

(Un)Packing Your Backpack: Educational Philosophy,
Positionality, and Pedagogical Praxis

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Yvette Prinsloo Franklin
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DEDICATION

To Rachel Rose, Nehemiah Daniel, and Elizabeth Grace Franklin

He has showed you what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly
and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8

But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth,
the home of righteousness.

2 Peter 3:13

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ABSTRACT

In this philosophical research project, the author examines the question: *How can the case be made that there is an imperative need to change the trajectory of current efforts to reduce “achievement gaps” in the United States and (re)vision a transformation of our school settings through conscious-raising sensitivity regarding issues of equity towards equality amongst educators that harnesses the work of philosophy of education scholars?* She engages the reader in a theoretical hike through a philosophical argument for attending to philosophical theories of education, extending the work of Jane Roland Martin regarding sensitivity and drawing heavily on the scholarship of Barbara Thayer-Bacon regarding relational “(e)pistemologies,” constructed thinking, and democratic community. Contending that there is a tandem need to address issues of diversity as they pertain to equity and work towards inclusion of dominant community and marginalized groups to establish a new equality of dominant and marginalized groups working together, the author explores guiding graduate level education students to personal preparation for conscious-raising regarding issues of sensitivity to diversity for equity with the imperative of inclusion for equality. The case is made, through theory infused with illustrative narrative, that a critical philosophically positional approach can raise consciousness regarding diversity for equity and inclusion to advance toward an ideal of equality, resulting in pedagogical praxis in educational practitioners which the author claims will help advance the vital aim of reducing “achievement gaps” in schools in the United States.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction: The Hike

When I was a young child I went on a hike. My memory is of walking along a path through the fynbos, the flora that can only be found in the Western Cape, uniquely designed to withstand the rugged life at the southernmost tip of the continent of Africa where the winds and two oceans converge. I recall being a part of a group of family and friends that wended our way across the saddle of the mountain. I remember our starting point, but the sandy gravel path didn't return us there. Perhaps the adults had the foresight to know we couldn't make a round-trip journey. Regardless, the impression was indelible: beginning and ending somewhere different with the remarkable sense of accomplishment, not of reaching a summit or of arrival, but of having traversed from one space to another.

Now almost thirty years later I have experienced another crossing-over: a theoretical journey that is unfolding profoundly in my teaching practice. And as a consequence I find myself asking: *How can I make the case that there is an imperative need to change the trajectory of current efforts to reduce "achievement gaps"¹ in the United States and (re)vision a transformation of our school settings² through conscious-raising sensitivity³ regarding issues of*

¹ I use this phrase because it is commonly recognized in the educational reform discourse. However I use it parenthetically because, as Gloria Ladson-Billings so eloquently states it: "the achievement gap is a kin to a focus on the budget deficit, but what is actually happening to African American and Latina/o students is really more like national debt. We do not have an achievement gap; we have an education debt." Gloria Ladson-Billings, "From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt: Understanding Achievement in U.S. Schools," *Educational Researcher* 35, no.3 (2006): 5.

² These settings include K-16 (primary through secondary grades and undergraduate level) learning spaces, particularly those that are government funded, i.e. public schools, and settings in higher education, such as teacher preparation, that are the forum for equipping educators for these K-16 school settings. I suggest that a situationally sensitive approach can create consciousness of equity that is transferable to all educational settings. Difference in the age of the students will effect thresholds of censorship.

³ The term sensitivity here does not simply mean well-meaning awareness or empathy; it is consciousness that precedes informed action in the cause of equity. My concept of situational sensitivity is explained later in the

equity towards equality amongst educators that harnesses the work of philosophy of education scholars?

All these years later the lingering conscious impact of my childhood hiking memory was of the texture of the path; the tenacious, heathery leaves; the velvety protea blooms; going but not returning. As I embark on this project, the recollection of my hike offers me a metaphor that reveals important elements I plan to explore. I wish to engage in a theoretical project that is a hike through an argument for attending to philosophical theories of education.⁴ The argument seeks an approach⁵ to education that pursues equity towards equality. I take equity to be *fairness*⁶ with justice and equality to be *fairness as equal access and opportunity*.⁷ It is my contention that there is a tandem need to address issues of diversity as they pertain to equity and work towards inclusion of dominant culture and marginalized groups to establish equality. Equity will ideally result in equality. This is similar to the concepts found in critical race theory that suggest equal access and opportunity *and* the correction of inequity are necessary.⁸ This hike is also an invitation to the reader to reflect on their own journey and engage in a shared experience of retracing our steps and (re)considering alternative paths or approaches in the on-

chapter and describes a strategy that is constantly looking for patterns of discrimination, their effects, and possible solutions.

⁴ Affirming the offerings of philosophy of education by no way is a move to eclipse the valuable contributions of others working in field of education to foster consciousness of equity and equality. I do mean to draw attention to the helpful, but perhaps less widely known, tools philosophy of education particularly has to offer educators.

⁵ It is important to note this is an approach to foster a potential and an ideal, not a “one-size-fits-all” model. In the pursuit of inclusivity and appreciation of diversity, there can be no set model of how to encourage transformation. Sharing my experiences of the modeling of a technique was particular to the exploration of the potentiality of transformative theory in a particular setting and student community.

⁶ I mean “fairness” in the sense of an honest attempt to be aware of and work against prejudice, favoritism, and self-interest while applying fair/equitable practices and policies. This is a two-fold relational and structural approach. I take up “justice” as the attainment of what is fair through making adjustments to foster equal access and opportunity.

⁷ Jorge Schement, “Imagining Fairness: Equality and Equity of Access in Search of Democracy” in Nancy Kranich, *Libraries and Democracy* (Chicago, IL: American Library Association, 2001), 15-27.

⁸ Gloria Ladson-Billings, “Just What is Critical Race Theory and What’s It Doing in a Nice Field Like Education,” in *Race is...Race isn’t: Critical Race Theory and Qualitative Studies in Education*, ed. Villenas et. al. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 21.

going pursuit of sensitivity to diversity for equity with the imperative of inclusion for equality in education.

Returning to my distant memory of the hike I do not recollect the provisions and preparations, but as a mother now I have no doubt that that multi-generational hike did not occur without them! Preparing for a transformative hike across educational theory similarly starts with sorting provisions in a metaphorical backpack, which I will argue needs to be (un)packed regarding our assumptions⁹ as educators regarding equity sensitivity. In terms of preparation for the hike I have selected a particular trail (see Appendix 1 for metaphorical map) so that the reader may know where I am taking my argument and to help me not go astray. This trail is that of a philosophical research as a means to “advance educational practice” through establishing a philosophical argument.¹⁰ I will look particularly to two philosophers of education to help guide my journeying. I extend Jane Roland Martin’s theory of situated sensitivity¹¹ to help me develop discernment about what to pack and what to take out of my backpack. My guidebook along the trail is a synthesis of Barbara Thayer-Bacon’s work,¹² particularly relating to her application of philosophy to education through relational “(e)pistemologies,”¹³ constructive thinking, and a

⁹ Peggy McIntosh. "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack." *Independent School* 49, no. 2 (1990): 31-36.

¹⁰ Barbara Thayer-Bacon and Diana Moyer, "Philosophical and Historical Research," in *Doing Educational Research: A Handbook*, ed. Kenneth Tobin and Joe Kincheloe (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2006), 141.

¹¹ Jane Roland Martin. "The Ideal of the Educated Person." *Educational Theory*, 31 (1981), 97-109. *Reclaiming a Conversation: The Ideal of the Educated Woman*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985. *Cultural Miseducation: In Search of a Democratic Solution*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2002. *The Schoolhome: Rethinking Schools for Changing Families*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.

¹² Barbara Thayer-Bacon with Charles S. Bacon. *Philosophy Applied to Education: Nurturing a Democratic Community in the Classroom*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Merrill, 1998. Barbara Thayer-Bacon, *Transforming Critical Thinking: Thinking Constructively*. New York: Teachers College, 2000. *Relational "(e)pistemologies"*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003. *Beyond Liberal Democracy in Schools: the Power of Pluralism*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2008.

¹³ Thayer-Bacon symbolically places the word *epistemology* in quotations to differentiate it from the traditional use of the word and brackets and places the ‘e’ in the lower-case to help the reader attend to her reorienting epistemology as non-traditional theory of a relational way of knowing based on lived-experience. (Barbara Thayer-Bacon, *Relational "(e)pistemologies"* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003), 5.)

vision of schooling as a democratic community. Teasing out my metaphor I imagine that there is a route on this hike that guides the reader through my own process of transformation through exposure to educational theory, particularly that of philosophy of education. This route also shows my experiences trying to encourage similar, yet unique, processes of personal preparation¹⁴ for sensitivity to equity in other educators through the teaching of a graduated level social foundations course. It follows the argument for the transformative work of philosophy of education theory in the quest for schooling equity through three key points of interest: philosophy, positionality, and pedagogical praxis. *Philosophy* refers to the work of philosophy of education. I take up *positionality* as the concept that our gender, race, and class are “markers of relational positions rather than essential qualities.”¹⁵ Consequently, our positionality informs our “goals, knowledge, beliefs, strategies, and other normative frames of reference”¹⁶ as educational researchers and practitioners and influences and effects our relationships with our context and others.¹⁷ *Pedagogical praxis* is the linking of teacher practice to theory and “working for equity and social justice.”¹⁸

¹⁴ Geneva Gay. *Becoming Multicultural Educators: Personal Journey Toward Professional Agency* (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 4.

¹⁵ Mary Kay Thompson Tetreault, “Classrooms for Diversity: Rethinking Curriculum and Pedagogy” in *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives* (2nd ed.) ed. J.A. Banks and C.A.M. Banks (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1993), 139.

¹⁶ Marsha Rehm and Barbara Allison, “Positionality in Teaching Culturally Diverse Students: Implications for Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher Education Programs,” *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal* 34, no. 3 (March 2006): 261.

¹⁷ Linda Alcoff, “Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory,” *Signs* 13 (March 1988): 405-436. Frances Mayer and Mary Kay Thompson Tetreault. *The Feminist Classroom: Dynamics of Gender, Race, and Privilege*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 164.

¹⁸ Handel Kashope Wright, “Cultural Studies as Praxis: (Making) An Autobiographical Case,” *Cultural Studies* 17 no. 6 (2003): 806.

The Trail: Philosophical Research

Why philosophy? For those that are familiar with the field of philosophy of education, I am going to avoid the long standing debate between philosophers and educators¹⁹ as to the nature of their relationship and impact on each other's realms. I ask the reader to postpone disciplinary introspection and rather join me in thinking the two to be in an evolving conversation²⁰ within the field of philosophy of education. Let us assume the view that philosophy of education is working towards making a positive contribution to education discourses by building the case for how things could and should be, by contributing to theory and practice in a way that bridges the abstract and the practical, while "making sense of the current educational situation,...and proposing better ways to educate that are responsive to the reality of the situation and to the range of the ideals that it activates."²¹ For those less familiar with philosophy of education and curious as to its usefulness in effecting teaching practice, I encourage you to see philosophy of education as a tool to understand the *why* of education through the exploration of the aims of education, the *why* of practice, and the *why* that forms a critique and the license to "envision things how they should be ideally."²² For, as the father of questioning and recalcitrant George in E.M. Foster's novel A Room With a View, emphatically states, "By the side of the everlasting Why there is a Yes--a transitory Yes if you like, but a Yes."²³ Philosophy affords us questioning and leads us to critique. Moreover, it pushes us to envisage and pursue a better way; to seek a Yes.

¹⁹ Rene Arcilla, "Why Aren't Philosophers and Educators Speaking to Each Other?" *Educational Theory*, 52, no. 1 (Winter, 2002):1-11. Audrey Thompson, "Maybe We Can Just Be Friends: The Unhappy Marriage of Education and Philosophy," *Educational Theory*, 52,no. 3 (Summer, 2002):327-334. Eric Bredo, "How Can Philosophy of Education Be Both Viable and Good?" *Educational Theory*,52, no. 3 (Summer, 2002): 263-271.

²⁰ Arcilla, 6.

²¹ Bredo, 271.

²² Thayer-Bacon, *Philosophy Applied to Education*, 1.

²³ E.M. Forster. *A Room with a View*,. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1923.

This trail is not the much travelled asphalt road of positivist scientific research that seeks to determine facts that can be proved, disproved, verified, quantified, and replicated. And it is not the metaphysical, abstract theory of “pure” philosophy, for it seeks to link conceptual work to educational application.²⁴ But this trail is one that seeks to traverse the divide between what is and what should be and “try to make the case for what is the best, the right, the good, the beautiful, the fair and just, the true.”²⁵ The way that this is accomplished is through establishing a fruitful argument with sound warrants, using reason to make my case. The reason for this approach is to logically make the case for the contribution of philosophy of education to my ongoing my personal preparation²⁶ for sensitivity to issues of equity; I am making a case of praxis. Thayer-Bacon extends my tools beyond logic to include the harnessing of intuition, emotions, and imagination to effectively communicate and relate my argument.²⁷ I incorporate the theorizing of experience infused with illustrative narrative to explain my development of situational sensitivity and my attempts as an instructor of a graduate level social foundations course to promote conscious-raising through exploration of positionality and philosophy of education, with an end goal of teachers pedagogically enacting praxis that nurtures equity sensitivity.

The trail of a philosophical argument²⁸ should begin with a central claim I am trying to make with reasons to explain and support my claims. To remain on the trail I need to be sure to be clear in my explanation (exactness). I need to provide enough reasons to convince the reader that this is in fact something worth attending to (exhaustiveness) without drifting too far off the

²⁴ Thayer-Bacon and Moyer, 141-142.

²⁵ Ibid., 143.

²⁶ Geneva Gay. *Becoming Multicultural Educators*, 4.

²⁷ Thayer-Bacon and Moyer, 143; Thayer-Bacon, *Transforming Critical Thinking*, 3, 171.

²⁸ Thayer-Bacon and Moyer, 145-148.

path by including reasons that take us off the trail of my central argument (exclusivity). I need to ensure the path is not too limited but offers the reader enough scope to see the validity of the argument (extendibility). As I make my central claim and begin the trail I will establish my need reasons (why the reader should attend to my argument at all). These are usually problems that create the impetus for the argument and compel the reader to join me on the trail. Once we're off, I will need to justify to the reader what I am arguing by sharing my (re)visioning of how things should be. In my case I will have to show the need to (un)pack our metaphorical backpacks as teachers so that we are able to explore our assumptions and develop increased consciousness regarding situational sensitivity to equity. I will justify this move by suggesting the further developing of a relational “(e)pistemologies” and fostering constructive thinking in democratic learning communities.²⁹ This will lead to consequences that my argument might have. These encourage the reader to complete the hike, through sharing the benefits and warnings of what I predict might happen if my argument is/is not taken up. As I follow the trail I must be careful to make sure I convey my argument logically, because I am hoping that the ideals I share will be more than personal opinion. I am hoping it will guide others (dominant community members and marginalized community members) to personal preparation for conscious-raising regarding issues of sensitivity to diversity (difference in a myriad of iterations, but for this project focus: race, class, and gender) for equity with the imperative of inclusion (drawing together in a mutually beneficial dialogical relationship of dominant and marginalized community members of all races, classes, and genders) for equality, which I am suggesting will help achieve the imperative aim of reducing “achievement gap” in schools in the United States.

²⁹ These concepts as Thayer-Bacon frames them will be explained and examined in Chapter II.

This argument will not be a journey that starts with a hypothesis, takes a journey of testing to prove or disprove the hypothesis and returns to the origination point to make a generalizable claim. My argument is directed to make a normative claim “open to continual reexamination and continual amending and extending”³⁰ that fosters movement along a continuum of consciousness-raising regarding issues of educational equity.³¹ The journey can be initiated but the final outcome is an ideal that cannot be attained through formulaic means. After all when hiking one can never account for the weather! Infinite variables will make each journey distinctive, but I will make the case that teachers should be especially prepared through philosophical theory to be conscious of issues of equity and diversity and the ideal of inclusion and equality. Thus despite evolving teacher identities, fluctuating student populations, varying teacher education programs, shifting school policies, and changeable national priorities, my extension of Martin’s situational sensitivity and understanding of her concepts of cultural miseducation and Thayer-Bacon’s relational “(e)pistemology,” constructive thinking, and democratic community create the space for equity and equality to be uniquely addressed by each educator in their distinctive learning settings and with their unique student community.

The Matter of Audience: All Hikers Welcome

Before we can proceed I need to establish the intended audience for this suggested educational equity sensitivity project. This requires explaining a gap I perceive and need to address. On my journey of conscious-raising I am informed by, amongst other things, the work of multiculturalism, a field that has directed me towards issues of equity and diversity in education. However the concept of multiculturalism itself means different things to different

³⁰ Thayer-Bacon and Moyer, 143.

³¹ The project is contained within the experiences of the course “Teachers, Schools, and Society” but the process continues beyond the culmination of the course and the completion of this dissertation.

people. Conservative multiculturalists see it as a means to explore the problems caused by diversity. But they perceive difference as divisive and seek to promote a “common culture.”³² This sort of discourse sounds like a binary *us* and *them*. Liberal multiculturalists wish to address inequality by promoting equal social and economic opportunities through education. However, within this approach Eurocentric culture is the norm referenced. Sameness in the form of individualism and citizenship is pursued by liberal multiculturalists.³³ This discourse sounds like *us* but the “us” is the dominant cultural group. Pluralistic multiculturalists “celebrate diversity and equal opportunity” but this often manifests in a separate-but-equal focus on “heritage and cultural differences”³⁴ and a “cultural tourism.”³⁵ This discourse speaks of *us* knowing about *them*. Left-essentialist multiculturalism sounds like *us*, but “us” is the marginalized group, and has “concerned itself more with self-assertion than with the effort to build strategic democratic alliances for social justice.”³⁶ Critical multiculturalism is concerned with how domination occurs and issues of power. Critical multiculturalism promotes self-reflection and positions class as an essential concern, although acknowledging it’s intersections between race and gender.³⁷ However, despite marginalized groups seeking new alliances with Whites from the working and middle classes, there still remains a discourse of *us*, the have-not’s and *them*, the have’s.

I see a further discourse in the *us* and *them* binary in the idea of multicultural education that has its focus on diversity education. This is evident in discourses that seek to prepare teachers to work with “ethnically and culturally diverse students.”³⁸ As multicultural scholar

³² Joe Kincheloe and Shirley Steinberg, *Changing Multiculturalism* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2002), 4.

