curriculum and pedagogy course requirement, rather than as a classroom teacher. They can reflect, unpack, and re-think misunderstandings as a part of process to becoming a teacher. My students view the confusion as a *crisis* (Britzman). In response to that crisis, the *distinct few* students deflect the possibility to learn from the mistakes.

These *few* White male students, struggling with new ways of knowing, concluded there must be a flaw in my expertise, ability, planning, and understanding of the field of social studies education. They concluded that I am incapable of being their professor. Such conclusions were brought to my attention by one of my students, whom I will refer to as "my confidant," during week five of the semester. One afternoon, my confidant waited to speak with me after class. Once all of the other students left the high school classroom, he informed me that some of his classmates were distraught by the expectations in the courses. He explained that his classmates were considering reporting me to the Dean of the College of

Education. I was astonished. I was engulfed in feeling of elation and invigoration by the learning I observed my students engaging in for the past weeks. His comments forced me to step back. Our conversation immediately reminded me of the struggles I continue to experience to understand my racialized self. This process transforms me now, just as it did decades ago.

I was intrigued by his comments and wanted to know more. I wanted to be responsive and attentive to my students. Through a series of questions, I could not uncover which expectation was creating such a deep frustration in my students that they would feel desperate enough to file a complaint with the Dean. I went through the entire list of the expectations: readings, assignments, deadlines, practicum hours, constructive criticism, or the student-centered seminars. When none was identified as the root problem, I knew it was the one issue the few were struggling with since the beginning of the semester. By a process of elimination, and my confidant not mentioning one of the issues, it was evident that the problem was the expectation to consider and interact with non-hypothetical students of color. The level of rigor within the course expectations was no different than the rigor I expected in the previous three semesters. The only difference was the location, which allowed for a tangible context through which to understand the theory and put it into practice. That location put my White students in direct contact with students of color. Within my frame of addressing the "demographic imperative" (Howard, 2006; Sleeter, 2005), this is a reasonable, necessary, commonsensical expectation for my students desiring to be teachers.

I was not entirely certain this was the only problem my confidant was bringing to my attention, so I continued to investigate further. What could possibly drive a few well-schooled undergraduates to complain to a Dean about course requirements? At the time I did not have Pinar (2004) to remind me that "the enemies of public education are not all in government; some are enrolled in the classes we teach" (p. 230). After deliberating with my co-instructor of the courses, about how to respond to the information my confidant provided, I administered a survey in the form of a "temperature check." I asked the students to complete the survey during the last 10 minutes of the next class meeting. Within the survey, I asked specifically about each of the course requirements and expectations. I asked the students to explain what parts of the courses were "working for" and which were "not working for" them. After collecting the surveys, I engaged in a careful and exhaustive review of the responses with my graduate assistant and co-instructor. The only thing that was clear was that there was nothing in common in their responses. The conversation with my confidant revealed that a few of the students were coming unhinged by having to consider and interact with students of color. The "temperature check" confirmed that to be the problem the few students were encountering. In both cases, the topic that went undisclosed within the discourse was more revealing than the topics that were mentioned.

Based on the "temperature check," I made some minor changes to the course calendar during the next class session. The few students appeared somewhat relieved. By the end of the semester, they would not experience any authentic, lasting relief from their fears of students and of learning because they refused to name the fears. Kumashiro (2004) describes the type of resistance to which these few students were committed: "It is not our lack of knowledge but our resistance to knowledge and our desire for ignorance that often prevent us from changing the oppressive status quo" (p. 25). I know that it is essential for my students "to be engaged in an educational process that [will] help mediate the transition to a different perspective, a different way of being White" (Howard, 2006, p. 20). I worked to create that process for all of my students. While many received the invitation and engaged the process, a few committed to resisting knowledge and sought ignorance. Because those few are White male students, I am left wondering whether such messages would have been better received if a White male messenger sent them.

Reconciling My Responsibilities

As a multiracial female teacher educator, I recognized that a few of my students were uncomfortable interacting with students that were racially and economically different from themselves. "How we are positioned in terms of race and power vis-à-vis others has a great deal to do with how we see, what we see or want to see, and what we are able not to see" (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 86). My initial reaction to knowing there was an unspoken discomfort among my students was a reminder that I endured the same types of confusion. This conflict was not something that was stated outright by any of the students, but rather, it was evident in what was unsaid. I know what goes unsaid and what is taboo. My own experiences allow me to see and hear the unspoken discomforts. I did not pretend that the teaching and learning context is suddenly irrelevant to my students' understanding of the complexities of teaching social studies when it became uncomfortable. I continue to walk with them into those spaces, knowing the discomfort, which I endure with them, is a necessary part of their development into culturally competent teachers (Howard, 2006). I imagine that there are teacher educators who opt out of crossing racial and economic bridges in direct association with their teaching due to the types of tensions that I walk through.