³³ *Ibid.*, 10-14.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 16-17.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

³⁶ Kincheloe and Steinberg, 22.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 23-25.

³⁸ Gay, *Becoming Multicultural Educators*, xi.

Sonia Nieto so poignantly, yet pragmatically states: “But for those whose race, social class, and gender differ from the majority, educational failure is multiplied. Because these are the students who have borne the brunt of devastating educational failure, I have chosen to focus especially on them....”³⁹ This creates an *us* targeted students⁴⁰ and *them* dominant culture discourse.⁴¹ However, Nieto’s definition of multicultural education offers a critical hope. She defines it as “embedded in a sociopolitical context and as antiracist and basic education for *all* students that permeates all areas of schooling, and that is characterized by a commitment to social justice and critical approaches to learning” [emphasis added].⁴² And here I suggest a potentially new discourse emerges as Nieto goes on to describe multiculturalism: “My definition is an expansive one, comprising not only race, ethnicity, and language but also gender, social class, sexual orientation, ability, and other differences. Students from the majority culture certainly are included in this definition”⁴³ of multiculturalism. *Us* and *them* becomes *all of us*, diverse but inclusive.

The vital work of scholars like prominent multicultural education and curriculum theorist Geneva Gay, seeks to address issues of diversity and inclusion of targeted students experiencing an “achievement gap.” There are more gaps than the “achievement gap” experienced by targeted youth, like the “teacher-quality gap, the teacher-training gap, the challenging curriculum gap, the school-funding gap, the digital-divide gap, the wealth-income gap, the health-care gap, the

³⁹ Sonia Nieto. *The Light in Their Eyes: Creating Multicultural Learning Communities* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2010), 26.

⁴⁰ Targeted students are those that have been identified by the dominant discourse as “minorities” and “at-risk.” These terms are imbued with discriminatory connotations, so I use “targeted” to describe those that have been identified as experiencing achievement disparities.

⁴¹ “Dominant culture” refers in the United States to the prevailing knowledge, ideas, and experiences being those of Euro-western, White middle/upper class males.

⁴² Nieto, *Light in Their Eyes*, 26.

⁴³ Nieto, *Light in Their Eyes*, 26.

nutrition gap, the school-integration gap, and the quality child-care gap.”⁴⁴ To close these gaps, ought to require the contributions, concessions, and consideration of *both* targeted *and* dominant culture groups. I thus take up Gay’s work with an expanded dimension to inclusion: that of dominant culture members. In terms of education, “diverse” schools have majority minority student populations, but these students are being educated by mainly White, middle-class, monolingual female educators.⁴⁵ This is not a move meant to undermine educators of color that are teaching in so-called diverse schools. The case has been ably made for the benefits of increased diversification of the teacher force,⁴⁶ especially those that teach targeted students.⁴⁷ But the reality remains that 87% of public school teachers are dominant culture group members.⁴⁸ I certainly do not want to re-center the dominant culture group, but by engaging the dominant culture group teaching force en masse, the large scale work of praxis-driven consciousness-raising regarding issues of equity and equality can harness the broad reach of this group for the benefit of targeted students.

Scholars agree “that a race-centered, cultural and diversity-focused, and multicultural curriculum are essential for student academic and social success”⁴⁹ and some suggest that teacher education programs should “provide an encompassing study of cultures, a repertoire of appropriate teaching adaptations, reflective and critical thinking, and multiple experiences with

⁴⁴ H. Richard Milner, *Culture, Curriculum, and Identity in Education* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), xii.

⁴⁵ Gloria Ladson-Billings, “Preparing Teachers for Diverse Student Populations: A Critical Race Theory Perspective,” *Review of Research in Education* 24 (1999): 226.

⁴⁶ H. Richard, Milner, *Start Where You Are, But Don't Stay There: Understanding Diversity, Opportunity Gaps, and Teaching in Today's Classrooms* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Education Press, 2010), 173.

⁴⁷ And I would argue, to the benefit of dominant culture group students, too.

⁴⁸ Rehm and Allison, 260.

⁴⁹ Milner, *Start Where You Are, But Don't Stay There*, 6. Nieto, *The Light in their Eyes*. Geneva Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2000.

culturally diverse people.”⁵⁰ Additionally, by acknowledging the teacher’s positionality as “a significant factor in the learning experience of students” issues of teacher perceptions that “cultural difference” is somehow “culturally deficient” can be addressed.⁵¹ This opens the door to culturally responsive/relevant pedagogical strategies and curricula, as suggested by Gay for example, being utilized by dominant culture group educators.⁵² If dominant community teachers can be encouraged to develop the dispositions that “include eagerness to learn as much as possible about cultures, willingness to make appropriate adaptations, self-reflection and desire to grow in skill and personal interest in students” one can only imagine the gains for the targeted student population⁵³ that will contribute to changes to the status quo on a micro and macro level. So, I utilize Gay’s focus on “personal preparation for being multicultural educators”⁵⁴ and employ multiculturalism “as broadly conceptualized” and as a “philosophical underpinning” to help guide myself and others to acquire the “skills, knowledge and critical awareness to become productive members of a diverse and democratic society.”⁵⁵ I do this with the caveat that I wish to purposely engage *all* the teaching force for *all* our students while troubling the fact that the “achievement gap” has been drawn along gender, racial, and class lines so that teachers will be able to better seek solutions to the “realities that disallow certain populations of students to reach their full capacity to learn.”⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Rehm and Allison, 260.

⁵¹ Ibid., 261.

⁵² Geneva Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2000.

⁵³ Rehm and Allison, 261.

⁵⁴ Gay, *Becoming Multicultural Educators*, 4.

⁵⁵ Sonia Nieto, *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education* (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1992), 269.

⁵⁶ Milner, *Start Where You Are*, 4.

The Backpack: Martin's Sensitivity and Miseducation

In the 2009 movie, Up in the Air, the central protagonist Ryan Bingham, relishing his seemingly-liberated transient life devoid of significant connection to people or possessions, develops the premise of the “empty backpack.” Bingham touts his theory on the motivational-speaking circuit, asking the audience: “How much does your life weigh?” He uses guided imagery to visualize packing “all the stuff you have in your life” into his prop of an empty backpack, leading us to believe that by emptying our backpacks we can find a pleasant kind of nothingness in a life of no attachments. The idea of emptying our backpacks really resonated with me, because I often imagined that I had emptied my backpack of things like racism, classism, and sexism. I liked to think that they were no longer carried by me individually or as a society in a pervasive, systemic way, except of course for the odd bigoted uncle at the family potluck with ribald jokes and a gang of wayward skinheads in the news now and then. It is with embarrassment that I recall how I would disavow racial classifications by stating “human” when a form asked what race I was. I earnestly declared impartiality, invoking color-blindness, asserting my class-less outlook, and proclaimed gender-equality. I believed in individual egalitarianism. I embraced the meritocratic ideal that anything is possible if we just are sufficiently motivated and work hard enough. Little did I know my outlook was based on the fact that I could assume a stance of race-, class-, and gender-blindness because of the invisibility of my race, the ubiquity of being middle-class, and lack of awareness of the experience of being a non-dominant culture woman. The empty backpack is an illusion.

In her 1982 presidential address at the annual meeting of the Philosophy of Education Society, Jane Roland Martin exposed this illusion of neutrality as it pertains to gender.⁵⁷ Attending to a dominant discourse in philosophy of education at the time, Martin unpacked the ideal of an educated person⁵⁸ and revealed it to be an individual with a “male cognitive perspective,”⁵⁹ located in the productive processes of society (beyond the customary female realm of home-bound reproductive processes); studying material written by men (even if the subject is women); and who exemplified rationality (thus excluding traits conventionally associated with women such as sensitivity, feelings, emotions, empathy, nurturing, and intuition). Martin exposes the illusion of the “empty backpack;” the false impartiality of becoming an educated person. The backpack is in fact filled with the ideal of a rational man objectively learning and working in the world outside the home. Equality is consequently impossible; only assimilation and accommodation on the part of the woman will allow her to be an educated person by this definition. She must choose between the productive and reproductive world, she must deny her emotions and intuitions, and she must be judged as a woman-compared-to-a-man, not simply on her intrinsic worth. Derision and ingrained feelings of inferiority might be felt by women who do not see knowledge created in a way that incorporates emotions or intuition; they do not see the contributions of women in the bodies of knowledge; they feel compelled to split their bodies from their minds and their homes from places of education. Conversely, maleness is seen as the location of superior knowledge that is objective

⁵⁷ Martin, *Ideal of the Educated Person*, 97-109. Disclaimer: Although I am aware that that identity is not fixed and the socially constructed location of gender manifests stereotypes about the genderized traits of women (and men), genderized epistemological approaches, and the reproductive processes that have conventionally associated with women such as childrearing. Appreciating that these traits, epistemologies, and processes are fluid and complex, Martin’s argument at the time was a powerful act of inclusion.

⁵⁸ The work of Peter’s whom Martin primarily critiques in this text is called “The Educated Man,” but Martin generously comprehends that he presumes to be referring to both men and woman in what he thinks is a gender-neutral way. Martin goes on to trouble this assumption.

⁵⁹ Martin, *Ideal of the Educated Person*, 99.

and created through reasoning; men are perceived to be the major contributors to bodies of knowledge because of the marginalization of women's contributions; productive work is viewed as the most valuable site for education. And the poignant irony of this situation is that a male *is* given an equal chance to succeed judged against the same normative standard of "maleness" a woman must measure up to. The playing field *seems* level and the need for equity appears unfounded for both women and men. He sees the backpack as empty when in fact it is half-filled with normative maleness and half-empty of "female" traits, epistemologies, and contributions. Both men and women are victims of the illusion of an educated person that Martin is critiquing; both miss out on the contributions of women and both are held to a hegemonic standard of "male" normativity.

It is at this juncture I would like to make my particular contribution by extending Martin's inquiry into gender to include race and class. I am sure I am not the first to make this connection, but I am hoping my rendering offers a unique contribution to the dialogue regarding sensitivity to equity. Let us take this ideal of an educated person that Martin has problematized and imagine the antithesis: an uneducated person or child. Following the logic of Peters (the philosopher of education Martin is critiquing) and, as Thayer-Bacon argues,⁶⁰ the pervasive classic liberal theories of democracy that have informed every day practice in public schools in the United States: a child who "fails" in the school setting to acquire the body of knowledge, the ability to reason, and to apply the body of knowledge is uneducated.⁶¹ And here philosophy's description(s) of the ideal of an educated person and real-life intersect: the ideal student thinks, learns, and interacts based on what is normative for the *dominant* gender, race, and class. Thus

⁶⁰ Thayer-Bacon, *Beyond Liberal Democracy*, 5.

⁶¹ It is important to note that this is education located in formalized schooling, it is not referring to education that happens outside school settings.

when student's lack of achievement in our public schools occurs along lines of gender, race, and class, the question becomes: is becoming an ideal student (ideal as based on dominant community normativity) possible or even desirable for a non-dominant student? For a concrete example let us turn to recent reform efforts in the United States directed to address children "failing" to reach the ideal of becoming an educated person.

As in the 1990's when a perception of education crisis resulted in mandated standardized testing, increased use of "prestructured and preformulated curricula and teaching strategies," refocusing on "transmitting a common storehouse of knowledge," and "achievement of excellence in the name of economic competitiveness,"⁶² a new wave of reform in the U.S. took the form of the reauthorization of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), which became known as the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB). It declared it would meet "the educational needs of low-achieving children in our Nation's highest-poverty schools, limited English proficient children, migratory children, children with disabilities, Indian children."⁶³ NCLB promised to close the so-called "achievement gap" between high- and low-performing children, "especially the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students."⁶⁴ Sonia Nieto notes that NCLB was subtitled 'An Act to Close the Achievement Gap' but cites recent statistics that indicate that despite gains made by all students, a persistent scoring disparity remains equivalent to two full grade levels.⁶⁵ In the over ten years since the law was

⁶² John S. Mayher, "Forward," in *Finding Our Own Way: Teachers Exploring Their Assumptions*, ed. Judith M. Newman (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1990), xiii.

⁶³ U.S. Department of Education, *Elementary and Secondary Education Title 1 - Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged* (U.S. Department of Education, 2004), <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg1.html> (accessed August 20, 2011).

⁶⁴ U.S. Department of Education, *Elementary and Secondary Education Title 1*.

⁶⁵ Nieto. *The Light in Their Eyes*, 11.

enacted, despite “more targeted interventions” no appreciable closing of the gaps has occurred.⁶⁶

In fact, it is my contention that NCLB has embarked on a reform agenda that has had the contradictory effect of increasing the “achievement gap” through high levels of targeted students being retained (which has high co-morbidity with high school incompleteness⁶⁷); pushed into special education (increasing marginalization and reducing post-secondary opportunities⁶⁸); being denied bilingual education⁶⁹ (despite the fact that 20 percent of our students currently speak a language other than English in their home⁷⁰); being schooled in resegregated schools;⁷¹ and leaving of high school⁷² at alarming rates.⁷³ Scholars point to these outcomes as being exacerbated by high-stakes testing,⁷⁴ narrowing of the curriculum through standardization,⁷⁵ unequal distribution of resources,⁷⁶ and the marginalizing effect of monolingualism⁷⁷ that NCLB has perpetuated.⁷⁸

⁶⁶ Education Week, *Achievement Gap*, <http://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/achievement-gap/> (accessed November 24, 2011).

⁶⁷ Joel Spring, *American Education* 14th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010): 54.

⁶⁸ Francis Schrag, “High Stakes Testing and Distributive Justice,” *Theory and Research in Education*, 2 (2004): 257.

⁶⁹ Ana Iddings and Brian Rose, “Promoting Educational Equity” in *Culture, Curriculum, and Identity in Education*, edited by H. Richard Milner, 78-79. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

⁷⁰ Nieto, *The Light in their Eyes*, x.

⁷¹ Nieto, *The Light in their Eyes*, 12-13. Jonathan Kozol. *The Shame of the Nation: the Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America*. (New York: Crown Publishers, 2005), Spring, *American Education*, 66-69.

⁷² Kris Sloan, “High-Stakes Accountability, Minority Youth, and Ethnography: Assessing the Multiple Effects,” *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 38, no.1 (2007): 24-41. Nieto, 12.

⁷³ Nieto, *The Light in their Eyes*, 12.

⁷⁴ Linda Darling-Hammond, “Standards, Accountability, and School Reform.” *Teachers College Record* 106, no. 6, (June 2004): 1047-1085. Nel Noddings, “High Stakes Testing: Why?” *Theory and Research in Education* 2 (2004): 263-268. Harvey Seigel, “High Stakes Testing, Educational Aims and Ideals, and Responsible Assessment,” *Theory and Research in Education*, 2 (2004): 219-233.

⁷⁵ Linda Valli and Daria Buese, “The changing roles of teachers in an era of high-stakes accountability,” *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 38, no.1 (2007): 57-75.

⁷⁶ Spring, *American Education*, 52-53.

⁷⁷ Jason Irizarry and John Raible, “Unpacking the Sociopolitical Context Surrounding English Language Learners” in *Culture, Curriculum, and Identity in Education*, edited by H. Richard Milner, 95-115. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

⁷⁸ David Hirsh. “Assessing No Child Left Behind and the Rise of Neoliberal Education Policies.” *American Educational Research Journal* 44, no. 3 (September 2007): 493-518.

Education policy scholar, Joel Spring, states that “[u]nequal educational opportunities continue to plague American schools”⁷⁹ elaborating on gender, race, and class disparities in the public school system. According to Spring “achievement gaps” (or failures to become an educated person) are occurring based on gender and he references Myra and David Sadker’s landmark inquiry into gender equity in schools in the United States. Their findings indicate that girls are equal or ahead of boys in terms of academic achievement, but that this declines in high school and college. Boys still out-score girls in science and math⁸⁰ and males receive more scholarships and achieve better scores on entrance examinations to graduate schools.⁸¹ And in an interesting sort of gender disproportion, females are achieving more undergraduate degrees than males with the Census Bureau reporting “that as of 2010, 36 percent of women ages 25 to 29 held a bachelor’s degree or better versus only 28 percent of men in the same age group.”⁸²

Critical Race Theory scholar Gloria Ladson-Billings has long made the case that race “continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States.”⁸³ Her exploration of a critical race theory applied to education brings to light the saliency of race and the role of the school in perpetuating inequality based on race.⁸⁴ School incompleteness rates, though dropping, continue to reflect racial disparity. In 2009 only 5% of White students left school, while 9.3% of African American, 17.6% of Hispanic, and 13.2% of Native American

⁷⁹ Spring, 82.

⁸⁰ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1990, 1992, 1996, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009 Mathematics Assessments, retrieved September 2 and November 23, 2010, from the Main NAEP Data Explorer (<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata/>). (This table was prepared November 2010.)

⁸¹ Spring, *American Education*, 130.

⁸² Education Week, *Achievement Gap*, <http://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/achievement-gap/> (accessed November 24, 2011).

⁸³ Gloria Ladson-Billings, “Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education” *Teachers College Record* 97, no. 1 (1995): 49-50.

⁸⁴ Ladson-Billings, *Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education*, 50.

students did not complete their schooling.⁸⁵ White students in 4th, 8th, and 12th grade national reading and mathematics assessments consistently achieve higher scores than their fellow African American, Hispanic, and Native American students, and the disparity increases the longer students attend school.⁸⁶

Achievement disparities are also drawn along class⁸⁷ lines. Current reports show that

of all children younger than 18 living in families, 15.5 million live in poverty, defined as a family of four with less than \$21,947 per year. This includes 4.9 million, or about 10 percent, of non-Hispanic white children, and one in three black and Hispanic children, at 4 million and 5.6 million, respectively (Annie E. Casey Foundation 2011). According to a seminal study of language development in 1995, by age 3, children in poverty have smaller vocabularies and lower language skills than children from middle-income families. Research has also shown that dropout rates tend to be higher for children who live in poverty. According to the U.S. Department of Education's 2011 *Condition of Education* report, about 68 percent of 12th-graders in high-poverty schools graduated with a diploma in 2008, compared with 91 percent of 12th-graders in low-poverty schools (NCES, 2011).⁸⁸

Critical pedagogy and multicultural scholars, Joe Kincheloe and Shirley Steinberg furthermore decry myths of meritocracy that “confuse intelligence with socio-economic advantage”⁸⁹ pointing to the powerful corollary between class and academic achievement that fosters such misnomers. We must develop an understanding of how “achievement gaps” are the “result of

⁸⁵Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2011). *The Condition of Education 2011* (NCES 2011-033), Indicator 20.