Despite this semester's tensions, unrest, and discomfort, there are reminders that motivate me to push forward. Ayers (2004) reminds me, "No matter how hard we work for justice we will never get there--'Perfection will evade us.'... There is always more to do and there always will be more to do" (p. 108). Knowing that achieving perfect cultural competence among my students is an evasive goal is reassuring (Howard, 2006). My own cultural competence was even challenged by my experience teaching my students this semester. I need to continue to bask in the discomfort of my own teaching practices as I ask my students to embrace their own confusions. Instead of seeking some unattainable perfection for myself in relation to my students' understandings and competencies, my goal is to continue. "The goal is to continue teaching and learning through crisis—to continue experiencing the queer" (Kumashiro, 2004, p. 47). With each new semester, with each new class session, I will experience "mistakes, misunderstandings, confusions and conflicts" (Britzman, 2003, p. 2). I want my students to learn from these mistakes—encounters with the queer; I want to learn from the queer also. The queer brings me to more complex understandings of my own teaching and inquiring as a multiracial woman venturing on a Southern landscape of education.

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Thriving In-Between Landscapes of Education

Ming Fang He, Georgia Southern University

Teaching and Living In-Between Landscapes of Education

I was born in the midst of political upheavals, economic recessions, and national starvation marked by the Anti-Rightist Movement and the Great Leap Forward (late 1950s), grew up during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), studied at a Chinese university, where I was exposed to foreign cultures on campus due to China's open door policy since 1978, pursued graduate studies in Canada (1989–1998), taught English as a Foreign Language at Wuhan University in P. R. China and English as a Second Language to immigrant adults and children for the Toronto District School Board in Canada (1991–1998), and became an university faculty member in the U.S. South since 1998. In the past decades, I have lived my life in China, Canada, Hong Kong, and the United States. As I moved from place to place, culture to culture, and language to language, my experience was complicated by the phenomenon that race, gender, class, and power in different places were rapidly changing and highly contested. I did not, still do not, and will not feel at home in any place, an experience which characterizes my life in-between.

My sense of in-betweenness carries more of a compelling sense of being in the midst rather than being either a marginalized outcast or a conformed follower. My experience is not one of being in-between public and private, Black and White, the mainstream and the margin, but, rather, something more complex, historically contested, culturally, and linguistically contextualized. Living in-between cultural movements and political upheavals is the origin of my intellectual in-betweenness--a sense of restlessness, not belonging here or there, but of being in-between, "constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others" (Saïd, 1994, p. 53). I have been, and always will be, living and teaching in-between.

As I continue to live in the U. S. South as a woman faculty member of color, I find myself constantly entangled in-between race, gender, class, place, and power. As I encourage my White students to challenge their White privileges and fight against racism against Blacks and other minorities, classism against *rednecks* and other lower socio-economic classes, sexism against women and particularly women of color in the South, I realize that as a Han, the dominant cultural group among fifty-six ethnic groups in China, I was privileged even though I was suppressed during political movements in China (He, 2003, 2006). I also realize that I have the privilege to choose to be on voluntary exile (He, 2010) even though I do not have a fixed sense of belonging in any place. As I encourage my Chinese students and colleagues to see the capitalist invasion and colonolization in China and many parts of the world and its detrimental effects, many of them still believe that the moon in North America is rounder and brighter. As I invite my undergraduate and graduate students to voluntarily exile themselves from the acquisitive and dehumanizing conditions (He, 2010), study educational mandates inside out, and develop *creative insubordination* strategies to educate but not for profit (Nussbaum, 2010), the educational landscape in the United States is getting bleaker and bleaker. Teachers are bombarded with destructive mandates, standardized curriculum, and diminishing working environments while their bodies are so imprisoned that they can not afford to lose their materialistic possessions in such a materialistic world. As I invite people in my communities to see the importance to recognize that Black lives matter before they claim that their lives matter, public denouncement and demeaning of Chinese were chanted in noisy crowds and featured in mass medias.

As I dive into the contradictions and complexity of life in the North American academy, I find the spirit of inquiry to be quite different from the sense of authority, certainty, and conformity that tended to accompany my ways of Chinese teaching and learning. I find myself very much in-between because I sense a different way of thinking and reach out to it while being held from it by the in-betweenness I was born into and the in-betweenness I live by. I was in-between becoming inquiry oriented and activist self and a sustained and conformed self who thought of knowledge in formalistic ways. Bowing to the authority and conforming to orthodoxy were part of my upbringing and formal schooling in China. During many cultural and political movements in China, inflammatory ideas were perceived as anti-revolutionary, dangerously threatening, frantically forbidden, and brutally punished. Nevertheless, as I was able to internalize *inflammatory* ideas such as critical theory, critical race theory, ecofeminism, Black feminist thought/Black womanism, Black protest thought, the third world feminism, indigenous ways of knowing, thinking, and doing, and further develop or practice them in my learning, teaching, inquiry, writing, and ways of living, I was asked to "take away inflammatory language" from my doctoral dissertation proposal writing in order to obtain the approval of my university's Institutional Review Board. When I was able to overcome the fear of challenging orthodoxies and confronting authorities, I was accused of being disrespectful. Just as I now understand that I can never escape the in-betweenness into which I was born, I cannot escape the in-betweenness of teaching as critical or libratory inquiry and teaching as a quest for certainty or conformity. This in-betweenness permeates my life in North American academy (He, 2003, 2006, & 2010).