⁸⁶ Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), NAEP 1999 Trends in Academic Progress; and 2004 and 2008 Long-Term Trend Reading Assessments, retrieved May 12, 2009, from the Long-Term Trend NAEP Data Explorer (<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata/>). (This table was prepared May 2009.) ; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1990, 1992, 1996, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009 Mathematics Assessments, retrieved September 2 and November 23, 2010, from the Main NAEP Data Explorer (<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata/>). (This table was prepared November 2010.)

⁸⁷ To clarify, the difference between socioeconomic status and class as a cultural group are that the latter can be, but is not necessarily, often taken up by individuals as a form of group membership based on the nature of employment, income levels, self-identification, and shared culture. Socioeconomic status can be determined quantifiably solely based on income levels. See Paul E. Willis. *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1977.

⁸⁸ Education Week, *Achievement Gap*, <http://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/achievement-gap/> (accessed November 24, 2011).

⁸⁹ Kincheloe and Steinberg 117.

more subtle environmental factors and ‘opportunity gaps’ in the resources available to poor versus wealthy children.”⁹⁰ We need to see these traits, contributions, and epistemologies of other classes⁹¹ and incorporate cultural assets so the ideal of an educated person can be broadened and deepened.

These scholars point us back to the illusion of the empty backpack when it comes to race, class, and gender. Elements in critical race scholarship illuminate the issue of racism being a deeply entrenched part of American society, not just isolated acts and challenges the traditional views of “neutrality, objectivity, color-blindness, and meritocracy as camouflages for the self-interest of dominant groups in American society.”⁹² Critical multiculturalists remind us that the ideology of classlessness that dismisses the effects of class on educational outcomes fosters myths that focus on the victim rather than the unfair systems that created challenges to their academic success. Myths of equal opportunity, meritocracy, and equality as conformity, and the power of neutrality⁹³ bring us back to Martin’s original argument regarding gender.

Martin’s problematizing of gender as it is extended to race and class now suggests an ideal of an educated person that is not only male, but White and middle or upper class. Equality is again impossible; only assimilation and accommodation on the part of people of color and so-called “lower” class to the dominant cultural will allow the “rise” to become an educated person. People of different race and class than the dominant cultural group must choose between their community and the dominant group world, they must deny their cultural traits and languages,

⁹⁰ Milner, *Start Where You Are*, 173. Education Week, *Achievement Gap*, <http://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/achievement-gap/> (accessed November 24, 2011).

⁹¹ This is not to say class culture and identity is bounded and static, as with any element of culture, they are contextualized and evolving elements.

⁹² Ladson-Billings, *Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education*, 52.

⁹³ Kincheloe and Steinberg, 117-118.

and they must be judged compared to a White middle-class male, not simply on their intrinsic worth. Similar derisive thoughts and ingrained feelings of inferiority might be felt because they do not see knowledge created in a way that incorporates traits of non-dominant group cultures; they do not see the contributions of people of color or different classes in the bodies of knowledge; they feel compelled to split their bodies from their minds; their homes from places of education; their individuality from their community. Lack of representation is causing an increasing disconnect for students who do not see themselves in the curriculum and a perpetuation of privileged status quo for those who do.⁹⁴ For example, the move to a limited, national curriculum explicitly, implicitly, and in nullifying ways⁹⁵ “teaches” some students to achieve and some to not.

And so the similarity pervades: Whiteness and middle-classness are seen as the location of superior knowledge; they are perceived to be the major contribution because of the marginalization of non-dominant group member contributions. Productive work is viewed as the most valuable site of education, not those who live or labor in the reproductive spheres. Again, the same poignant irony is that our male, White, middle-class children *are* being given a better than equal chance to succeed...because who they are is the normative standard. So, for them the playing field seems level, their individual efforts will determine their achievement or lack thereof, and the need for equity seems unfounded. They see the backpack as empty. But the backpack is half-full of their normativity and half-empty of the traits, epistemologies, and contributions of non-dominant culture members. Both the dominant and the marginalized become victims of the illusion of an educated person.

⁹⁴ H. Richard Milner, *Culture, Curriculum, and Identity in Education*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 2-4.

⁹⁵ H. Richard Milner, *Culture, Curriculum, and Identity in Education*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 2-4.

Fortunately Martin's critique is coupled with the valuable philosophical work of (re)defining the function of education and restructuring the ideal of an educated person. She encourages us to find the hidden curriculum that teaches us the myths of the empty backpack in a process of conscious-raising.⁹⁶ And we read her words thinking of gender with race and class:

Raising to consciousness the male cognitive perspective of the disciples of knowledge in the educated person's curriculum is no guarantee, of course, that the educated females will not suffer from a lack of self-confidence and from self-alienation. Yet knowledge can be power. A curriculum which, through critical analysis, exposes the biased view of women embodied in the disciplines and which, by granting ample space to the study of women shows how unjust that view is, is certainly preferable to a curriculum which, by its silence in the subject, gives students the impression that the ways in which the disciplines look at the world are impartial and unbiased.⁹⁷

In addition to raising consciousness through broader exposure to the process of marginalization and the reclamation of the contributions of women, people of color, and different classes, Martin suggests we appreciate that identical or equal treatment does not create "identical results so long as the treatment contains a male [White, classist] bias."⁹⁸ When our differences are thought to make no difference, our unique contributions may be over-looked. To be fair we need to attend to unfairness, seeking to be just to dismantle injustice. To be truly equal we must be equitable.

Feminist scholar Barbara Houston asked the question: should public education be gender-free?⁹⁹ She explored three possible meanings of gender-free: a gender education which would actively work to ignore gender all-together; a system that worked to "disregard gender by obliterating gender differentiations that arose within the education sphere" to "deinstitutionalize sex differences to create a form of gender-blindness;" and education that limited itself to only

⁹⁶ Martin, *Ideal of an Educated Person*, 107.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Martin, *Ideal of an Educated Person*, 109.

⁹⁹ Barbara Houston, "Should Public Education Be Gender Free?" in *The Education Feminism Reader*. Ed. Lynda Stone (New York: Routledge, , 1994), 122.

eliminate issues of bias in terms of gender.¹⁰⁰ However, Houston's examination of all three revealed that gender inequality was likely in fact to be perpetuated by these strategies.¹⁰¹

The inability of the three strategies Houston identified to attend to issues of gender and sexism is akin to the poignant irony of multicultural work. As the various iterations of multiculturalism attempt to address disparity, discourses of *us* or *them* are unfortunately often buttressed. In the three strategies Houston identifies the options are: gender being eliminated (there is no *us* or *them*), attempting to ignore both maleness and femaleness in a gender-blindness (get rid of the concept of *us* and *them*); and addressing only gender bias (*them* but only when they are experiencing unfairness). None of these strategies to approach gender in education works towards *all of us*, diverse but inclusive.

Returning to multicultural education we see it has been used in multiple ways by differing marginalized groups to unpack oppression and work towards empowerment, but it has been limited by the "failure of white people and institutions to grapple substantively with their own racism at personal as well as systemic levels."¹⁰² The new status quo is more a culture of tolerance, as long as Euro-western/White values "serve as the invisible referent against which difference is defined"¹⁰³ and racism remains customary and not aberrant in American culture.¹⁰⁴ Added to this, is the theoretical work of multicultural scholars that supports Africancentrism¹⁰⁵ and explorations of Whiteness,¹⁰⁶ and viewpoints of the "Other"¹⁰⁷ which, though vital and

¹⁰⁰ Houston, 122.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 123.

¹⁰² Christine Sleeter and Peter McLaren, *Multicultural Education, Critical Pedagogy, and the Politics of Difference* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 11.

¹⁰³ Sleeter and McLaren, 14.

¹⁰⁴ Gloria Ladson-Billings, *Preparing Teachers for Diverse Student Populations*, 212.

¹⁰⁵ Sleeter and McLaren *Multicultural Education, Critical Pedagogy*, 356.

¹⁰⁶ See Joe Kincheloe, et al., *White Reign: Deploying Whiteness in America*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.

unquestionably necessary, unfortunately inadvertently reinforce discourses of *us* and *them* by retaining the duality. To get at the roots of inequity (manifest in funding inequality, racial segregation, inequitable access to learning, underrepresentation of teachers of color, practices of cultural assimilation,¹⁰⁸ oppressive patriarchal practices, privilege, the myth of meritocracy, etc.) a shift in strategy is needed in teachers. Similarly, rather than risking assimilationist behaviors, ignoring gender, or attempting to create equality without equity, Houston suggests a different way: Martin's gender-sensitive construct. This perspective recommends:

that we pay attention to gender when it can present sex bias or further sex equality. It is a perspective that requires careful monitoring of our gender interactions and urges direct intervention when necessary to equalize opportunities...A gender-sensitive perspective is not a blueprint for education that will answer all our questions about particular practices. It is, rather, a perspective that constantly reminds us to question the ways in which students and teachers make sense of and respond to a sexist culture. It is a situational strategy, one that lets the patterns of discrimination themselves determine which particular action to take to eliminate bias.¹⁰⁹

It is a self-correcting method that can adapt to the unique contexts, positionality, embeddedness, and embodiments of teachers and students.

Martin describes this gender-sensitive approach as: "one which takes sex or gender [or race or class] into account when it makes a difference and ignores it when it does not."¹¹⁰

Martin's gender-sensitivity, which Houston describes as a situational strategy, and what I would expand to call situational sensitivity, helps me (un)pack my backpack because I now see that ignoring gender, race, and class "in the name of equality is self-defeating,"¹¹¹ no matter how well intentioned I might be. This situational strategy, that implies a sentiment of attentiveness and a

¹⁰⁷ Joe Kincheloe and Shirley Steinberg, "Addressing the Crisis of Whiteness: Reconfiguring White Identity in a Pedagogy of Whiteness," in *White Reign*, ed. Joe Kincheloe et al., 26.

¹⁰⁸ Nieto, *The Light in Their Eyes*, 51-69.

¹⁰⁹ Houston, 131.

¹¹⁰ Martin, *Ideal of an Educated Person*, 109.

¹¹¹ Martin, *Reclaiming a Conversation*, 195.

probable action, is constantly looking for patterns of discrimination, their effects, and possible solutions. It is “a process that is constantly organizing and reorganizing our social life”¹¹² and teaching practices. Through continuous, critical vigilance we can “catch our own errors, alter policies and practices that no longer work, and introduce new policies for new circumstances.”¹¹³ In doing so we might begin to have our consciences heightened¹¹⁴ to see the ways that students have been excluded from the curriculum, expected to conduct themselves according to dominant group norms, and how their diversity has been perceived as a deficit.¹¹⁵ Situational sensitivity doesn’t mean a constant focus in our thinking and in our practice as educators on race, class, and gender, but it is a mindset of being constantly attentive to “the workings of sex and gender [race and class] because in this historical and cultural moment, paradoxically they sometimes make a big difference even if they sometimes make no difference at all.”¹¹⁶

Now that I know my backpack is not empty, how do I go about (un)packing it? Jane Roland Martin’s book *Cultural Miseducation: In Search of a Democratic Solution*,¹¹⁷ helps us explore the importance of culture to school settings and begin to distinguish how we pack our backpacks with cultural-wealth (be they cultural assets and cultural liabilities), and work to understand how to preserve the good (reclaim, remember, record¹¹⁸), while unpacking the bad or mediating the next generation through it. Martin states, “Cultural miseducation occurs when so many cultural liabilities or such devastating ones are passed down that a heavy burden is placed on the next generation; or, alternative, when invaluable portions of the culture’s wealth are not

¹¹² Houston, 131.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Martin, *The Ideal of the Educated Person*, 107.

¹¹⁵ These concepts reflect the experiences of women Martin expresses in *Ideal of Educated Person*, 101.

¹¹⁶ Martin, *Reclaiming a Conversation*, 195.

¹¹⁷ Jane Roland Martin. *Cultural Miseducation: In Search of a Democratic Solution*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2002.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 97.

passed down....it occurs when these sins of omission and commission are conjoined.”¹¹⁹ This takes us back to backpacks that are half-full and half-empty.

Martin argues against a single curriculum and for a more nuanced approach to the traditionally individual-focused educational mind-set, one that understands the transmission of culture that is occurring in multiple ways, not just in our schools. The powerful benefits of her cultural-wealth approach are that it “encourages one to distinguish between cultural assets and liabilities, another is that it acknowledges the central role that institutions play in cultural preservation and transmission.”¹²⁰ Martin’s concept of cultural wealth deals with the issues of: cultural abundance, the problem of curriculum selection, the overabundance of information or increased cultural stock, and the reclamation of cultural assets such as indigenous practices. She expresses the idea of a cultural debt or cultural poverty as the passing on of cultural liabilities or the failure to pass on cultural assets. Martin states that, “to increase the nation’s level of education, we will have to solve the problem of cultural miseducation.”¹²¹ She suggests that to “accomplish this it is necessary to know the extent and nature of our culture’s stock and its educational agents, and to discover whether and how our assets and liabilities are being preserved and transmitted to the new generation.”¹²² This is the work of a hiker with a growing discernment about what to (un)pack to be prepared for the trip. However, the hiker must acknowledge the power that hold in determining what is (un)packed. We are able to explore what is being packed, what should be packed but isn’t, and what should to be unpacked in our metaphorical backpack regarding our acculturated assumptions in a process of situational-sensitivity that is raising consciousness regarding issues of equity toward equality.

¹¹⁹ Martin, *Cultural Miseducation*, 5.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 19.

¹²¹ Martin, *Cultural Miseducation*, 86.

¹²² Ibid., 115.

A practical starting point for developing and enacting Martin's heightened consciousness includes texts and courses exploring issues cultural groups face with lesson ideas and pedagogical suggestions; exposure to "concepts such as prejudice, oppression, ...justice...[and] critical theory;" and "immersion in experiences with people of other cultures to stimulate genuine relationships" to foster "understanding and responsive actions when working with students of varied backgrounds."¹²³ By developing a degree of cultural competence, educators will be able to become sensitive to the different ways of knowing (epistemologies).¹²⁴ Sensitivity enacted will embrace a culturally responsive curriculum that understands that knowledge is co-constructed¹²⁵ and connects the curriculum to the students' culture and language.¹²⁶ Nieto suggests that it is the teachers who should do the institutional transforming to promote learning through careful implementation of curriculum and pedagogy through a critical lens. She states affirmative learning communities are produced by the belief that:

- all students have talents and strengths
- all students are capable of high levels of learning
- students' families and communities are meaningful partners in promoting learning
- students learn best when they are engaged, active, and working in collaboration with others
- student learning is promoted when there is a strong connection to teachers, schools, and learning.¹²⁷

¹²³ Rehm and Allison, 263.

¹²⁴ H. Richard Milner. "Race, Culture, and Researcher Positionality: Working Through Dangers Seen, Unseen, and Unforeseen." *Educational Researcher* 36, no. 7 (2007): 395.

¹²⁵ See Thayer-Bacon, *Relational "(e)pistemologies."*

¹²⁶ Angelina Castagno and Brian Brayboy, "Culturally Responsive Schooling for Indigenous Youth" A Review of the Literature," *Review of Educational Research*, 78, no.4 (December 2008), 947.

¹²⁷ Nieto, *The Light in Their Eyes*, 101-129.

By encouraging teachers to learn about their students, connect with student families, develop collaborative relationships with fellow educators, join professional organizations, and be active in dismantling oppression beyond the school space, Nieto provides tools to confront and transform the education setting. These tools offer to empower the teacher with microcosmic acts of justice in the form of sensitivity to equity within their classroom communities to challenge the disempowering effects of NCLB and other state reforms that limit teacher power in the macrocosm. For these recommendations to be enacted, they cannot be imposed but must be catalyzed by a compelling philosophical outlook. Philosophical because it causes us to attend to the very way we think about knowledge, widening the educators gaze beyond only the psychological, physical, and practical foci of education. This is the expanded vision a guidebook offers the hiker to inspire and aid them on their journey. I refer to my guidebook as I begin to justify the change in trajectory I am suggesting.

The Guidebook: Thayer-Bacon's Relational "(e)pistemologies," Constructed Thinking, and Democratic Community

We have seen that Martin has pointed out the problem of an ideal of an educated person that thinks, acts, and learns in a "male" way. I have argued in agreement with her that this ideal person is not only of the dominant male gender, but has other dominant culture attributes such as Whiteness and middle/upper class sensibilities. This is especially vital to grasp for educators who have adhered to gender- or color-blindness and need to be convinced of the pertinence of gender, race, and class.¹²⁸ Awareness of the impact of gender, race, and class will produce educational practices that address their existence. Curriculum will be scrutinized for representative contributions, miseducation will have to be brought to consciousness, and

¹²⁸ Milner, *Start Where You Are*, 165.

programs of study will need to be infused with nurturing and care.¹²⁹ These recommendations require classrooms that intentionally value and nurture students of every gender, race, and class. Here Thayer-Bacon can help us imagine such an environment. Thayer-Bacon's idea of democratic learning spaces will help advance sensitivity to diversity for equity with the imperative of inclusion for equality through the development of relational "(e)pistemologies" and constructive thinking, knowledge of the ideal community, support of cultural diversity, and a sense of justice and care.

Thayer-Bacon's idea of relational "(e)pistemologies" is vital for a (re)visioning of our educational purpose and conduct as it "views knowledge as something that is socially constructed by embedded, embodied people who are in relation with each other."¹³⁰ As Thayer-Bacon states:

I seek to offer a feminist (e)pistemological theory that insists that knowers/subjects are fallible, that our criteria is corrigible (capable of being corrected), and that our standards are socially constructed, and thus continually in need of critique and re-construction. I offer a self-conscious and reflective (e)pistemological theory, one that attempts to be adjustable and adaptable as people gain further in understanding.¹³¹

In my opinion, this view of knowledge construction nullifies the quantitative, "impartial," quest for standardization that we see in the current education climate.¹³² Understanding knowledge is socially constructed means acknowledging the relational nature and variety in ways of knowing and, consequently, learning. The ideal of an educated person becomes multi-faceted epistemologically.

¹²⁹ Milner, *Start Where You Are*, 197-198. Ladson-Billings, *Preparing Teachers for Diverse Student Populations*, 226, 231.

¹³⁰ Thayer-Bacon, *Philosophy Applied to Education*, vi.