As I encourage my doctoral students to explore creative ways to dive into life and write into contradiction in schools, families, and communities in the U. S. South (e.g., Faulkner, 2012; Haynes, 2008, 2016; Janis, 2012, 2015; Mabray, 2012; Mitchell, 2009; Mikell, 2012, 2016; Pantin, 2012; Scott-Simmons, 2008, 2012; Tennial, 2008), I find that social justice inquiries (He & Ayers, 2009; He & Phillion, 2008; He & Ross, 2012; He, Scott-Simmons, Haynes, & Tennial, 2010; He, Haynes, Janis, Ward, Pantin, & Mikell, 2013) that I encourage them to engage in "clash with traditional research methodologies they have learned that are legitimized for objectivity, rationality, and neutrality" (He, Ross, & Seay, 2015, p.). As I begin to work closely with them on their dissertations, I have to help them to unlearn what they have learned in some of the required methodology courses, which creates tensions for my funds of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) and my sense of belonging (hooks, 2009) which furthers my displacement in-between in predominantly white rural areas.

Tensions arise when my students are encouraged to ground their research and writing in the intersectionality of culturally congruent epistemologies, research phenomena, inquiry contexts, modes of inquiry, forms of representation, and

possible educational and social changes. Tensions arise when they question whose knowledge should be considered valid and how experience should be interpreted, theorized, and represented (He & Ayers, 2009; He & Phillion, 2008; He, Ross, & Seay, 2015).... Tensions arise when they search for autobiographical and cultural roots of inquiries; bring personal, professional, and cultural experience to research; let participants name research problems and define research questions; immerse ourselves in the lives of participants in various cultural milieus as we collect counterstories, oral histories, or other forms of information; and make meaning of inquiries in relationship with participants with various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Tensions arise when they draw from culturally congruent theoretical traditions to search critical ways to look at, think about, and write about their inquiries. Tensions arise when the research methodologies they choose, such as "critical race narrative inquiry" and "slave narrative," are dismissed and ridiculed for lack of objectivity, rationality, and legitimacy, and when they are taught to use systematic computerized data analyses to analyze the vulnerable counterstories they feel responsible to collect and tell with passions and heartfelt concerns for the people and places in the plight under study. Tensions arise when they challenge *damage centered research* (Tuck, 2009) that often portrays the lives of underrepresented, misrepresented, and marginalized individuals and groups as deficient, inferior, and/or invisible (He, Ross, & Seay, p. 90). Tensions arise when they confront issues of equity, equality, and social justice in research and demand positive social and educational change (He, Ross, & Seay, 2015, p. 91).

As I was introduced to some ideas of Japanese philosophers such as Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Daisaku Ikeda, I began to explore embodied democracy in education through cultural humanism in the East, in the West, and in-between illuminated in the five main themes in the works of Confucius (551–479 B.C.), Makiguchi (1871–1944), Ikeda (1928–present), and Dewey (1859–1952). Although I am thrilled to find that cultural humanism and embodied democracy are embedded in languages, cultures, and identities in an increasingly diversified, complicated, and contested world, I am caught in-between the cultural humanism permeated in life in the East, West, and in-between and a culture of hatred toward Japanese due to the Japanese invasion of China (1935–1941) when about 3.2 million soldiers and 9.1 million civilians died in combat, and 20,000 to 80,000 women were raped by soldiers of the Imperial Japanese Army during the Anti-Japanese War. From kindergarten on, I and many other children in China were taught to hate all the Japanese. I was surprised to find that Makiguchi was imprisoned to death due to his life-long contest against the competitive and examination-driven Japanese education, governmental policy illustrated by the slogan "national wealth and military strength" (Ikeda, 2010, p. 3), and governmental goal of "imperial aggression and expansion in Asia under the guise of [the slogan] 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere'" (Ikeda, 2010, p. 21). As a schoolteacher and principal, Makiguchi spent his personal and professional life trying to rectify the Japanese education system which he deemed misguided and miseducative (Kumagai, 2000). Among the first generation of students educated under Japan's militarized wartime (1931–1945) indoctrination system, Ikeda experienced firsthand the human loss, anguish and turmoil of a nation at war. He lost his beloved brother to the mandatory Japanese military service and struggled all his life with

reconciling patriotism, authority, war, and the good and evil of education and life in Japan. While I am still deeply disturbed and disgusted by documentary films on the rape of Nanking and the Japanese invasion, I am inspired by the cultural humanism illuminated in the works and lives of Makiguchi and Ikeda.

As the Vice President of Division B (Curriculum Studies) of the American Educational Research Association when I was called upon to foster "public scholarship to educate diverse democracies," I found that different cultures and languages might not use the word "democracy" to express *democratic ideal*. For instance, some Indigenous peoples might use *decolonization* (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999/2012; also Grande, 2004; Tuck, 2015), educating *the heart, mind, body, and spirit* (Archibald, 2008); some might use *critical race tesmonio* (Urrieta Jr. & Villenas, 2013); some might use *revolution* or *social activism* (Lee, 2012); some might use *freedom* and *liberation* (Ayers, 2004; Payne, 2008); some might use *critical consciousness*, *conscientization*, or *conscientização* (Portuguese)(Freire, 1970/1992, 1997); some might use *love, justice, and education* (Schubert, 2009a), some might use *browning* (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2006), and some might use *exile* (Saïd, 1994, 2000) or *exile pedagogy/curriculum* (He, 2010). Confucius, Makiguchi, and Dewey illuminated their ideas of embodied democracy in education through cultural humanism which is embedded in languages and cultures and flourishes with the ideal of educating for creative, harmonious, associative, joyful, and worthwhile living. Epistemologically, I am in-between.

This in-betweenness becomes more complicated as I move back and forth in-between cultures in China and North America. From time to time, I am invited back to China or Hong Kong as a visiting scholar or as a Chinese American professor to attend educational conventions or give public lectures. As I fly across the North American continent back to the Asian continent, the cross-cultural, intellectual, in-betweenness leads to political in-betweenness. The true stories I told about my experience of the Cultural Revolution (He, 2003, 2010) might be perceived to "air the dirty laundry in public," that carry criticism against the Chinese governmentality. I, again, live in-between. This time, the in-betweenness is political. I am constantly reminded by my Chinese students and colleagues that I should be careful about what I say and what I do in public in China since security officers could be everywhere I go.

This political aspect of intellectual in-betweenness becomes magnified as I translate my talks and my North American colleagues' talks into Chinese. I find myself stumbling through translation at conferences or lectures, being recognized by my Chinese colleagues as an American professor who "dressed like a Chinese and talked like a foreigner" while they themselves dress in famous brand Western ties and suits and talk about the Western paradigms of research in eloquent Chinese English. To borrow a phrase from Hoffman (1989), I feel "lost in translation" since I did not have exposures to many academic languages in my Chinese education. The political in-betweenness turns into linguistic in-betweenness. Being "lost in translation" is, for me, as it is for Hoffman, a metaphor for in-betweenness and the sense of not belonging here or there that comes with cultural movements and political upheavals. This nuanced cultural, political, and linguistic sense of in-betweenness characterizes my identity as a woman of color in the North American academy.

Theorizing In-Between Landscapes of Education

As I continue to work with my doctoral students, particularly women students, who have been living their lives in the U.S. South, I realize that "the skins [they] speak (Delpit & Dowdy, 2002), the lives [they] live (Reynolds & Webber, 2009), and the places [they] work (Whitlock, 2007) complicate [their] identities, multiply [their] sense of belonging and displacement, and demand that [they] teach courageously [and creatively] in-between (He, Scott-Simmons, Haynes, & Tennial, 2010, p. 220). I begin to realize that I need to pass on the wisdom of *creative insubordination* to my students since they, as teachers and educators, are policed with more oversight and a more rigid and demanded scripted curriculum to follow. Creative insubordination is knowing when, how, and why to act to counter to established authorities, procedures, or directives. With creative insubordination strategies, they are able to use all their skills to take maximum advantage of the moment to teach courageously in-between authorities, procedures, and directives knowing what they are doing is morally and ethically correct. Teaching courageously in-between thrives on passionate involvement, brave commitment, and unfaltering advocacy for disenfranchised, underrepresented, and invisible groups and individuals against all forms of adversities, injustices, and suppressions. It calls for educational workers to work as allies with schools, communities, and tribes to create a culture of resistance, to build up courage, and to use exile space in-between the contested places (He, 2010) to develop creative strategies to "transgress orthodoxies and enact educational and social change that fosters equity, equality, freedom, and social justice" (He, Scott-Simmons, Haynes, & Tennial, 2010, p. 220).

I strive to move beyond the Black and White binary to counter the official narrative about the South. In my teaching I purposefully attempt to awaken teachers, young or veteran, to the lies they have been told (Loewen, 2007) and coerced to believe without seeing contested race, gender, class, and power permeated in life; to develop their *epistemological curiosity* (Freire & Macedo, 1995); and to cultivate their critical consciousness to teach courageously in-between contested race, gender, class, and power in the *trembling* (Smith, 1944, 1949/1961) South (He, Scott-Simmons, Haynes, & Tennial, 2009; He, Ross, & Seay, 2015).