¹³¹ Thayer-Bacon, *Relational "(e)pistemology"*, 7.

¹³² Which must not be confused with authentic accountability and educationally sound assessment, see Noddings, "High Stakes Testing: Why?" (2004).

Relational “(e)pistemologies” not only point to the way we make knowledge, and by extension, do the work of knowledge making and sharing in democratic learning, but it draws us back to our backpacks. The concept of being “embedded and embodied” give us a sense of being situated in a particular time and place, with our backpacks full of unique histories, dispositions, needs, and limitations.¹³³ We are making knowledge together in a process of inquiry that is “dynamic, flexible, and reciprocal.”¹³⁴ These standpoints or particularities position us within our learning community, in a collaboration of knowledge construction that is always in process and in which we can never fully know the “view” of the other, but we can seek to attempt to see another’s perspective or be sensitive to hear their opinions as we (un)pack our backpacks and seek to learn together.

Our embeddedness gives emotional, social, intellectual, and relational context to our construction of knowledge. Appreciation of our situatedness is vital if we are to encourage sensitivity to diversity for equity with the imperative of inclusion for equality by attempting to know ourselves, attempting to know others, and to create knowledge together. It acknowledges our positionality in that we cannot be detached from the knowledge we are making, but we are not limited to just our knowledge. We can, in relation with others, broaden our understanding of the perspectives of others.¹³⁵

Not only does our embeddedness help connect us to others, but our embodiedness helps us to unite the parts of our individual identities.¹³⁶ Acknowledging our embodiedness, heals the

¹³³ Thayer-Bacon, *Transforming Critical Thinking*, 104-105.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 58.

¹³⁵ Thayer-Bacon, *Philosophy Applied to Education*, 59.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

split of our minds from our bodies,¹³⁷ by connecting our objective and subjective and productive and reproductive¹³⁸ selves together. Embodiment makes for a rich place for teachers and students in a democratic learning community to explore their personal positionalities to develop a sense of self through relationships with others to enhance learning, for as Thayer-Bacon states, “we need a sense of self to become potential knowers.”¹³⁹ Acknowledgement of embodiment is also a powerful tool in the dismantling of these splits as they manifest themselves in oppressive racial, gender, and class hierarchies.

Current reform measures bear the finger prints of Locke and Rousseau with what Thayer-Bacon calls their “assumption that individuals develop atomistically on their own.”¹⁴⁰ Within a democratic learning community, students will develop their ability to reason and care together, by being constructive thinkers. By drawing on their personal knowledge and expert knowledge of others, these students will be able to piece together thinking patterns that appreciate both logic and our inherent subjectivity. They will be able to investigate more deeply what they experience through attending to what they feel, imagine, or intuit.¹⁴¹ Such engagement is antithetical to the current emphasis on direct instruction, rote memorization, and limited assessment modalities, but holds the greatest potential for developing critical appreciation of diversity and inclusion for equity and equality.

The standardization and high stakes testing reform tactics of the 1990s, post the negative United States Department of Education report “A Nation at Risk” and the more recent NCLB initiatives, have disempowered teachers by diminishing progressive teaching strategies and re-

¹³⁷ Thayer-Bacon, *Transforming Critical Thinking*, 27.

¹³⁸ Martin, *Ideal of an Educated Woman*, 104.

¹³⁹ Thayer-Bacon, *Philosophy Applied to Education*, 56.

¹⁴⁰ Thayer-Bacon. *Beyond Liberal Democracy*, 2.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 125-165.

focusing on “basic skills.” They have consequently bred a school environment directly oppositional to the cultures of the very students these measures have been implemented for. The competitive school culture and narrowing of curriculum makes culturally relevant instruction¹⁴² unlikely and minority and/or low achieving students bear the brunt of culturally biased testing based on a curriculum that has been “dumbed down.” Thayer-Bacon’s democratic community offers a means to heal the sense of alienation for students from communitarian cultures. Thayer-Bacon suggests the creation of a classroom environment that sidesteps individualistic models that “focus on the individuals at the expense of the group”¹⁴³ and social constructivist models that “emphasizes the group at the expense of the individual.”¹⁴⁴ She recommends a democratic classroom community that “does justice to both the individual and the group by focusing on interconnected, interdependent, interactive relationship that exists between the self and the community.”¹⁴⁵

High-stakes testing, amongst other factors in current reform measures, encourage competition and a sense of individualism that causes school environments to be alienating, hostile, and “makes it even more difficult for students from communitarian cultures to succeed.”¹⁴⁶ Native Americans, Hispanic, and African American students, who have been specifically targeted by the current reform, belong to communities that, in general, value “cooperation, sharing, and fraternity, based on a belief in the interconnectedness of the self to others.”¹⁴⁷ As multicultural scholar, Richard Milner states: “Since students come to learning

¹⁴² Gloria Ladson-Billings. *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994), 30-53.

¹⁴³ Thayer-Bacon, *Philosophy Applied to Education*, 31.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Thayer-Bacon, *Beyond Liberal Democracy*, 3.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 4-5.

encounters with different cultural orientations, frames of reference, lived experiences, and personal styles treating them all the same instructionally is morally indefensible.”¹⁴⁸

Multicultural scholars agree “that a race-centered, cultural and diversity-focused, and multicultural curriculum are essential for student academic and social success”¹⁴⁹ and suggest that teacher education programs “provide an encompassing study of cultures, a repertoire of appropriate teaching adaptations, reflective and critical thinking, and multiple experiences with culturally diverse people.”¹⁵⁰ Thayer-Bacon reflects that the more educators are “provided teacher education programs that encourage the developments and practice of such skills as communication, relational, and critical thinking skills, the more likely they will be aware of their own perspectives and the possible limits to these.” She echoes the call for teachers to experience interaction with people different from themselves and to be supported in efforts in self-reflection.¹⁵¹ Teachers so equipped will be participants in democratic learning communities.

In a democratic learning community students will hopefully experience a collective that is working towards inclusion and affirmation, caring and justice, and that allows for “dissonance and discord,” time to develop relationships, a feeling of responsibility, and have a sense of being a vital contributor to the group.¹⁵² This environment will counter-act the current reform environment that is creating tension rather than collaboration between learners and teachers when the stakes are so high (merit-pay, public exposure of student test scores, high school graduation rates, etc.). “[S]ocial democratic values such as fraternity, equality, sharing, and cooperation” will create spaces to explore shared responsibilities, shared authority, and shared

¹⁴⁸ H. Richard Milner, *Diversity and Education: Teachers, Teaching, and Teacher Education* (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 2009), xvi.

¹⁴⁹ Milner, *Start Where You Are, But Don't Stay There*, 6.

¹⁵⁰ Rehm and Allison, 260.

¹⁵¹ Thayer-Bacon, *Philosophy Applied to Education*, 72.

¹⁵² Ibid.

identity¹⁵³ and will counteract perceptions that focus on “achievement gaps” and perceive culturally diverse students as coming to the classroom with deficits.¹⁵⁴

Thayer-Bacon describes a learning community that would welcome English language learners in an affirming way, engage learners of cultures different than that of the dominant discourse, create a nurturing space for learning to occur, allow for civil discourse and civic empowerment, as students will feel their value and the efficacy of their efforts and will work against low-expectations and negative self-fulfilling prophecies.¹⁵⁵ Immigrants, who are choosing to reside in the United States at the rate of a million people a year,¹⁵⁶ will be drawn into community. It is in this (re)visioning that increasing “achievement gaps” between students based on race and socioeconomic status, the narrowing of the curriculum, and the marginalizing effect of monolingualism can be addressed and reversed because students are not problems with deficiencies to be addressed and students are not the sum of their cumulative testing statistics.

Thayer-Bacon’s nurturance of a democratic community in the classroom creates a mindset that “acknowledges that each of us is a unique human being with our own specific context and different, individual gifts and talents as well as needs and limitations.”¹⁵⁷ She elucidates a caring ethic that focuses on “unique differences that exist within particular situations” and suggests caring as an ethical approach that “allows a teacher to take into account the students as a whole person” but acknowledges the many questions that this sort of relational approach raises.¹⁵⁸ Thayer-Bacon suggests that teachers must focus on student’s interactions and

¹⁵³ Thayer-Bacon, *Beyond Liberal Democracy in Schools*, 176.

¹⁵⁴ H. Richard Milner, *Start Where You Are*, 9.

¹⁵⁵ Thayer-Bacon, *Beyond Liberal Democracy in Schools*, 15.

¹⁵⁶ Nieto, *The Light in Their Eyes*, ix.

¹⁵⁷ Thayer-Bacon, *Philosophy Applied to Education*, 119.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 119-120.

encourage them to exchange ideas freely. She suggests that students must be encouraged to develop their communication skills and well as their relational skills. Teachers are described as needing to create an environment that insists that each person has a voice to be heard.

Additionally Thayer-Bacon explains that schools need to be structured to allow teachers and students to spend more time with each other in manageably sized groups. Consequently teachers, students, and parents will have more of a chance to know each other and have healthy relationships.

Through opportunities to learn how to communicate with each other, students will increase their shared interests to help alleviate their experiences of loss of community or the harmful, destructive forms of community, and finally, students who feel marginalized, excluded, and “othered”, can find a sense of belonging in a community of learners who are actively constructing knowledge together.¹⁵⁹ This creates a nontoxic environment where students are able to explore, relate, and connect. This does not mean absence from conflict, inequity, or failure, but, I believe with Thayer-Bacon that if we can envision schools committed to justice and care, trust and respect, appreciation and affection, we can work together to develop the sensitivity to diversity for equity with the imperative of inclusion for equality necessary to justly leave no child behind. This cursory perusal of our guidebook is enough to get us on our way. We see possible solutions to the mind-body split, epistemological marginalization, and dominance of rationality at the expense of emotion, intuition, and imagination that Martin’s ideally educated person was challenged by.

¹⁵⁹Thayer-Bacon, *Philosophy Applied to Education*, 32.

Now that I am attending to what is in my backpack in terms of acculturated assumptions I am ready to embark on my hike. I have begun on the philosophical research trail by establishing that there is an imperative need to change the trajectory of current efforts to reduce “achievement gaps” in the United States and (re)vision a transformation of our school settings. My central claim is that we must address this need through praxis-driven conscious-raising regarding issues of sensitivity to diversity for equity with the imperative of inclusion for equality amongst educators that harnesses the work of philosophy of education scholars. I have shared compelling reasons to embark on such a project, namely the dangers of the illusion of the empty backpack that implicitly enforces harmful stereotypes and makes problems of inequity imperceptible, the failure of NCLB to address educational “achievement gaps,” the persistent inequity based on gender, race, and class in schools, and the need for situational sensitivity regarding diversity and equity with the imperative of inclusion for equality. I look forward to sharing my journey of personal preparation for situational sensitivity, traveling to the points of interest of philosophy, positionality, and pedagogical praxis.

The Route: Retracing Steps

Based on the philosophical outlook of situational sensitivity, cultural miseducation, relational “(e)pistemologies,” constructive thinking, and democratic communities, the bulk of this proposed project is going to be devoted to retracing the theoretical and experiential steps of my personal preparation as an individual and an instructor attempting to facilitate conscious raising regarding sensitivity to diversity for equity with the imperative of inclusion for equality in the graduate level course, “Teachers, Schools, and Society.” I have been through a process that, through exploration of positionality and exposure to and engagement with philosophy of education has resulted in pedagogical praxis that reflects the on-going evolution in my

personhood and practice as an educator. The course is my attempt to facilitate conscious-raising in other educators, while continuing to raise my own consciousness.

Gay's 2003 work Becoming Multicultural Educators is my exemplar of evolutionary stories of educators who are discovering and committing to the same goal of equity, opportunity, and achievement of targeted students,¹⁶⁰ similar to what I am exploring through my on-going engagement with educational philosophy, and positionality as they affect my and other educator's pedagogical praxis. Gay's text reflects the process of conscious-raising I am experiencing; what she describes as, "becoming critically conscious of one's own knowledge, attitudes, and skills....and the process of how these evolve."¹⁶¹ This text acts as an example of what I am attempting to articulate for myself: a facilitation of "the development of self-consciousness for teachers"¹⁶² regarding issues of sensitivity to diversity for equity with the imperative of inclusion for equality. The teachers in the Gay text are being informed by multicultural education theory and share narratives that are "personal, professional, and autobiographical"¹⁶³ of their emergence as multicultural educators to stimulate conversation about teaching diverse students. Gay offers the hope that "[a]s the discourse prompted by our collective stories expands, our individual competencies for multicultural teaching will be enriched and enabled even more, and more children will be better served in our schools."¹⁶⁴

I take up Gay's work to inform my inquiry into preparation for conscious-raising because she too sees it as important in particular ways. She, like me, wishes to confirm that connection of theory to practice. Gay points to my not being further along in my career as an academic and

¹⁶⁰ Gay, *Becoming Multicultural Educators*, xi.

¹⁶¹ Gay, *Becoming Multicultural Educators*, xi.

¹⁶² Ibid., xii.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 2.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 14.

the immediacy of my role as a classroom teacher as in fact beneficial due to my likeliness of wanting to seek to link theory to practice. I have experienced what it is to teach, but not fully know why I was doing what I was doing or make critical choices about my pedagogy. I had intuited, reflected, and been trained for the *how*, but I didn't have the tools to think theoretically about the *why* of my teaching. Gay also offers a space for novice scholars and relatively young educators, such as myself, to make contributions because all stages of the journey are valued, especially those of origination since those point the way to how journeys of transformation are begun and perhaps fostered. Additionally, Gay makes that case that I do not have to claim expert and authoritative knowledge, but makes room for me to rather use my skills as a facilitator to foster knowledge construction.¹⁶⁵ Since I do not assume such a thing as a one-size fits all solution to changing the trajectory of current efforts to reduce "achievement gaps" in the United States and (re)visioning a transformation of our school settings, I take up Gay's focus on "personal preparation."¹⁶⁶ Personal preparation has the quality of being uniquely transformative and gives the hope that sharing stories of "how individuals are engaging with the challenge of personal growth...[will] illustrate the dynamic, complex, and developmental nature of the process."¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, my experience resonates with her articulation that this preparation is a journey, not a destination. My transformation process regarding issues of equity and equality reflects a conviction I share with Gay that at "the heart of this personal becoming is self-knowledge"¹⁶⁸ that is always evolving. This process involves a lifelong (un)packing of our backpacks. This belief is particularly evident in Gay's focus on the way *who* we are determines *how* we teach and in her recognition that multicultural teaching is a "personal *and* professional

¹⁶⁵ Gay, *Becoming Multicultural Educators*, 3.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁶⁷ Gay, *Becoming Multicultural Educators*, 4. Nieto, *Affirming Diversity*, 273.

¹⁶⁸ Gay, *Becoming Multicultural Educators*, 4.

process,” [emphasis added]¹⁶⁹ which confirms for me my focus for my course on philosophy of education, positionality, and pedagogical praxis.

I came to Gay’s work after completing my social foundations-based graduate degree and doctoral coursework. Through continued engagement with my own process of conscious-raising, I am now embarking on a tentative project encouraging teachers to be more “reflective and critically conscious.”¹⁷⁰ Gay demonstrates for me *how* sensitivity to equity can be explored. As a means to explore the relationship of our positionality to practice, Gay utilizes “self-studies and personalized reporting of teachers” otherwise referred to as “reflection, narratives, storied research, and autobiography.”¹⁷¹ Gay’s work claims the legitimate use of narratives as research methodology, data or content, and pedagogical tool in educational research, theory, and practice.¹⁷² Further, in a practical way, Gay’s text offers a formatting of information as descriptive, reflective analytical, and interpretative. Thus the details of the experience are made explicit, then a move is made by the reflecting educator/narrator to make sense of the experiences and determine their significance, and finally “interpretive information extrapolates broader...educational messages that are embedded in our personal stories.”¹⁷³

Using descriptive information from my prior educational experiences and then the course “Teachers, Schools, and Society” I will make the accounts of myself and/or my students explicit. I will then theorize about our accounts of experiences and analyze them for their relative significance. While I do this I will be checking my backpack for situational sensitivity will be vigilant to the (un)packing of cultural-assets and cultural-liabilities. While I am tracing my route

¹⁶⁹ Gay, *Becoming Multicultural Educators*, 4.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 9.

through philosophy, positionality, and pedagogical praxis I will be seeking to stick to the trail of philosophical research and reinforce my central claim with justification reasons leading to a final chapter that will share the consequences (both in terms of benefits and warnings) that I have perceived along our hike together.

Let me offer a glimpse of the view at the end of the trail. We will see that traits don't have to belong to women or men (Whites or people of color or social class), but are perceived as positive attributes that benefit all community members. This is evident in our experience of relational "(e)pistemologies," thinking constructively, and democratic classrooms of its transformative additive potential to our collective cultural wealth. Instead of the hidden curriculum denigrating the marginalized, our educational locations are broadened to include for example the religious and the secular, popular or high culture, and "the hidden hierarchy of society."¹⁷⁴ We have seen sensitivity as an essential step to build nurturing capacities and an ethics of care into curriculum complemented by arguments for relational "(e)pistemologies," constructive thinking, and democratic community. We will find a space where binaries are removed and the productive and reproductive are brought together, as are the mind and body, and theory and pedagogy.¹⁷⁵ The classroom community will find new points of validation and potentials for inclusion. Curriculum and pedagogies that are attuned to the unique backpacks of the classroom community members can begin to do the work of crossing over the "gaps" and consequently reducing them although I acknowledge that consciousness raising and "the setting of new goal, and the integration of the new scholarship on women [people of color and different classes] into the curriculum are only the first steps in the transformation of the journey of

¹⁷⁴ Martin, *Reclaiming a Conversation*, 197.

¹⁷⁵ Frances Mayer and Mary Kay Thompson Tetreault. *The Feminist Classroom: Dynamics of Gender, Race, and Privilege*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001.

becoming educated.”¹⁷⁶ It is a move to give us the YES, this is a better way, albeit a transitory yes, that philosophy allows us to envision.