I draw my notion of teaching courageously in-between from a wide array of theoretical traditions such as: *the in-betweenness of teaching*, *the courageous aspect of teaching in-between*, and *the contested nature of race, gender, class, and power in the South*. My notion of teaching in-between was built upon my work on teaching, learning, and living in-between (2003, 2006) and my work on exile pedagogy--teaching in-between (2010, 2016).

> [Teaching courageously in-between] is highly contested with complicated tensions and irresolvable contradictions within diverse theoretical traditions and socio-political, cultural, and linguistic contexts. [It] is interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes counterdisciplinary. [It] is international, transnational, and sometimes counternational. [Teaching in-between], with its interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity, and counterdisciplinarity, thrives with [contradictions in-between] diverse *paradigms, perspectives, and possibilities* (Schubert, 1986) (He, 2010, p. 469)

The in-betweenness of teaching also draws upon the works of Homi Bhabha on *location of culture* (1994) and *culture's in-between* (1996/2008), William Reynolds and Julie Webber (2004) on *expanding curriculum theory/dispositions and lines of flight* based upon Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987) on *rhizome, interbeing, intermezzo, multiplicity, and line of flight*, M. M. Bakhtin (1981) *on double-voiced, double accented, and double languaged hybrid*, and Ted Aoki (1991) on *teaching as indwelling between curriculum worlds*.

While the in-betweenness of teaching is central to a wide array of educational thoughts reflected in contested theories, practices, and contexts, teaching courageously in-between demands *exile in-between* (He, 2010), which carries more of a sense of being in the midst rather than being either excluded or conformed. Based on his personal experience, Edward Saïd (1994) transcends the meaning of exile that represents the complex, contradictory, and contested lives intellectuals live:

> Exile for the intellectuals…is restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others. You can not go back to some earlier and perhaps more stable condition of being at home; and, alas, you can never fully arrive, be at one with your new home or situation. (p. 53)

Public intellectuals who teach in-between thrive with this unsettling and troubling aspect of their lives. However, most of the literature on exile focuses on a binary approach or "interpretations of opposites" in "the ways [exile includes] conflicts and oppositions" (McClennen, 2004, p. 30), where exile is seen either as mourning for loss of home or nostalgia of home or being liberated from the experience of displacement. For Saïd (2003),

> [Exile] can produce rancor and regret, as well as a sharpened vision. What has been left behind may either be mourned, or it can be used to provide a different set of lenses….[No] return to the past is without irony, or without a sense that a full return, or repatriation, is possible. (p. xxxv)

Saïd moved beyond the binary or oppositional interpretation of exile and entered an evolving in-between space although he did not call it that then. We see the exile space as a prelude for an emergent in-between space in a wide array of literature such as reflections on exile (Saïd, 2000); philosophers in exile (Grathoff, 1989); women in exile (Afkhami, 1955); writers in exile (Robinson, 1994); art of memory in exile (Píchová, 2002); exilic and diasporic filmmaking (Naficy, 2001); film, media, and the politics of place (Naficy, 1999); the making of exile cultures (Naficy, 1993); exiles and communities (Pagano, 1990); postmodern discourses of displacement (Kaplan, 1996); exiles, diasporas, and strangers in art (Mercer, 2008); reluctant exiles (Skeldon, 1994); feminism, diasporas, and neoliberalisms (Grewal, 2005); and contested landscapes: movement, exile, and place (Bender & Winer, 2001). There is more a sense of blurredness, convergence, or multiplicity and a sense of being in the midst in approaches to exile in the arts, film, media, fiction, and poetry. This discursive, multifaceted, complicated, sometimes contradictory or contested nature of exile is a prelude for an evolving in-between space. This evolving in-betweenness is the key to conceptualizing the in-betweenness of teaching courageously.

The courageous aspect of teaching in-between draws on a wide array of theoretical traditions (He, 2010), particularly