We are conversely warned that “failure to acknowledge the valuable traits, dispositions, skills, traditionally associated with reproductive processes ...will harm both sexes [races and classes] although not always in the same ways.”¹⁷⁷ Everyone suffers when an ideal of the educated person fails to give the non-dominant members of society their due or take up their contributions. Our backpacks are half-empty; our potential partial. We are cautioned too that gender, race, and class are impacting student achievement in a fundamental way and they are part of the fabric of our society. Since they are so deep-seated we must attend to them in educational theory and practice, failure to do so would be “[i]mplicitly reinforcing the very stereotypes and unequal practices [society] claims to abhor, it makes invisible the very problem it seeks to be addressing.”¹⁷⁸ And if the problem of normativity of dominant culture is generally obscured, the job of addressing the dangers of sexism, racism, and classism is relegated to those intimately affected by it, leaving non-dominant members the responsibility to solve, inform, and reform. This leaves us in an infinite loop of dominance, marginalization, and resistance rather than sensitivity to diversity for equity with the imperative of inclusion for equality.

Conclusion: On Our Way

I am hoping this text will be a journey originating with the claim that we address “achievement gaps” as they intersect with race, class, and gender with a personal preparation that develops situational sensitivity (Martin). This will require a philosophical application to

¹⁷⁶ Martin, *Reclaiming a Conversation*, 198.

¹⁷⁷ Martin, *Ideal of an Educated Person*, 109.

¹⁷⁸ Martin, *Reclaiming a Conversation*, 195.

education that embraces relational “(e)pistemologies,” constructive thinking, and goes beyond liberal democracy in our schools (Thayer-Bacon). In a process of conscious-raising (through understanding of philosophy, positionality, and pedagogical praxis) the unique contributions and needs of students will be attended to regarding issues of diversity. This will in turn create classroom communities addressing needs for equity.

As warrants for my case, I will explore my personal preparation to develop situational sensitivity by excavating the influence of philosophy of education (Chapter II), the conscious-raising power of positionality (Chapter III), and their impact on pedagogical praxis (Chapter IV). After the examination of theory infused with narrative experiences I will conclude (Chapter V) with the practical possibilities of my claim found in my contribution and the work of others. Not attending to the conscious-raising potential of philosophical theories of education and their possible iterations in our classrooms risks retaining the status quo and limits the benefits of that an on-going personal preparation for situational sensitivity might offer to educator’s in the form of equitable and inclusive pedagogy, curriculum selection, and assessment strategies. This is not be confused with a traditional recommendations chapter, as conscious-raising cannot be mandated or coerced but is rather a movement along a continuum and how this will manifest in pedagogical praxis will be unique for each practitioner. I have suggested that conscious-raising can be supported, but cannot be prescribed. What I offer is a story of how theory provides the tools to start a process of perpetual sensitizing and explores the genesis of educators theoretically equipped to (re)vision a life-long transformative hike towards educational equality.

CHAPTER II

Introduction

We do not grow absolutely, chronologically. We grow sometimes in one dimension, and not in another; unevenly. We grow partially. We are relative. We are mature in one realm, childish in another. The past, present, and future mingle and pull us backward, forward, or fix us in the present. — Anaïs Nin¹⁷⁹

This project is difficult to execute. I want to retrace my route, originating from my claim that we address “achievement gaps” as they intersect with race, class, and gender with a personal preparation that develops situational sensitivity. I am pouring over the philosophical theory that has so influenced my preparation and sensitivity. And afresh I am inspired by philosophy’s application to education that embraces relational “(e)pistemologies,” constructive thinking, and creates democratic communities in our classrooms.¹⁸⁰ But now I am to the hard graft of demonstrating this process of conscious-raising (through understanding of philosophy, positionality, and pedagogical praxis) for the sake of the unique contributions and needs of students. I must validate that this attentiveness to issues of diversity with a philosophically positional stance will create classroom communities addressing needs for equity.

Warrants for my case are from my personal preparation to develop situational sensitivity by excavating the conscious-raising power of philosophy of education and positionality. In

¹⁷⁹ Anaïs Nin and Gunther Stuhlmann. *The Diary of Anaïs Nin*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971.

¹⁸⁰ Barbara J. Thayer-Bacon, with Charles S. Bacon. *Philosophy Applied to Education: Nurturing a Democratic Community in the Classroom*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Merrill, 1998. *Transforming Critical Thinking: Thinking Constructively*. New York: Teachers College, 2000. *Relational “(e)pistemologies*.” New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003. *Beyond Liberal Democracy in Schools: the Power of Pluralism*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2008.

discussing philosophy of education and positionality in discrete chapters, starting now with the contribution of philosophy of education scholars, there is an implication that these can easily be experientially and theoretically separated. However, my involvement has been a holistic one, where philosophy and positionality have dove-tailed or even mirrored each other. In fact, it is almost painful to attempt to tease them apart. Fortunately, the philosophically positional stance I will elucidate is born of philosophies that heal the divisions that have been created as we seek to know and share what it is we have come to know. For trying to separate myself from the object, myself as knower from the known, is impossible.¹⁸¹ As I attempt to add to the body of knowledge regarding educational equity and equality via my ideas on personal preparation and situational sensitivity, the work brings *me* with it, in an uneven, partial, relative way linking the past, present, and future.¹⁸²

Seeking Philosophy

My high school headmistress was this diminutive lady who was an able administrator but by no means a charismatic speaker. When we matriculated we had various commencement ceremonies and she would always begin her dry speeches with a quote. Well, as I sit to write my 250 words I want to join Mrs. Walters in her love of using others to speak for herself. Yeats said, "Education is not the filling of a bucket but the lighting of a fire" and this blaze has led me from South Africa, through Europe, and to the foothills of the Smoky Mountains.

I completed high school in my very old, very English-public-school school in the midst of the freeing of Mandela. I voted in the first free and fair post-Apartheid election. I rode the train to school watching protest rally's that turned to riots. I trained as a teacher preparing to teach first, second, and third languages as a matter of course. I taught little children that couldn't eat or drink during the day in the month of Ramadan, children who had goat's hair necklaces from their shaman, and fair-haired children who played on lawns maintained by 'colored' gardeners while their black nannies watched over them.

And I dreamed of studying further and pursued scholarships to colleges in the United States to do so. After achieving acceptance to a small private liberal arts college, I

¹⁸¹ Thayer-Bacon, *Transforming Critical Thinking*, 5.

¹⁸² Nin

arrived in Tennessee with a suitcase and six hundred dollars and my unexpected Dutch complexion. I graduated with the fire yet unquenched. Teaching and now raising a family has not dampened it either.

The fire of education in me yearns to be stoked, so I am reading while I tend my brood, but I have a sense that there may be more yet to come for me and academia. I am fascinated by educational context and ideally see myself teaching on a tertiary level, hoping to open the eyes of student teachers to the bigger picture, so that they might become aware of the master design and are elevated from assembly line workers to informed participators, from providers of a service to promoters of the voice, agency, identity, and expression of children. I want to learn all I can about the philosophy, history, and sociology of education so that I might be a facilitator in the awakening that I have recently begun to experience as to the big issues of policy, morality, culture, and where we are going as a society with this thing called school.

I am a neophyte when it comes to the right catch phrases and theoretical knowledge bases. However, I am a person with a need for meaning, who wants to understand my role as an “instrument of alteration” (Burke). I would like to bring myself as a learner, teacher, traveler, believer, wife, and mother to your institution to glean what I can.

(Fall 2005, adapted from application essay for Cultural Studies in Education program)

I was accepted to the Cultural Studies in Education program and began my first semester of graduate school in the spring. I enrolled in two philosophy of education courses taught by my advisor, Dr. Barbara Thayer-Bacon. *Survey of Contemporary Issues in Philosophy of Education* explored “current debates within various philosophical fields of study related to education” and *Philosophy of Education* gave students understanding and experience of “description, interpretation, and critique of philosophical/theoretical arguments: truths, knowledge and values in relation to education.”¹⁸³ I was hooked. The desires of my application essay were being realized. Upon reflection I see now the theoretical genesis of my intuited personal preparation to develop situation sensitivity through the influence of philosophy of education.

The serendipity of connecting with a program and professor who fostered my learning in such an impactful way cannot be overstated. Yet to be familiar with Thayer-Bacon’s work

¹⁸³ On-line course description

relating to the application of philosophy to education through relational “(e)pistemologies,” constructive thinking, and a vision of schooling as a democratic community, I recall the impact the *Philosophy of Education* course, for example, had on me. I began learning the skills of explaining, interpreting, and critiquing philosophical arguments. Despite the course description appearing rationally focused on developing the skills of logic and not seeming overly demonstrative of relational “(e)pistemologies” or constructive thinking, the modus operandi of the instructor demonstrated these concepts in her pedagogical praxis. For example, the fact that I was a mother at the time of a toddler and small infant with limited child-care options, that was commuting almost an hour to attend classes, and that I was reentering academia as a non-traditional student was not seen as an impediment to my learning.

To be a thinker, I was not called upon to leave my maternal body or negate my domesticated context. Thayer-Bacon modeled her theory that knowledge is relationally socially constructed by embedded, embodied people by being willing to teach the course as an independent study so that I could maximize my time on campus thereby reducing my travel time and time away from my children. The epistemological openness, inclusivity, adjustability, and adaptability¹⁸⁴ was tangibly present, by the smoothing of a way for me, a housewife/elementary school teacher, to be in on the conversation with philosophers (my teacher and the texts). By taking my circumstances into account, my teacher had established a relationship with me of justice and caring,¹⁸⁵ another educationally applied philosophical concept I was experiencing through Thayer-Bacon’s practice that I would later be able to understand in theory. My

¹⁸⁴ Thayer-Bacon, *Transforming Critical Thinking*, 2.

¹⁸⁵ Thayer-Bacon, *Philosophy Applied to Education*, 79.

testimonial argument is thus comprised of my personal witness of the efficacy of these theories and their pedagogical praxis as a student and later a teacher (see Chapter IV).

The initial contribution that philosophy of education made to my personal preparation to being situationally sensitive was the arc of growth that occurred in experiencing a particular pedagogy and by being exposed to a certain curriculum.¹⁸⁶ The texts that formed the basis for my dissection of philosophical arguments also fostered my understanding of the connection between teaching, society, and theory. I will share some of these texts, *not* to simply repeat their arguments, but to show their impact on my thinking and actions. Through reading philosophical texts about what education in fact is, the role of teachers, and how pluralism and inclusion intersect with education, my journey of consciousness was nurtured.

One of the texts I explored in the class was John Dewey's philosophical essay "The Teacher and His World."¹⁸⁷ It is a call to action on the part of teachers. Dewey states that the sum of the matter is that the times are out of joint and that teachers cannot escape even if they would, some responsibility for a share in putting them right.¹⁸⁸ His reasons that warrant his arguments stem from a concern about an increase in chaos in a world of contradictions and the fact that teachers are not making informed decisions amidst the disorder. Dewey expresses a desire for a better world and recommends that teachers need to be made aware of the theories, ideologies, and political forces at work in society. He encourages educators to make choices and execute decisions based on informed choices. Drifting along is not an option. As teachers, Dewey warns that we cannot assume blindly and evade the issues before us in our society. He

¹⁸⁶ The reader is urged not to read my focus on the theories, curricula, and pedagogies that influenced me as the only way transformation can be advanced. It would be a contradiction of the very inclusivity I wish to advocate to presume that there is only one way to become aware and foster equity in educational contexts.

¹⁸⁷ John Dewey, "John Dewey's Page," *Social Frontier* 1 (January 1935): 7.

¹⁸⁸ Dewey, 7.

states that, “Teachers are unfortunately somewhat given to wanting to be told what to do, something specific. But is it not true that understanding of forces at work, of their direction and the goal to which they point, is the first prerequisite of intelligent decision and action?”¹⁸⁹ Dewey urges that we need to courageously and intelligently, consciously, know the *why* of our actions and how our actions bear on actual conditions and goals.¹⁹⁰

Let us take the issue of race as an example. Heeding Dewey’s call, present day scholars add their voices in affirmation of the need to lay hold of the past to understand how it has informed present inequities; if we are non-reflexive, we react only to the present without understanding its context.¹⁹¹ For instance a White teacher like me might ignorantly succumb to seemingly benign reactions regarding racism in the United States by saying *I can’t speak for someone else of another race so I would rather say nothing at all regarding race.*¹⁹² Or the White teacher might respond with a guilt reaction (a well-known feeling for me, as a child of South Africa’s apartheid now residing in the separated south of the United States) that immobilizes and abdicates responsibility to people of color to fix issues of racism.¹⁹³ Alternately, the ill-informed, neo-liberal, or neo-conservative White teacher might adhere to a sense of entitlement born of a belief in meritocracy and an assumed set of invisible guarantee’s that “five hundred years of white affirmative action has created.”¹⁹⁴ She may fail to perceive the “blindspot in the sense-of-entitlement reaction,” of her pulling-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps mentality that “neglects the systemic or collective nature of some of the hardships being

¹⁸⁹ Dewey, 7.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Joe Kincheloe, et al., *White Reign: Deploying Whiteness in America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 49.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 87.

discussed.”¹⁹⁵ Or else, like I have done, the White teacher might form color-blind illusions of race neutrality.¹⁹⁶ In the case of race and the White teacher Dewey’s call to action is vitally germane: “[g]iving up white privilege begins with giving up white inaction.”¹⁹⁷

My application essay indicates that I was aware that there were bigger forces at play in the realm of education, as I am sure most teachers are. However, Dewey’s article reinforced the urgency of my sense of needing to know specifically what I was doing and why I was doing it. It personally invoked a sense of shame in me if I am not seeking to be informed. This may seem unwelcome to teachers stressed by the currently hostile environment of high stakes testing and job insecurity. But, interestingly, Dewey wrote this piece at a time in history during the years after the Great Depression and prior to World War II. This time mirrors our high unemployment rates, conflicting political agendas regarding the role of the state in the nation’s economic and social spheres, and local and international instability. Teachers cannot avoid that they have a responsibility in such times. Thus an understanding of philosophical and social theory, the big picture, becomes a vital tool for present day educators. It helps equip them to effectively address “achievement gaps” and pursue the tandem need to address issues of diversity as they pertain to equity and work towards inclusion of dominant culture members and marginalized groups to establish equality in education and society at large.

The dilemma for Dewey’s argument is that teachers are not the only members of our communities responsible for our times and our future. The placing of the remedying of all political, social, economic, moral, and environmental ills at the feet of teachers threatens to overwhelm the educational system and exhaust its educators. This is not what Dewey suggests.

¹⁹⁵ Kincheloe, *White Reign*, 87.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 98.

Rather, acknowledging that society must assume responsibility for what causes students to experience inequitable education and educational outcomes, he exhorts that teachers are culpable for their own decisions and actions. This appreciation of accountability can be a starting point of the process of personal preparation to develop situation sensitivity towards issues of equity.

Empowered by a sense of shared responsibility as a teacher, I solidified a commitment to be informed regarding educational issues across the political and theoretical spectrum. This has manifest itself in the accessing of educational academic research in journals, engaging in educational theory in graduate school, attending and participating in educational conferences, and keeping abreast of educational issues in the popular media. However, Dewey's call to awareness of what a teacher should do was then further developed by theoretical material that questions the perennial question of whether a teacher qualifies as a professional or not. What became pivotal for me was less the gradations of professional or not, but the case for a body of knowledge or theory made in Broudy's philosophical argument in "Teaching – Craft or Profession."¹⁹⁸

Harry Broudy's argument is directed at such teachers who are career oriented and for whom defining their occupation is an important issue. He states that teaching should be a profession with a base of theory, extensive formal training, autonomy, and a service-client orientation. He implies that teaching needs to justify itself. By incorporating reduced numbers of theoretical courses that are higher in quality during teacher training and insisting that teacher candidates master this theory, Broudy proposes teaching may be perceived as a profession. This theoretical clarity may also reveal the roles of the teacher in a new light. Teachers would be

¹⁹⁸ Harry S. Broudy, "Teaching – Craft or Profession," *The Educational Forum* (January 1956): 175-184.

justified in seeking autonomy and more adequate reparation (gratitude, prestige, money) indicative of this professional-client relationship. Broudy uses lawyers, doctors, and surgeons as examples of professionals, who are describes as having a calling, completed formal education, utilized mental labor, and engage in a special discipline. This is juxtaposed with the craft occupation which uses manual labor and includes plumbers, carpenters, and typists in its ranks.

I had the sense that Broudy's recommendation at the time regarding theory instruction in teacher education had yet to find universal support or rejection. Instead, my experience had been that as pre-service teachers we didn't get fewer and fatter courses, but got a watered down sampling of theory of education or social foundations of education. In my teacher training at a small, liberal arts college with a competitive, well-run teacher education program, these "thin" courses were only taught in our final year. There were certainly fewer of them than the methodology classes and it seemed to me that their role was unclear.

There continue to be debates in higher education institutions regarding the usefulness and validity of theoretical classes.¹⁹⁹ This is a trickle-down effect from government policy that is seeking to improve teaching quality through high-stakes testing assessment methods, which then affects teacher education by imposing criterion that make it hard to keep theory courses a priority, favoring a narrowing of the curriculum at the expense of social foundations courses. This then affects the capacity of teachers to have rich theoretical training, thus weakening the possibility of qualifying as one of Broudy's professionals. More significantly to my argument, it

¹⁹⁹ Dan Butin, "How Social Foundations of Education Matters to Teacher Preparation: A Policy Brief," *Educational Studies*, 38, no. 3 (2005): 214-229. Dan Butin, "Is Anyone Listening? Educational Policy Perspectives on the Social Foundations of Education," *Educational Studies* 38, no. 3 (2005): 286-297. Steve Tozer and Debra Miretzky, "Social Foundations, Teaching Standards, and the Future of Teacher Preparation," in *Teaching Social Foundations of Education: Contexts, Theories, and Issues*, ed. Dan Butin (London: Routledge, 2005), 3-27. Kathleen DeMarrais, "Reflections on a Social Foundations Approach to Teacher Education," in *Teaching Social Foundations of Education: Contexts, Theories, and Issues*, ed. Dan Butin (London: Routledge, 2005), 167-188.

reduces the opportunities for teachers to explore their responsibilities regarding issues of equity in education and suppresses a thoroughfare to personal preparation towards situational sensitivity. This is not to say that personal preparation for situational sensitivity regarding issues of inequity cannot occur in other formal teacher education courses or across disciplines or in informal contexts (friendships, cross-cultural engagements, novels, movies, etc.). However, the basis for this entire project is that positional²⁰⁰ philosophical praxis-driven theories are an effective way to directly impact inequities by impacting teachers personally and in a way that is adaptable to every educational situation.

Broudy's argument confirmed that as a teacher I should take responsibility for seeking an extensive formal training with a strong theoretical component, which for me had already begun by enrolling in graduate school in a program that was predominately theoretical. Thus I have begun the work of addressing my need for a stronger theoretical background to do the necessary work Dewey had challenged me to do in knowing my role as a teacher situated in my particular place in history. And my particular place is in a country whose schoolrooms have children who are not being adequately educated and this failure runs along the fault-line of racial, class, and gender diversity. So the question becomes what to do with the differences found in our culture and reflected in our public schools.

Maxine Greene asserts in her philosophical argument "The Passions of Pluralism: Multiculturalism and the Expanding Community"²⁰¹ that the answer to the challenge of shaping a common public culture amid differences is pluralism and multiplicity. Through passions, engagements, and imagining Greene wants to find a way of referring to an expanding community

²⁰⁰ Positional in the sense of being dependent on context and attending to issues of positionality.

²⁰¹ Maxine Greene, "The Passions of Pluralism: Multiculturalism and the Expanding Community," *Educational Researcher* 22, no. 1 (Jan. - Feb., 1993): 13-18.

that is made up of diverse people speaking as a who and not what they are, whom come together in speech and action to constitute something common among themselves with openness despite distinct perspectives. She describes this as a community attending to difference, while being open to plurality, defining plurality as the shared experience of being human but humans that are each entirely unique. The author explores the challenge to confront pluralism and multiplicity in the face of incredible diversities and the need for a common public culture that is inclusive. I was drawn in by Greene's claim of pluralism and multiplicity for in it I saw a hope that through continuous and authentic interactions, it will be less likely that categorizing and distancing will occur, reducing the marginalization of 'others' and expanding inclusion.

The argument for pluralism and multiplicity is justified by Greene's assertion that our classrooms need to be inclusive. This had a lasting impact on me and is extended by the work of Thayer-Bacon who helps me see epistemological and pedagogical out-workings of the necessity for inclusion. Greene conveys that via conversation with others, education might be an invitation into the dialogue where we learn to determine the voices and their context. Greene hopes for an ongoing dialogue of people with distinct perspectives, but who are open to others. The author addresses the multiple concerns regarding pluralism, such as the discomfort that many feel regarding relativism and the subversion of authority, and the desire for a coherent heritage. Again, Thayer-Bacon's work helps me find a way to think through the problem of relativism, which I will attend to later in this chapter as I try to relieve fears of an "anything goes" society and the perceived threat to individual belief structures for the sake of inclusion.

Greene acknowledges that pluralism appears as a threat to democracy and the "American Way" to some while others have become oversensitive to multicultural concerns and political correctness. She asserts that we are not in a cultural melting pot, but a multiplicity. However, in

that multiplicity voices have been left out. To remedy the invisibility of some voices the author recommends openness and inclusiveness, not the replacing of domination with another. In attempting to draw in marginalized groups efforts should be made to move beyond defining people by the oppression or discrimination they have faced. Injustice should move us to imagine things as they could be so we go beyond where we are to a better future. Greene suggests that learning through multiple perspectives advances pluralism by building bridges and attending to human stories, resulting in healing and transformation. The challenge is to make sure that the power structures already in position do not eclipse or dominant marginalized voices. This is a difficult dance for the teacher. Power manifest in a teacher's authority needs to be utilized in a positive way to protect class community members from hearing "inflexible proclamations" that harm other community members.²⁰² Silencing and censorship seem incongruent to inclusivity, but are at time necessary. The ideal remains that as a community attentive to difference and open to the ideal of pluralism, appreciating the life affirming good of diversity is Greene's answer to the problems of conformity, individualism, and the need to maintain the integrity of voices. Again, Thayer-Bacon points out a way to deal with the issue of individual and community needs, which I will address shortly. Although we cannot predict all the possibilities or provide an objective ground for hope, by speaking about justice, caring, love and trust, Greene hopes that democratic pluralism will be championed.

Greene recommends extending the reference of "us" as far as we can through creation of classrooms that are just and caring, full of various conceptions of the good, inclusive of many voices, where human solidarity is expressed in concern for others, friendship, and demonstrate

²⁰² Barbara Applebaum, "Social Justice, Democratic Education, and the Silencing of Words the Wound." *Journal of Moral Education*, 32, no. 2, (2003): 161.

consciousness of worth and possibility. As I revisit her argument, it is like I was humming Greene's tune long before I read her words, but through the lyrics of her heady philosophizing I was able to begin to articulate and live my goals and aspirations as an educator.

Encouraged by Greene to extend the reference of "us" in just and caring classrooms, teachers such as me, are called to establish class environments that are fair, care for the students, and where differing opinions²⁰³ and values are elicited, explored, and encouraged. Teachers would need to provide opportunities for dialogue involving as many voices as possible, such as living people, historical figures, or literary characters, and create situations or act on situations that cause students to engage in exchange of ideas. Teachers would need to establish codes of conduct in such dialogues, modeling and encouraging concern for others and consciousness of worth. This may take the form of mentoring, facilitating peer groups, social activism, community service, and school programs. Community members would need to support educative endeavors that support pluralism, such as community round-tables, cultural awareness programs, neighborhood forums, and settings designed to encourage dialogue. Cultural awareness would need to be increased and fostered on the commonalities and differences in cultural groups and encourage diversity. Multicultural focuses in communities, schools, and government would need to be directed towards inclusion. Schools would need to demonstrate inclusiveness in hiring, encourage authentic interactions with diverse students through caring classrooms, and educate regarding culture with the goal to break down barriers and dismantle stereotypes. The tune of theory becomes the song of action.

²⁰³ Again I refer to Barbara Applebaum's "Social Justice, Democratic Education, and the Silencing of Words that Wound." which justifies the censorship of certain voices that are irrationally and inflexibly hateful. Although I would argue that civil discourse in a democratic classroom can allow for expression of opinions that may be antithetical to those of others.

These few examples of texts that have impacted me in my initial interaction with philosophy of education start a chain of evidence as to the need for teachers to experience the same. Dewey, Broudy, and Greene enhanced my process of conscious-raising regarding the unique contributions and needs of students regarding issues of diversity. The course texts that were used to develop the skills of explication and critique simultaneously covered themes that explored and spoke to the application of philosophy to education and pointed the way towards the need for democratic communities of learning in our schools. However, the application of the call to action through knowledge of theory in the light of pluralism, diversity, and inclusion bring challenges that I have mentioned: the problem of relativity and the issue of the conflict between the needs of the individual and the needs of the community. To address these concepts, I need to precede qualified relativism and the democratic classroom with the vital issue of epistemology (the philosophical theory that deals with how it is we know or understand and the quintessence and grounds of knowledge) as it impacts diversity and inclusion.

Call for Inclusive Ways of Knowing

Let me return to my example of racism inherent in our schools and society in the United States to show other voices calling for a better way of doing epistemology in the light of diversity and the imperative of inclusion. If Whiteness is to be exposed to those, like me, who professed to be color-blind and are ignorant regarding the power of Whiteness to oppress and dominate, we would need to...

...view relational constructs from the side of the Other, to see the intersubjective space that binds subject to subject through language. This process produces a blank space to allow for new interpretation, thinking and theory that students may not have conceived

previously. Through a call to the “quiet other,” a revelation of socially constructed histories is possible.²⁰⁴

By a process of critiquing and naming what has been seen as normative (Whiteness, maleness, and Euro-western ways of knowing) and exposing its oppressive capacity to nullify and erode difference we can reveal the hidden curricula of normalizing structures in our society. In this space we can “bring to light and teach subjugated histories.”²⁰⁵ Here the work of equity is done to stimulate equality in our schools.

A further example that speaks to both race and colonization is the richness that indigenous ways of knowing bring to knowledge bases. The voice of a north Australian Aborigine causes me think through what I do as teacher:

What is white man’s education all about? Education for what? To destroy my people? To destroy the land? Our education, Aboriginal education, was for survival, for getting along with each other and all the creatures. Theirs was to try make us be like them.²⁰⁶

This Aboriginal voice is different to “the Western worldview wherein lies Truth and Reason and Goodness, the undergirding of white ideology.”²⁰⁷ This alternative view that I must be careful not to essentialize challenges me to a “never-ending process of evaluation”²⁰⁸ of my assumptions of knowing and learning that are compartmentalized rather than related; positivistic at the expense of the spiritual; linear rather than cyclic; and focused on doing rather than being.²⁰⁹ I need to explore my own conceptions of authority, work, and economics which are all directly related to the educational process. I need to imagine an emphasis in relationship that values the

²⁰⁴ Kincheloe, *White Reign*, 119.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 117.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 105.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 106-120.

shared experience of being and working together rather than just seeing relationships as a means to an end.²¹⁰

The voices of indigenous North Americans also draw out the need to value multiple ways of knowing; not in essentialized ways, but rather in the spirit of inclusion so that the multiple contributions add to our communal wealth of knowledge. Native Americans have knowledge systems that include strong senses of community, relationality, “notions of responsibility to self and community,” “a rootedness in place,” and a responsible use of power.²¹¹ These contributions open up ways of knowing that emphasize the big picture and seek to make meaning, which is different than a way of making knowledge that is the sum of smaller fragments.²¹² This is clearly different from the way curriculums and scopes of learning have been in my teaching experience. Added to which, with the memorization of facts and a contracted set of specific concepts and rules in our compartmentalized subjects we teach at school is stridently discordant with a relational worldview “in which connections and interrelations between living beings and the natural world are central to understanding and living in the world.”²¹³

I have come to see knowledge as ideological and recognize that existential reality is not the product of something transcendental. This removes the sense of immutability and replaces it with possibility. As Freire states, “just as objective social reality exists not by chance, but as the product of human action, so it is not transformed by chance. If humankind produce social reality, then transforming that reality is an historical task, a task for humanity.”²¹⁴ Our schooling has

²¹⁰ Kincheloe, *White Reign*, 111.

²¹¹ Angelina Castagno and Brian Brayboy, “Culturally Responsive Schooling for Indigenous Youth: A Review of the Literature,” *Review of Educational Research*, 78, no.4 (December 2008), 951.

²¹² Castagno and Brayboy, 951.

²¹³ Ibid., 952.

²¹⁴ Paulo Friere, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum Books, 1993), 33.

most often imparted one sort of knowledge and then has failed to acknowledge its presence just as Whiteness is a normative value we do not perceive. However, I now know it is there. I see it in the favoring of scientific, fact-based approaches to truth; the focus on people as separate from their environment; the compartmentalization of our lives; the “use of linear time frames and quantifiable concepts,” the “emphasis on function and transactions rather than on being and interactions,” the “manipulation of the environment, secular, mechanistic, and impersonal economic systems,” and the placement of authority in bureaucratic processes rather than “through kinship loyalties, acts of generosity, intelligence or other personal attributes.”²¹⁵ How can transformation be advanced? Many suggest a multicultural curriculum, but I propose that in addition to this is the “missing piece that is needed in classroom debate and dialogue...[the] exploration of positionality.”²¹⁶ I will discuss positionality and multiculturalism in depth in Chapter III.

Multicultural scholar, James A. Banks makes the connection of knowledge and positionality. He states that all knowledge reveals the values and interests of those who are constructing it, thus he notes three camps of knowledge-makers (traditional Eurowestern, multicultural, and Afrocentric) who conceive of knowledge differently as they reflect their social and political embodiments and embeddedness. I have had contact with all three of these approaches. As Banks exposes, the dominance of a focus on Eurowestern civilization was the curriculum of my formative schooling and undergraduate degrees. Entering a graduate program that was imbued with a multicultural focus I was then exposed to the ideas that our schools and universities marginalize others based on race, class, and gender and that corrective action should

²¹⁵ Kincheloe, *White Reign*, 117.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 119.

be taken to include marginalized voices into our epistemologies, curriculums, and pedagogies. Banks also describes the Afrocentric focus on centering African culture and history in the curriculum for the benefit of African American students, which I have been exposed to through course work. Banks urges that knowledge as it relates to our cultural diversity should be explicitly taught.²¹⁷ And I have been fortunate to have experienced such an enlightening education through multicultural coursework and other theoretical fields such as philosophy, sociology, and history of education.

Banks' handling of Eurowestern traditionalism, multiculturalism and Afrocentrism forms another link in my chain of the need for philosophy's offerings, particularly in the realm of epistemology. These three positions present themselves as ways of understanding knowledge. Banks suggests that we need to identify these different types of knowledge and the way they "reflect particular values, assumptions, perspectives, and ideological positions," to help us see all types of knowledge.²¹⁸ These have contributed to my understanding of the debates about knowledge construction and helped me see what my own position is. And I am informed by Banks, who echoes Friere, that there is a transformative power in connecting our understanding of knowledge and its construction to a social commitment to action.²¹⁹ Regarding positionality, like Thayer-Bacon, Banks acknowledges that we (which I extend to include teachers, researchers, and scholars) need to identify our positions and normative assumptions; we cannot create knowledge that is not influenced by our positionality. Thus, "[t]he ethnic and cultural experiences of the knower are also epistemologically significant because these factors also

²¹⁷ James A. Banks, "The Canon Debate, Knowledge Construction, and Multicultural Education," *Educational Researcher* 22, no. 4 (1993), 4.

²¹⁸ Banks, 5.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

influence knowledge construction, use, and interpretation in U.S. society.”²²⁰ Not only are they influential, but they impact whether certain ways of knowing will be marginalized, will cause victimization, will leave biases unchallenged, or will perpetuate false dogmas such as difference being associated with deviance and deficit.²²¹

Banks suggests there are five types of knowledge (personal/cultural, popular, mainstream academic, transformative academic, and school), awareness of which fosters a greater understanding of “the perspectives of different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups” as well as helping me develop my own perspectives of issues and events. The contestation of knowledge construction reveals the power to emancipate or dominate in our schools and this necessitates the need for personal awareness in teachers of these issues. The theoretical framework Banks provides us with offers a way to connect theory to practice to pursue equity through inclusion. For if we engage in personal preparation for situation sensitivity, Banks’ types of knowledge in turn create awareness that translates into curricular and pedagogical praxis. For example, his personal/cultural knowledge refers to the ways we construct knowledge derived from personal experiences in our families and communities. This powerfully impacts teaching when we see that many students from collectivist societies will perceive the individualistic practices of school life as they contrast with the values of their families and cultural communities. Banks points to research that shows that these students “believe that if they master the knowledge taught in the schools they will violate fictive kinship norms and run the risk of ‘acting White.’”²²² This is a vital concept to grasp if we are to make schools places where learning positively benefits

²²⁰ Banks, 6.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid., 7.

students and does not cause fractures between the versions of history, ways of making knowledge, behaviors, and communication methods of student's schools and their kin.

Consciousness of personal/cultural knowledge helps teachers heal the schism that causes a student to experience schools as “alienating and inconsistent with their cultural experiences, hopes, dreams, and struggles.”²²³ Awareness then translates to a valuing of personal and cultural knowledge that can act as a means to be inclusive. This balances school knowledge that often reinforces the dominant social, economic, and power arrangements within society. We need to find spaces for objectivity to be contested and subjectivity acknowledged. Banks encourages teachers to bring transformative knowledge and perspectives to their classrooms to challenge the dominant discourses and expand the knowledge base so that knowledge can bring about positive change where needed.²²⁴ This sort of positive change is envisaged within a democratic classroom, where students understand that multiple perspectives are welcome and that they will

acquire the skills and abilities they need to examine conflicting knowledge claims and perspectives. Students must become critical consumers of knowledge as well as knowledge producers if they are to acquire understandings and skills needed to function in the complex and diverse world...²²⁵

The focus on an “overinvestment in the center”²²⁶ (which should be understood in the context of documented historical evidence of practices that systemically deny targeted youth the education they too deserve) of our knowledge base produces marginalization of other ways of knowing and consequently the domination or oppression of others that creates “achievement gaps” or rather “opportunity gaps.” The counter-weight to this marginalization is what I think we can see happen in Thayer-Bacon's democratic communities in classrooms that support relational

²²³ Banks, 8.

²²⁴ Ibid., 9, 11.

²²⁵ Ibid., 12.

²²⁶ Kincheloe, *White Reign*, 44.

(e)pistemologies and a constructive thinking approach. This is a learning space that includes multiple ways of knowing and making knowledge.

Inclusive Ways of Knowing

Thayer-Bacon explains that teachers need to attend to epistemology because “what we believe concerning how students obtain knowledge affects how we teach them” and consequently “[teachers] teach certain ways, not realizing that how they teach is based on certain assumptions about how students learn and what counts as knowledge.”²²⁷ My argument for a personal preparation steeped in positional philosophical theory and linked to practice thus finds a theoretical home in Thayer-Bacon’s work Relational “(e)pistemologies”. The author calls educators to “understand what theories of knowledge are and how they translate into classroom settings” resulting in “conscious choices in how they teach, how they represent knowledge, and how they assess what their students know, based on their epistemological beliefs.”²²⁸ Philosophical offerings in the form of epistemological theories connect directly to the idea of positionality. For as Thayer-Bacon notes, the way we perceive students shapes our behaviors and decisions. Consequently we need to be aware of how we think knowledge is constructed to be overtly conscious of our pedagogical moves as they enhance, eclipse, or encroach on student modes of knowledge construction.

The problem with traditional epistemology that Thayer-Bacon points out is that it seeks to validate what knowledge is. So it is a sort of filtering system that only allows what is valid, logical, and right to pass through. This flies in the face of ideas of inclusion, plurality, and equality. It risks removing the “dross” of context, emotion, imagination, the everyday. Instead

²²⁷ Thayer-Bacon, *Philosophy Applied to Education*, 37.

²²⁸ Ibid.

acts to retain only what can be logically true for every context or not at all. The filtered truth, goodness, and beauty that remain after the separation process are now transcendental markers of what is real and known. However, it has been my experience that the transformative power of philosophy occurs when it is placed *within* the lived contexts of teachers and students.

Otherwise, educators will fail to see its efficacy in enhancing their practice and it will be relegated to metaphysical musings that never step foot inside a real teacher's classroom.

Philosophy is extended by Thayer-Bacon beyond the role of filtration system or validator of what is known to that of a guide. Philosophy's epistemology revised by Thayer-Bacon can influence change intelligently. It has the capability to question what has become normative and assumed to be real or true.²²⁹ And through this process traditional epistemology is changed from being transcendently omniscient and exclusive to something contextually focused and relationally inclusive.