influenced by radical democratic orientations of Freire's *pedagogy of the oppressed* (1970/1992), *education for critical consciousness* (1997), and *teachers as cultural workers* (1998), Freire & Faundez's *learning to question/pedagogy of liberation* (1989), Palmer's (1998) *courage to teach public pedagogy* of Sandlin, Schultz, and Burdick (2010), Giroux's *teachers as intellectuals* (1988) and *critical public pedagogy* (2004), Kincheloe's (2008) *critical pedagogy*, Trifonas's (2000) *revolutionary pedagogies*, McLaren's (2002) *critical pedagogy*, Grande's (2004) *Red pedagogy*, Lather's (1991, 1998) *feminist pedagogy*, Kozol's *savage inequalities*(1991) and *letters to a young teacher* (2008), Crocco, Munro, and Weiler's (1999) *pedagogies of resistance*, Simon's (1992) *teaching against the grain*, Cochran-Smith's (1991, 2001, 2004) *learning to teach against the grain and teach for social change, teaching for social justice* of Ayers, Hunt, and Quinn (1998), *learning to teach for social justice* of Darling-Hammond, French and Garcia-Lopez (2002), bell hooks's *teaching to transgress* (1994), *teaching community* (2003), and *teaching critical thinking* (2010), Saïd's *intellectuals as exiles* (1994), Ayers' (2004, 2006) *teaching toward freedom*, and *teaching the taboo* of Ayers and Ayers (2011). The radical democratic and intellectual quality of teaching creates an in-between space for educational workers to *exile voluntarily to teach in-between* (He, 2010, in press). This aspect of exile in-between is illuminated in an oral tradition of Confucianism: A good teacher should be able to remove himself/herself from the crazy materialistic world, seek a balanced human condition in-between unbalanced and contested contradictions and complexities within nature and humanity, and develop a clear vision to *cultivate beauty, integrity, justice, and humanity* (also see Schubert, 2009a). Many educational workers who choose to teach in-between not only question *[what] is worthwhile [to teach], for whom it is worthwhile [to teach], and how we make [teaching] worthwhile* (Schubert, 2009b, p. 136) but also confront issues of equity, equality, social justice, societal change, and democratic human conditions through pedagogical theory and praxis.

The courageous aspect of teaching in-between also draws on the work on *radical imagination* (Greene, 1995; also Bauman & Tester, 2001; Giroux, 2007; Olson & Worsham, 2007), *radical possibilities* (Anyon, 2005), *freedom dreams* (Freire, 2007; Kelley, 2002; Schubert, 2009a), *Black protest thought* (Watkins, 2005), *radical love* (King, 1963/1981; Schubert, 2009a), *sociological imagination* (Mills, 1959/2000), *dialogic imagination* (Bakhtin, 1981), *spaces of hope* (Harvey, 2000), *geography of human life* and *theory of value creating pedagogy* (see Makiguchi's works 1881–1988; Bethel, 1989, 2002), and *curriculum imagination* (Lake, in press). Teaching courageously in-between demands volunteer exile (He, 2010) from *commodified* (Illich, 1970; Reynolds & Webber, 2009), *acquisitive* (Schubert, 2009a), and *deskilling* societies (Apple, 1986) to make the impossible possible and to "keep the forever unexhausted and unfulfilled human potential open, fighting back all the attempts to foreclose and preempt the further unraveling of human possibilities, prodding human society to go on questioning itself and preventing that questioning from ever stalling or being declared finished" (Bauman & Tester, 2001; cited in Giroux, 2007, p. xiii). Teaching courageously in-between calls for radical imagination (Anyon, 2005; Freire, 2007; Giroux, 2007; Greene, 1995; Olson & Worsham, 2007)

that "exercis[es] an optimism of the intellect in order to open up ways of thinking" (Harvey, 2000, p. 6) and cultivates "educated hope" (Giroux, 2007, p. xiii) that is "the outcome of those pedagogical practices and struggles that tap into memory and lived experiences, while…linking individual responsibility with a progressive sense of social change. As a form of utopian longing, educated hope opens up horizons of comparison by evoking not just different histories, but also different futures…it substantiates the importance of ambivalence while problematizing certainty" (Giroux, 2007, p. xiii). Educated hope politicizes possibilities (Olson & Worsham, 2007) without romanticizing or cynicizing the world where we live. Teaching courageously in-between demands unfaltering commitment to a high level of human potential and intercultural awareness for creative, harmonious, associated, joyful, and worthwhile living (Schubert, 2009b) for all in an increasingly diversified, complicated, and contested world (He, 2010).

The contested and intertwined nature of race, gender, class, and power draws mainly on the works of race, gender, class, and power of Black feminist thought/Black womanism (Davis, 1983; Hill Collins, 1991; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; hooks, 1999; James & Sharpley-Whiting, 2000; Lorde, 984/2007; McClaurin, 2001; Morrison, 1992, 2008; Phillips, 2006; Smith, 1983/2000; Walker, 1967/1983), Chicana feminist thought (Arredondo, Hurtado, Klahn, Najera-Ramírez, & Zavella, 2003; García, 1997), critical race feminism (Wing, 2000, 2003), third world feminism (Mohanty, 2003/2005; Narayan, 1997), post/neocolonial feminism/ecofeminism (Anzaldúa, 1987, 1990; Minh-ha, 1989; Mies & Shiva, 1993; Mohanty, 2003/2005), Native American social and political thought (Grande, 2004; Lomawaima, 1994; McCarty, 2002; Ng-A-Fook, 2007), indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing (Archibald, 2008; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999/2012; Wilson, 2008; also Denzin, Lincoln, & Tuhiwai Smith, 2008), postmodern geography (Soja, 1989), the third space (Soja, 1996), critical geography (Harvey, 2001), social and cultural geography (Del Casino Jr, 2009; Anderson, Domosh, Pile, & Thrift, 2003), and spatial justice (Soja, 2010). While the intersectionality of race, gender, class, and power is always central to Black feminist thought/Black womanism, the intersectionality of repatriarchal historical analysis, spirituality, migration, displacement, slavery, racism, sexism, classism, imperialism, colonialism, heterosexism, ageism, ableism, anthropocentrism (human supremacism), speciesism, and other forms of oppression is illuminated in Chicana feminist thought, critical race feminism, third world feminism, and post/neocolonial feminism/ecofeminism. Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing connect critical theory with indigenous knowledge and socio-political contexts of indigenous education to develop transcendent theories of decolonization and advocate the liberty of indigenous language and cultural rights and intellectualism. Postmodern geographers, critical geographers, social and cultural geographers engage in this complex intersectionality within vibrant special dynamics of socio-political, cultural, and linguistic contradictions, complexities, and possibilities.