Thayer-Bacon changes the filter to a net, drawing in through her insistence that we are fallible knowers who revise what we know continually based on our socially constructed sense of what is real. This process of constant revision requires continuous reflection and adaptation through openness and inclusion of other knowers and ways of knowing. Accepting that our criteria and standards are created by humans and are consequently fallible, we are now able to adjust our way of determining what knowledge is and accordingly what is true, good, and beautiful. This is imperative for a classroom that seeks to positively attend to diversity and seeks to cast the net of inclusion.

²²⁹ Thayer-Bacon, *Relational "(e)pistemologies*, 2.

Inclusive Ways to Making Knowledge

Thayer-Bacon's relational (e)pistemologies offer an alternative theory of knowledge, one that seeks to be "open and inclusive, as it attempts to be self-conscious, and reflective, adjustable, and adaptable, as people gain further understanding."²³⁰ Her epistemology views knowledge as "socially constructed by embedded and embodied people who are in relation with each other."²³¹ Perceiving the disjoint between traditional Euro-western, male dominated ways of knowledge that value abstract and logical thinking, Thayer-Bacon wishes to include what has been relegated to women and other marginalized groups such as indigenous people. She argues we also make knowledge in ways that are intuitive, imaginative, and emotional. In her text Transforming Critical Thinking she broadens the concept of critical thinking (reiterating the role of a filter) to what she calls constructive thinking (that again acts as a net of inclusion). Thus epistemic communities of knowers are imagined as including teachers and students embodying every sort of difference in a process of social construction of knowledge using rationality enhanced by personal voice, intuition, imagination and emotional feelings. This is possible within the ideal of a democratic community in a classroom that fosters caring relationships with "honest, sincere, respectful communication" amongst its "imaginative thinkers/feelers/intuiters who are able to appreciate and use the knowledge that they have had the opportunity to [create]."²³²

As we have seen in Thayer-Bacon's laying out of relational (e)pistemologies, transcendental epistemological perspectives and claims of truth are challenged. We will see shortly how she deals from a pragmatic view with truths as warranted assertabilities. From a

²³⁰ Thayer-Bacon, *Transforming Critical Thinking*, 2.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid., 13.

point of negotiation to create knowledge we are able to expand the net of inclusion, through deconstructing the binaries of mind/body and subjects/objects. So doing, the door is opened to, for instance, communitarian ways of knowing, gendered ways of knowing, and positioning the knower in a subjective stance that relinquishes the illusion of objectivity. Our positionality embeds and embodies us in ways that are constantly changing and cause us to shy away from essentializing who we or others are. Now we are in a community of knowers that values holistic and relational ways of knowing – again, including non-Eurowestern, non-male, and non-White conceptualizations. We understand that we are in a conversation with each other and our knowledge is fallible and flexible. Through understanding all the ways we make knowledge our classrooms become places that value and support multiple ways of learning and thinking. Constructive thinking provides the inclusive way of making knowledge – using reason, voice, imagination, intuition, and emotion. It fosters the pluralistic, inclusive society I wish to promote for the sake of equity for diverse students and the inclusion of dominant community members in a realization of equality that builds “coalitions across differences.”²³³

Navigating Philosophical Challenges

I return finally to challenges of relativity and the question of individual versus community rights. In terms of relativism: do pluralism and inclusion in light of diversity mean that everything is then true, good, and beautiful? I contend that we do not have to tumble down the slippery slope of relativism towards anarchy simply because we live in a multicultural society that needs to correct its inequalities through inclusion and equity. Rather, Thayer-Bacon offers us a qualified relativism that is nourished by the ideas of Dewey’s warranted assertability and

²³³ Thayer-Bacon, *Transforming Critical Thinking*, 172.

James' satisfactory truths.²³⁴ She argues that her “(e)pistemological fallibilism (belief in the impossibility that knowledge is certain) entails (e)pistemological pluralism (belief in the impossibility of attaining knowledge that is universal),” but contends that “democratic communities always-in-the-making protect us from fears of vulgar relativism, as we openly argue and discuss and debate our concerns within our own communities as well as among other communities....”²³⁵ So truths are socially negotiated to come to an agreement that is open to revision.

Knowledge, and by implication truth, goodness, and beauty, are also socially constructed, social in that they are created by us, members of society. Like witnesses of the same event, we fallibly make knowledge that is embodied and embedded in contexts and relationships that produce different perspectives. Acknowledgement of our embeddedness and embodiedness makes our knowledge-making relationships rich with our contributions. We are able to see the impact of knowledge, ourselves, others, and our contexts on our understanding of what knowledge is and how it is constructed and conveyed. These perspectives will always be “partial and flawed”²³⁶ so we need each other to connect, critique, and confirm knowledge. This is the constructive aspect of socially constructed reality.

Qualified relativism requires of me that I relinquish absolutes for what we are able to see now as true, good, and beautiful, but might need to revise based on new inquiry or additional perspectives. I adhere to a philosophy that is not transcendently omniscient, but is rather doing the work of enlarging our thinking²³⁷ and is a tool for educators to understand the *why* of

²³⁴ Thayer-Bacon, *Relational “(e)pistemologies*, 9.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

²³⁶ Thayer-Bacon, *Philosophy Applied to Education*, 40.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

education through the exploration of the aims of education, the *why* of practice, and the *why* that forms a critique and the license to “envision things how they should be ideally.”²³⁸ This philosophical approach, as I have just explained, is based on a social constructed view of reality. Nevertheless, within my own positionality there is an Absolute. I believe in God, His Truth, His Goodness, and His Beauty. I believe God not to be the construction of humankind, but a transcendental and omniscient source of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty.

However, I do not discount the relational aspect of this Truth, Goodness, and Beauty; I simply retain the fallibility of the interaction for myself. Thus, the object is Absolute and Real, but my knowledge relationship is open to inquiry and critique. The daily living out of my relationship with God is socially constructed on my part. The relationship between fellow-believers nurtures, and at times hampers, our knowledge of God, based on our fallibility and the adaptation and adjustment of our absolutes and perceptions of reality. Therefore even belief in Absolutes of God’s Truth, Goodness, Beauty based on a transcendental Reality does not preclude the usefulness of the philosophical manifestation of relational (e)pistemologies. I am still capable of enlarged thinking and relinquishing my socially constructed absolutes, with the capacity to be nurtured in my “ability to think, speak, read, write, [and] even relate”²³⁹ and the ability to encourage others to do likewise. This demonstrates the ability of relational (e)pistemologies to handle questions of relativism, even for an individual with a definitive belief system, and opens the door to epistemological inclusion within the classroom community. The challenge then becomes: how can individuals with unique embodiments and embeddedness and

²³⁸ Thayer-Bacon, *Philosophy Applied to Education*, 1.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

differing values and opinions be respected while doing justice to the democratic community in the classroom?

Again Thayer-Bacon helps us envisage a way to be inclusive. As educators the most likely location of our attempting to foster inclusion for the sake of equity is in our classrooms. These classrooms have members that may or may not willingly be there, but because of their shared experience of being in the same space, for the same time, with the same people creates a community. Simply being together, even if it were voluntary isn't enough to do the work of inclusion. This requires classrooms that intentionally value and nurture students of every gender, race, and class while challenging racist, classist, and sexist opinions and values. To help advance sensitivity to diversity for equity with the imperative of inclusion for equality Thayer-Bacon helps us through envisioning a democratic community in the classroom.

In her text Philosophy Applied to Education, Thayer-Bacon examines two kinds of communities; one is individualistic and the other social constructivist. Of her inquiry with Charles Bacon, she writes,

...we found the individualistic models focus on the individual at the expense of the group, whereas the social constructivist models tend to emphasize the group at the expense of the individual. We suggested that the democratic community is a model that does justice to both the individual and the group by focusing on the interconnected, interdependent, interactive relationship that exists between the self and the community.²⁴⁰

This democratic community perspective is established through the high quality relationships of its members. These relationships are vitally coupled with developing caring and reason to help the students and teacher navigate how do deal with agreements and disagreements; honoring the individual's right but negotiating the community's needs and safety; encouraging involvement

²⁴⁰ Thayer-Bacon, *Philosophy Applied to Education*, 31.

while discouraging domination; and fostering the freedom to participate or not.²⁴¹ As Nel Noddings writes, “a relational approach avoids the most troubling errors of both individualism and communitarianism.” She goes on to say that,

Thayer-Bacon challenges us to seek connection across both similarity and difference. Some relational approaches obliterate difference by assimilating both parties into a “oneness” of some sort, but a deeply relational account recognizes that those beings we call “individuals” emerge from relations and enter (never fully formed) new relations in which differences will always be present....This suggests a continuing need to connect and re-connect, and this is so in our pursuit of knowledge and truth as well as satisfying social relations.²⁴²

It is in this relational space that students and teachers can live out the importance of equality and fairness as they learn “how to get along with and help others and to view oneself as an important, responsible, contributing member of a larger group, community, or society.”²⁴³ This thinking shows us that individuals need communities and communities need individuals. By caring for the individuals, the individuals care for their communities.²⁴⁴

Caring is not just compassion or kind consideration; in a philosophical handling informed by the work of Nel Noddings, caring is a form of ethics that guides the appropriate behavior for the individual and the community. Thayer-Bacon helps us see how we make ethical decisions constantly as teachers, especially in the realm of classroom management.²⁴⁵ These decisions about the “rules” of conduct in our classroom will look different if inclusion is to be of primary importance. Through reading Thayer-Bacon’s philosophical handling of ethics in the classroom I have come to see that another both/and situation is created. Instead of determining “right” behavior through only a sense of justice (universal impartial fairness), it is coupled with an ethic

²⁴¹ Ibid., 27.

²⁴² Nel Noddings, “Forward,” in Thayer-Bacon’s *Relational (e)pistemologies*, ix.

²⁴³ Thayer-Bacon, *Philosophy Applied to Education*, 27.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 32.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 79.

of care. Caring attends to the individual, but within the context of relationships imbued with “dialogue, conversation, and mutual understanding.”²⁴⁶ Interpersonal reasoning in the context of relationships helps the individual and the community practice engaged caring.

Based on this theoretical approach I have personally engaged in the risky work of not simply relying on “[p]rincipled models of justice and virtue” to determine “objective” rules to be upheld in every situation.²⁴⁷ I work to know my students and develop relationships with them by being approachable. I strive to make their learning applicable not arbitrary. I offer choices and seek students input. And I take their personal situations into account when considering issues like homework being late, needing to miss a class, and preferring to remain quiet during discussions. Icebreakers, chances to share about our lives, and engaging generous listening are classroom practices that I have intuitively done to build community, but Thayer-Bacon’s personal pedagogy and theoretically elucidation of the ethic of care helps demonstrate the greater import of these strategies.²⁴⁸ It is essential for a democratic community that “students share and listen attentively, with sympathy, openness and caring.”²⁴⁹ We need to do this to create knowledge together, but also to create a space where constructive thinking can occur and critique is possible so that our thinking can be enlarged. The aim is not consensus, but trying to understand each other.²⁵⁰

In the face of pluralism and inclusion we need a way of valuing the individual and the community that considers needs for generalized principles of ethics while attending to the

²⁴⁶ Thayer-Bacon, *Philosophy Applied to Education*, 111.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 113.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 115.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

specific contexts and differences of student “gifts and talents as well as needs and limitations.”²⁵¹ Thus this ethical approach allows for principles and rules to be balanced with “unique differences that exist in particular situations.”²⁵² I see this balanced approach reflected in my own faith community, where the Bible teaches that God has shown humankind what is good, “[a]nd what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”²⁵³ Justice and care (manifest in mercy and humility) work together as we seek to create a learning environment that is equitable when it comes to the needs of the individual *and* fosters equality for the community.

Just as we create knowledge from our unique individual perspectives in a relational process of social construction, so too the democratic model that harnesses justice and caring supports and protects the contributions of all members so that the community may thrive. Dewey, Broudy, and Greene would be proud! Here is a classroom where a teacher can affect her times, acting based on theory, to shape a multifarious and inclusive democratic community amid differences.

Conclusion

This chapter reveals the efficacy of philosophical scholarship as a means to “advance educational practice.”²⁵⁴ I share my experiences in order to encourage similar, yet unique, processes of personal preparation for sensitivity to equity in other educators believing in the transformative work of philosophy of education theory through suggesting the embracing of relational “(e)pistemologies” and fostering constructive thinking in democratic learning

²⁵¹Thayer-Bacon, *Philosophy Applied to Education*, 119.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Micah 6:8

²⁵⁴ Barbara Thayer-Bacon and Diana Moyer, *Philosophical and Historical Research*, 141.

communities. Philosophically urged to heed the call to be informed (Dewey) by a body of theory (Broudy) for the sake of a pluralistic inclusive education (Greene), my personal preparation has consequently been impacted by the realms of epistemology and ethics. Navigating the challenges of relativity and the needs of the individual and the needs of the community, the epistemological and ethical approach I have experienced helps address the problem of an “achievement gap” in our public schools. By valuing diversity and working towards inclusion, students are drawn in by an educational approach that appreciates different ways of knowing and making knowledge. The epistemological and ethical methodologies I have now assumed as an educator insist that I attend to context. This leads me to the area of positionality as it relates to personal preparation for situation sensitivity. In Chapter III I will address the need to attend to issues of explicit positionality. I will again trace its theoretical genesis in my personal preparation and demonstrate how it influences situational sensitivity towards diversity and inclusion.

CHAPTER III

Introduction

*We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are. — Anaïs Nin*²⁵⁵

Having related the potential of certain philosophical theories to advance sensitivity to equitable educational practice within processes of personal preparation,²⁵⁶ I now turn to positionality. I remind the reader that I take up positionality as the concept that our race, class, and gender are “markers of relational positions rather than essential qualities.”²⁵⁷ Positionality influences and affects our relationships with our contexts and others.²⁵⁸ Our positionality informs our “goals, knowledge, beliefs, strategies, and other normative frames of reference”²⁵⁹ as educational researchers and practitioners. Thus “[w]e don't see things as they are, we see them as we are.”²⁶⁰

Like philosophy of education theory, positionality is laden with transformative potential to address the problem of an “achievement gap” drawn along lines of race, class, and gender in our public schools. The philosophy of education theory I have shared (see Chapter II) envisages pluralistic ways of being in a democratic learning community that has the potential to draw

²⁵⁵ Anaïs Nin and Gunther Stuhlmann. *The Diary of Anaïs Nin*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971.

²⁵⁶ Geneva Gay, *Becoming Multicultural Educators: Personal Journey Toward Professional Agency* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 4.

²⁵⁷ Mary Kay Thompson Tetreault, “Classrooms for Diversity: Rethinking Curriculum and Pedagogy” in *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives* (2nd ed.) ed. J.A. Banks and C.A.M. Banks (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1993), 139.

²⁵⁸ Linda Alcoff, “Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory,” *Signs* 13 (March 1988): 405-436. Frances Mayer and Mary Kay Thompson Tetreault. *The Feminist Classroom: Dynamics of Gender, Race, and Privilege*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 164.

²⁵⁹ Marsha Rehm and Barbara Allison, “Positionality in Teaching Culturally Diverse Students: Implications for Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher Education Programs,” *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal* 34, no. 3 (March 2006): 261.

²⁶⁰ Nin.

students into an educational process that appreciates different ways of knowing by valuing diversity and working towards inclusion. Positionality works to make diversity and inclusion explicit opening the door to this kind of knowledge-making community. Like the lacing of fingers in a posture of prayer, philosophy and positionality (in the way that I am applying them) work to elevate our consciousnesses. I will trace positionality's theoretical genesis in my personal preparation and demonstrate how it influences situational sensitivity towards diversity and inclusion. The origins of my personal preparation can be seen in my critical engagement with philosophical and multicultural theory and qualitative research methodologies. I will make a start with multicultural theory and its conscious-raising potential amongst educators.

Personal Preparation and Positionality

I know I am different. I am in a process of personal preparation and transformation regarding issues of equity and equality. Exposure to and engagement with philosophy of education, exploration of positionality, and exposure to multicultural theory, has catalyzed a pedagogical praxis that reflects the on-going revolution in my personhood and practice as an educator. Prominent multicultural education and curriculum theorist Geneva Gay's 2003 work Becoming Multicultural Educators offers similar evolutionary stories to the one I represent throughout this text of educators who are committed to the same goal of equity, opportunity, and achievement of targeted students.²⁶¹

Gay's text reflects the process of conscious-raising I have experienced, what she describes as "becoming critically conscious of one's own knowledge, attitudes, and skills....and

²⁶¹ Gay, *Becoming Multicultural Educators*, xi.

the process of how these evolve.”²⁶² Her text acts as an example of what I am attempting to articulate for myself: a facilitation of “the development of self-consciousness for teachers”²⁶³ regarding issues of equity and equality. The teachers in the Gay text are being informed by multicultural education theory and share narratives that are “personal, professional, and autobiographical”²⁶⁴ of their emergence as multicultural educators to stimulate conversation about teaching diverse students. A strategy I am to a degree emulating in this text. Gay offers the hope that “[a]s the discourse prompted by our collective stories expands, our individual competencies for multicultural teaching will be enriched and enabled even more, and more children will be better served in our schools.”²⁶⁵

I take up Gay’s work to inform my inquiry into preparation for conscious-raising because she wishes to make explicit the connection between theory and practice. I have taught without making informed critical choices about my pedagogy. I wasn’t thinking theoretically about teaching, I was just doing it. My experience resonates with Gay’s articulation that this preparation is a journey, not a destination.²⁶⁶ I am very much on a journey of reflection regarding theory and experimentation with pedagogy that reflects my on-going transformation. Gay also offers a space for novice scholars and relatively young educators, such as myself, to make contributions because all stages of the journey are valued, especially those of that tell of how growth was catalyzed.

Since I do not assume such a thing as a one-size fits all solution to changing the trajectory of current efforts to reduce “achievement gaps” in the United States and (re)visioning a

²⁶² Gay, *Becoming Multicultural Educators*, xi.

²⁶³ Ibid., xii.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 2.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 14.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 2.

transformation of our school settings, I take up Gay's focus on *personal* preparation²⁶⁷. It has the quality of being uniquely transformative that gives the hope that sharing stories of "how individuals are engaging with the challenge of personal growth...[will] illustrate the dynamic, complex, and developmental nature of the process."²⁶⁸ My transformation process regarding issues of equity and equality reflects a conviction I share with Gay that at "the heart of this personal becoming is self-knowledge."²⁶⁹ This belief is particularly evident in Gay's focus on the way *who* we are determines *how* we teach and her recognition that multicultural teaching is a "personal and professional process,"²⁷⁰ which confirms for me the need to carefully consider positionality.