Drawing upon three major theoretical traditions: *the in-betweenness of teaching*, *the courageous aspect of teaching in-between*, and *the contested nature of race, gender, class, and power in the South*, I choose to teach to tensions, contradictions, and complexities in-between contested race, gender, class, and power with equity, equality, social justice, and human freedom

as explicit goals. The power of teaching courageously in-between lies in educational workers' strong advocacy on behalf of individuals, groups, families, tribes, communities, and societies that are often at controversy, underrepresented, misrepresented, or excluded in the official narrative. Teaching courageously in-between connects the personal with the political and the practical with the theoretical through passionate participation in and critical reflection on teaching, learning, inquiry, and life with an "epistemological curiosity" (Freire & Macedo, 1995, p. 382)—a curiosity that is deprived in current education. As Freire strongly argued:

> We must not negate practice for the sake of theory. To do so would reduce theory to a pure verbalism or intellectualism. By the same token, to negate theory for the sake of practice, as in the use of dialogue as conversation, is to run the risk of losing oneself in the disconnectedness of practice. It is for this reason that I never advocate either a theoretic elitism or a practice ungrounded in theory, but the unity between theory and practice. In order to achieve this unity, one must have an epistemological curiosity… (Freire & Macedo, 1995, p. 382)

Teaching courageously in-between cultivates this *epistemological curiosity* in learning, inquiry, and life with critical reflections on experience. Those who dare to teach courageously in-between recognize contradictions; move beyond boundaries; transgress orthodoxies; question mandates and regulations; educate rather than profit; and "build on long-term, heart-felt engagement and shared efforts driven by commitment to equity, equality, social justice, freedom, and human possibility" (He, 2010, p. 471). They create a culture of resistance, build up courage as agents of change, and work in communities to "build a participatory movement to promote a more balanced and equitable human condition through personal and political acts of teaching in an increasingly diversified and contested world" (He, 2010, p. 471).

Teaching courageously in-between is inherently personal and political. Teaching courageously in-between is personal in that it begins with critical reflections to challenge assumptions, acknowledge contradictions, embrace differences, and celebrate commonalities. It is political in that every act of teaching embodies a particular stance in relation to race, gender, class, and power. The overt agendas of equity, equality, liberation, and social justice make teaching courageously in-between both vulnerable and invigorating, and always dynamic, grounded, and incomplete.

The place of in-between is a place of intellectual awakening, a place of contradictions and complexities, and a place of exhilaration for cultivating a better human condition (Nussbaum, 1997). It is a place where you can pick up your wings from the human wreckage and still fly your new lines of flight (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Reynolds & Webber, 2004). This evolving, multifaceted, discursive, complicated, contradictory and contingent in-between space (Bhabha, 1994, p. 7) is an exhilarating and invigorating place to teach courageously in the midst of contested race, gender, class, and power. Within such a vibrant space of contradictions, complexities, and possibilities evolving with socio-political, cultural, and linguistic dynamics, teaching courageously in-between demands exile in-between (He, 2010) and thrives with unsettling and troubling aspects of live*s* (Saïd, 1994). Those who choose to teach in-between need not only to question

[what] is worthwhile [to teach], for whom it is worthwhile [to teach], and how we make [teaching] worthwhile (Schubert, 2009b, p. 136) but also to confront issues of equity, equality, social justice, societal change, and democratic human conditions through pedagogical theory and praxis. Teaching courageously in-between demands volunteer exile (He, 2010) from commodified (Illich, 1970; Reynolds & Webber, 2009), acquisitive (Schubert, 2009a), and deskilling societies (Apple, 1986) to make the impossible possible, to keep the boundless human potential evolving, to keep questioning and challenging the meta or official narrative, to fight back all forms of suppressions, repressions, and oppressions, to seek a balanced human condition in-between contradictions and complexities, and to develop a clear vision to cultivate beauty, integrity, justice, and humanity (Schubert, 2009a).

Teaching courageously in-between calls for radical imagination (Anyon, 2005; Freire, 2007; Giroux, 2007; Greene, 1995; Olson & Worsham, 2007) that keeps "an optimism of the intellect" (Harvey, 2000, p. 6) alive, cultivates "educated hope" (Giroux, 2007, p. xiii) that evokes "different histories and different futures" and "substantiates…ambivalence while problematizing certainty" (Giroux, 2007, p. xiii) and politicizes possibilities (Olson & Worsham, 2007) without romanticizing or cynicizing the world where we live. Teaching courageously in-between demands engagement in solidarities and joined efforts to move beyond boundaries, transgress orthodoxies, and passionately participate in the life of schools, families, and communities. Teaching courageously in-between demands unfaltering commitment to a high level of human potential and cultivation of more balanced, fair, equitable human condition for creative, harmonious, associated, joyful, and worthwhile living (Schubert, 2009b) for all in an increasingly diversified, complicated, and contested world (He, 2010).

Nevertheless, my notion of teaching in-between could be perceived as not choosing a position or taking a stance. Teaching courageously in-between is *the position* where teachers, learners, and other educational workers together dive into contested contradictions and complexities in-between contested race, gender, class, and power. Another dilemma for choosing to teach in-between is that the mobile, unpredictable, and contested in-between positions, that educate courage, passion, hope, and radical imagination, and strong commitments to the plight of the people and the injustice embedded in larger societies, can create vulnerability (Behar, 1996), evoke threats and dangers to lose privileges, benefits, and advantages of life, and lead to outcast, exclusion, displacement, and exile involuntarily at home. However, "this unhomely moment" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 10), both personal and political, is not homeless or diminishing. Rather it is an *improvisational* moment (Bateson, 1989) when those teachers who chose to teach in-between thrive with highest human potentials for more balanced, fair, equitable human conditions for all.

Teaching courageously in-between thrives on passionate involvement, strong commitment, and unfaltering advocacy for disenfranchised, underrepresented, and invisible groups and individuals. This passion, commitment, and advocacy cannot be cultivated in isolation even though teaching courageously in-between very likely could be against the conformed communities. There is more a sense of blurredness, convergence, or multiplicity and a sense of being in the midst. Rather, it calls for an exile community, "the hybridity of imagined communities" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 5), a movement of

community organizing, where teachers and educational workers with shared experience of teaching against the grain (Cochran-Smith, 1991, 2001, 2004; Simon, 1992) to work together as allies, to take to heart the predicaments of the oppressed, suppressed, and repressed groups and individuals, and to develop ideas, languages, and strategies to enact educational and social change that fosters equity, equality, freedom, and social justice. This exile community can only flourish when the efforts of teachers join with the efforts of other educational workers such as educators, administrators, policymakers, students, parents, and community members (He, 2010). This expanded community embodies possibilities and creates hope that we can invent more in-between spaces, an invigorating gathering place for differences, where we might live more robustly, develop our human capacities more fully, and become humane and peaceful in inquiry and life in an increasingly changing and diversifying world.

I continue to explore education, inquiry, and life in-between the Eastern, Western, and in-between philosophy and curriculum with a particular focus on the works of Confucius, Dewey, Makiguchi, Ikeda, and Saïd in relation to language, culture, and identity in multicultural contexts, cross-cultural teacher education, curriculum studies, activist practitioner inquiry, social justice research, exile curriculum, narrative of curriculum in the U.S. South, transnational and diasporic studies.

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Authors

Ming Fang He
Professor of Curriculum Studies
Department of Curriculum, Foundations, and Reading
College of Education, Georgia Southern University
Statesboro, GA

Sonia Janis
Clinical Assistant Professor
Assistant Director, Improving Teacher Quality
Department of Educational Theory and Practice
College of Education, The University of Georgia
Athens, Georgia

Mina Kim
Department of Elementary Education
Graduate College of Education
San Francisco State University
San Francisco, CA

Brenda Marina
Brenda L.H. Marina, Ph.D.
Associate Dean, Academic Affairs
Baltimore, Maryland

Isabel Nuñez
Associate Professor
Center for Policy and Social Justice
Concordia University Chicago
River Forest, IL

Shawn Arango Ricks
Associate Professor, Rehabilitation and Human Services
Chair, Department of Human Service Studies
Winston-Salem State University
Winston-Salem, NC

Sabrina Ross
Associate Professor of Curriculum Studies
Department of Curriculum, Foundations, and Reading
College of Education, Georgia Southern University
Statesboro, GA

Wynnetta Scott-Simmons
Associate Professor
Department of Graduate Studies,
Mercer University
Atlanta, GA

Alma Stevenson
Associate Professor of Literacy
Department of Curriculum, Foundations, and Reading
College of Education, Georgia Southern University
Statesboro, GA

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c/o Dr. Robert C. Morris
Department of Leadership & Instruction University of West Georgia
1601 Maple Street
Carrollton, GA 30118