Gay clarifies for me my own personal preparation, as I engage in an individual process of conscious-raising and embark on my own project of wishing to encourage teachers in being "reflective and critically conscious"²⁷¹ regarding issues of equity and equality. Gay utilizes "self-studies and personalized reporting of teachers," referred to as "reflection, narratives, storied research, and autobiography,"²⁷² as a means to explore the intersections of our positionality and practice. Her work claims the legitimate use of narratives as a pedagogical tool in educational research, theory, and practice.²⁷³ Thus my text makes explicit my experiences as I try to make

²⁶⁷ Gay, *Becoming Multicultural Educators*, 4.

²⁶⁸ Gay, *Becoming Multicultural Educators*, 4. Sonia Nieto, *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education* (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1992), 273.

²⁶⁹ Gay, *Becoming Multicultural Educators*, 4.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Gay, *Becoming Multicultural Educators*, 4. This work is not limited to multicultural scholars of course. Feminist scholars Maher and Tetrault for example do a similar process of autobiographical work to make their personal positions and research commitments explicit which in turn informed and transformed their practice (narratives and vignettes became central, rather than the comparative analysis they envisaged, in The Feminist Classroom project).

sense of them and determine their significance and I attempt to interpret “broader...educational messages that are embedded in [my] personal stories.”²⁷⁴

In explaining the process of examining a “personal and professional process” (personal preparation) at the “intersections of person and performance”²⁷⁵ (positionality), Gay is informed by Sonia Nieto’s texts *The Light in Their Eyes* (1999, 2010) and *Affirming Diversity* (1992, 2000). Nieto expresses that “student learning is not simply a personal discovery, but also a social act; it is also deeply connected with the beliefs and daily practices of teachers.”²⁷⁶ Nieto speaks to the transformative process that is a “personal awakening and call to action,”²⁷⁷ what I am framing as a situational sensitivity that results in pedagogical praxis.²⁷⁸ This transformation has its genesis in the individual and these stories of the origins and consequences of transformation can in turn inform other educators.²⁷⁹ Nieto asserts that “the reflections of teachers can have a profound impact on educational theory and practice,” affirming Gay’s (and my own) claim to the value of this sort of project.²⁸⁰ Nieto writes regarding transformation,

I have participated with teachers in reflecting and learning about the power and the limits of education. With teachers I have considered the tremendous chasm that exists between the rhetoric of equality and the reality of oppression. I have listened as they have described fundamental changes they have made in their beliefs, or their teaching, or both. And I have continued my own transformation as a teacher and a learner... It is these experiences that have convinced me that unless and until teachers undergo a personal transformation, little will change in our schools.²⁸¹

²⁷⁴ Gay, *Becoming Multicultural Educators*, 9.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 4.

²⁷⁶ Sonia Nieto. *The Light in Their Eyes: Creating Multicultural Learning Communities* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2010), 27.

²⁷⁷ Nieto, *Light in Their Eyes*, xviii.

²⁷⁸ I remind the reader that the term sensitivity here does not simply mean well-meaning awareness or empathy; it is consciousness that precedes informed action in the cause of equity. My concept of situational sensitivity is explained in Chapter I and describes a strategy that is constantly looking for patterns of discrimination, their effects, and possible solutions.

²⁷⁹ Nieto, *Light in Their Eyes*, 26.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 27.

Nieto extends this transformative process beyond individual lives of teachers and connects it to the broader societal context.²⁸² This has been a profound paradigm shift for me. I have moved on from an “uncritical hope”²⁸³ in education that is ignorant of or denies “the destructive effects of deep-seated inequities in society and schools” and thereby holds students and their families wholly accountable for educational failure.²⁸⁴ Nieto argues for a critical hope, modeling the use of her personal story from novice, naïve teacher to an outlook of hope with critique.²⁸⁵ She sees the potential for good and harm embodied by each educator and maintains that the sharing of stories of educator evolution within the tension of individual action interacting with societal conditions such as racial, class, gender, religious, epistemological, and ontological oppression and discrimination is useful for personal and collective transformation.²⁸⁶ Transformation can occur in the spaces of examining our identities (what I am calling positionality), becoming students of our students, identifying with our students, becoming multicultural, challenging racism and other biases, and finally in joining with others with the same critical hope.²⁸⁷ At times, this latter engagement may be with the narratives of others, thus the value of the work of scholars like Gay and Nieto who share stories of transformation, and by extension, my own project.

Gay draws on Nieto’s contention that “*becoming a multicultural teacher...first means becoming a multicultural person*” [emphasis in original].²⁸⁸ Nieto tells us this means, amongst other things, gaining understanding of other cultures, tackling issues of personal racism and bias,

²⁸² Nieto, *Light in Their Eyes*, 28.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 29-31.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 30-31, 155.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 155-183.

²⁸⁸ Gay, *Becoming Multicultural Educators*, 5. Nieto, *Affirming Diversity*, 275.

attending to other viewpoints.²⁸⁹ Nieto goes on to describe how moving from being monocultural to multicultural may not guarantee that everyone exemplifies her list of attributes, but it lays “the groundwork for it.”²⁹⁰ This is significant to note when wishing to make the case that personal preparation can transform educators to being advocates of equity and equality. There is no surety of making this internal shift occur. In light of the critical theories that inform me, narratives we share, pedagogies I employ, and environment I create to facilitate transformation, I can only claim that this lays groundwork for potential growth. As Gay explains, “we can offer guidance, resources, encouragement, support, models, but how or whether to act on these is always an individual decision. Each of us must make our own journey...”²⁹¹ And my journey involves making the move to attend to Nieto’s recommendations by focusing on philosophy and positionality for praxis-driven conscious-raising in this text and in the way I teach.

Finding Postitionality

During my graduate school experience I was fortunate to have multiple qualitative research courses with an educator with a strong social justice focus. She introduced me to processes of research and theoretical orientations that echoed the process of reflection that had been sparked by my engagement with certain philosophy of education theories. Some of the qualitative research approaches we explored resounded that reality is socially constructed. The approaches relied on contextualization, sought pluralism, acknowledged complexity, and

²⁸⁹ Nieto, *Affirming Diversity*, 275.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 275-276.

²⁹¹ Gay, *Becoming Multicultural Educators*, 5.

expected personal involvement and empathetic understanding of its practitioners.²⁹² Certain qualitative research also acknowledges the same epistemological tensions as researchers²⁹³ that I was negotiating as a teacher philosopher engaging with alternative epistemological theories. I was seeing positionality intersecting with philosophical and qualitative research theories in the same way that it had with multicultural scholarship. My qualitative research excursions taught me to examine my orientation as a researcher, and subsequently, as an educator. As the qualitative researcher Amos Hatch explains: “it is assumed that knowledge is always mediated through the political [racial, classed, gendered, epistemological] positioning’s of the researcher.”²⁹⁴ Consequently, knowledge is always seen through the prism of our multifaceted positionalities. We engage with those we research and teach through this prism; it’s refracted light impacts all we do.

Writings from my first semester of graduate school from my contemporary philosophy of education course reveal that my positionality as a White privileged woman from Africa was triggering deep reflection. One paper I wrote in response to “Pluralisms for Education: An Ethics of Care Perspective” by Ann Diller²⁹⁵ was rather melodramatically titled “Mea Culpa, My Skuld [Afrikaans for my guilt]: Confessions of a White African American.” Another example of this philosophical reflection influenced by issues of positionality was a response to Megan Boler’s article “All Speech is Not Free: The Ethics of Affirmative Action Pedagogy”²⁹⁶ which I

²⁹² Corrine Glesne, *Becoming Qualitative Researchers: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 2005), 5.

²⁹³ Carol Grbich, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Introduction* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007), 3-15.

²⁹⁴ Amos Hatch, *Doing Qualitative Research in Education Settings* (Albany, New York: State University Of New York Press, 2002), 16.

²⁹⁵ Ann Diller, “Pluralisms for Education: An Ethics of Care Perspective,” *Philosophy of Education* (48th Annual Meeting, 1992).

²⁹⁶ Megan Boler, “All Speech is Not Free: The Ethics of ‘Affirmative Action Pedagogy,’” *Philosophy of Education* (56th Annual Meeting, 2000).

diffidently titled “Affirmation Action Pedagogy.” In responding to this philosophical piece I was grappling with the idea that dominant discourses, methodologies, and dominant community members cannot do the work of equity-making; “the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.”²⁹⁷ I wrote:

According to Megan Boler we do not have equal protection under the law or equal access to resources and thus not all voices carry the same weight. Not only are all voices not equal, but it is the responsibility of educators not to guarantee a space that is “free from hostility...but rather, to challenge oneself and one’s students to analyze critically any statement made in a classroom, especially those which are rooted in dominant ideological views that subordinate on the basis of race, gender, and class...”²⁹⁸ Boler explains that hostility that “targets a marginalized person on the basis of her or his assumed inferiority carries more weight” than if the aggression was being conveyed towards a dominant community member by a marginalized person.²⁹⁹ She states: “Until all voices are equal, we must operate within a context of historicized ethics which consciously privileges the insurrectionary and dissenting voices, sometimes at the minor cost of silencing those voices which have been permitted dominant status for the past centuries.”³⁰⁰

As I tried to integrate this thinking into my own outlook, my thoughts demonstrate a longing to move beyond Boler’s affirmative action suggested for our classrooms to a climate of affirmation action. Banks notes how “positionality reveals the importance of identifying the positions and frames of reference from which scholars and writers present their data, interpretations, analyses, and instruction.”³⁰¹ Thus, positionality helps me identify the ideological positions and normative assumptions³⁰² exposed in my writings. My response reveals my lack of understanding of the deep structural issues that continue to perpetuate racial, class, and gender inequities, but it was a starting point for a coming to consciousness about these

²⁹⁷ Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984), 110-114.

²⁹⁸ Boler, 321.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 329.

³⁰¹ James A. Banks, “The Canon Debate, Knowledge Construction, and Multicultural Education,” *Educational Researcher* 22, no. 4 (1993), 5.

³⁰² Banks, 5.

issues. I was doing the fallible work of a positioned teacher philosopher, struggling to imagine “the best, the right, the good, the beautiful, the fair and just, the true.”³⁰³

I understand affirmative action to be an “active effort to improve the employment or educational opportunities of minority groups and women” and this definition has been extended to include a “similar effort to promote the rights or progress of other disadvantaged persons.”³⁰⁴ A brief examination of examples of contemporary thought regarding race reveal an interesting possibility. Dana White (an African American) from a conservative think tank in Washington D.C., says that thirty years ago affirmative action was necessary to “open the doors of American universities and companies,”³⁰⁵ correcting the wrongs of racial discrimination. However, White asserts that it is now a “new day in America,” and says that African Americans can be found at the helm of such companies as American Express, AOL/Time Warner, and Merrill Lynch. One only has to think of Ophra Winfrey’s wealth and influence or of former Secretaries of State Colin Powell or Condoleezza Rice to agree that this is not the America of the 60’s. White urges that African Americans not be further subjected to a culture of low-expectations and perpetual victimization, exhorting a move to setting goals for the future and the cessation of blaming White Americans for the sins of the past.

Another African American scholar, John McWhorter³⁰⁶ refutes policies of racial preference, typifying them as counter-productive in as they create a false reality that belies the actuality of life in a competitive society. He suggests that despite ever-improving conditions in American, therapeutic alienation not lingering racism is to blame for the current racial disparities. These opinions raise an interesting possibility: that previous policies of affirmative action have in fact been successful in terms of promoting the rights or advancement of minority groups and women. A cursory view of academic scholarship, education, politics, sociology, religion, philosophy, popular literature, contemporary music, film and television – all indicate a new awareness, actualization, and even appreciation of these marginalized groups. Given this progress, perhaps a more subtle and nuanced model is needed for alleviating the problem of all speech not being free noted by Boler.

Boler’s affirmative action pedagogy advocates that “we are not equally protected in practice by the first amendment, and that education needs fairly to represent marginalized voices by challenging dominant voices in the classroom.”³⁰⁷ Some of her examples include using classrooms as places where “marginalized and silenced voices can respond to ignorant expressions rooted in privilege, white supremacy, or other

³⁰³ Thayer-Bacon and Moyer, 143.

³⁰⁴ Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition (Springfield: Merriam-Webster, 2003), 21.

³⁰⁵ Dana White, “Who Say’s I’m Inferior?,” *The Heritage Foundation*, <http://www.heritage.org/research/commentary/2003/06/who-says-im-inferior> (accessed February 23, 2006).

³⁰⁶ George Leef, “John McWhorter Versus Affirmative Action,” *The John William Pope Center for Higher Education Policy*, <http://www.popecenter.org/commentaries/article.html?id=1674> (accessed February 23, 2006).

³⁰⁷ Boler, 322.

dominant ideologies,”³⁰⁸ supporting the creation of separate classroom environments for the empowering of historically marginalized factions, the disallowing of students to enroll in classes, the prohibiting of certain kinds of speech, and written assignments as punishment for prejudicial thinking. One can see that these practices are proposed because there has been an omission of justice, but their very implementation would be a commission of a different kind of injustice. Enactment of such pedagogy is fair, but its implementation is divisive. It creates a dualism between those who have a voice and those who don't, those who are dominant and those that have been marginalized. The cycle perpetuates itself ad nauseam. Someone is advocated, someone is marginalized. Power shifts but isn't shared.

However, the role of justice presupposes an intention for people to be in community therefore it should function to reinstate people to community. It is this point that throws Boler's suggested course of action into stark relief. Many of her examples (separate learning environments, exclusion from classes, the censoring of dominant voices) suggest community schisms, not unity. While it is a true that all do not receive equal benefits despite improvements in the rights of marginalized groups, the cycle of current inequalities needs to be broken, not by power shifts, but by a new way: affirmation through grace.

In justice, benefits can also be distributed according to need, as opposed to entitlement or punishment. This kind of justice then becomes an act of grace. Grace can be described as undeserved acceptance and love received from another, mercy, and pardon. Juxtaposed to grace, despite being justified, affirmative action pedagogy perpetuates disempowerment of some voices to hear others. True free speech perhaps can only be heard in an environment of undeserved acceptance, mercy, and pardon in a place of grace enabling human regeneration. If one is to follow Boler's reasoning and agree that the classroom is “one of the few public spaces in which one can respond and be heard,”³⁰⁹ then the function of the principle of grace becomes the application of affirmation action. By acting to affirm all the voices in our classrooms, by advocating multicultural curriculums, by upholding the value of both the dominant and marginalized voices to dispel bias for all in the classroom, by reading anti-racist and feminist scholarship, and by laying parameters of mercy, pardon, undeserved acceptance, perhaps then all voices will be equal. Other philosophers of education present a more inclusive approach imbued with an affirmative sensibility. Ann Diller recommends an ethics of care perspective in educational pluralism. Thayer-Bacon offers constructive thinking as way to include different voices in dialogue and envisages a democratic classroom community always in the making that is attentive to difference and seeks to be inclusive.

It would seem counter-intuitive to exclude in order to include, oppressing in order to free. In this way the ends justify the means. Perhaps it is time to incorporate into our pedagogies ideals such as Thayer-Bacon's relational epistemology that embraces

³⁰⁸ Boler, 322.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

constructive thinking, equality, and the nurturing of mutual responsibility and caring.³¹⁰ We should applaud the successes of affirmative action, but move beyond a punitive justice model of viewing society, and live in affirmation of each other, under girded by grace. Perchance in adopting a give-and-give attitude, rather than give-and-take we will find our redemption.

Reflection on this piece written years ago shows that I had yet to grasp the concepts of meritocracy, de-centering Whiteness, systemic racism, or my own privilege. This lack of sensitivity is deplorable. But positionality and critical theories were sowing the seeds of an appreciation of issues of equity and equality in education that began to germinate through the continued identification of my own positionality.

Identifying my Positionality

As a part of my qualitative research work I was challenged to engage in a process of making my positionality explicit, beginning with attending to my orientations as researcher, and by extension as an educator. I began by asking myself, “What is the work my soul must have?”³¹¹ Critical qualitative researchers helped me recognize my own strong compulsion towards social justice. I observed my desire for equity and equality was mirrored within critical qualitative research practices which Soyini Madison describes as originating from “an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular ...domain.”³¹² Madison also describes this drive as compelling, a sense of duty, an obligation to moral principles of human freedom and well-being, and as caring for those that suffer.³¹³ I find a deep resonance with these motivations. This is coupled with a desire to emulate attention to

³¹⁰ Barbara Thayer-Bacon, “Caring and its Relationship to Critical Thinking,” *Educational Theory*, 43 (September 1993): 323–340.

³¹¹ Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mother’s Gardens* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace, 2003), 238.

³¹² D. Soyini Madison, *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005),

5.

³¹³ Madison, 5.

marginalization, call for caring for others, and up-side-down logic that makes the last first manifest in Christ.³¹⁴

In the on-going work of interrogating my positionality I try to trace the development of my identity whereby I “honor [my] own personal history and the knowledge [I] have accumulated up to this point....”³¹⁵ I must “scrutinize [my] particular identities with respect to race, class, and gender.”³¹⁶ I do this to based on the counsel of qualitative research scholar, Enrique Murillo. He warns against being complicit in colonial agendas. Since I am literally a White colonizer from Africa now residing in another former colony, the United States of America, I carefully heed the caution. As a dominant community member I must avoid the act of colonizing knowledge for my own benefit in the guise of reclamation of marginalized knowledge and ways of knowing. I must circumvent the imposition of colonizer power within my classroom by reserving primacy for the marginalized and establishing power-sharing and power-transferring strategies. If I neglect my particular positions of privilege they remain intact and unchallenged and I fail to disrupt inequity. Murillo points out the need to navigate the dilemma of being self-serving in my efforts, since I am often an outsider of the communities I study and teach. I continually challenge myself to question if my attention to equity is simply a means for advancing my career, making me look better as a human being, or if it turns attention

³¹⁴ “And he began to teach them saying, ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’” Matthew 5:2-10

³¹⁵ Madison, 19.

³¹⁶ Enrique Murillo, “Mojado Crossing Along Neoliberal Borderlands,” in *Post Critical Ethnography: Reinscribing Critique*, ed. George Noblit, E. Murillo, & S.Y. Flores (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2004), 156.

onto me rather than others.³¹⁷ Oxymoronicallly, I desire to attend to myself for the sake of others.

My role as a member of the dominant members of our society, my position as an able-bodied, heterosexual, middle class English-speaking White person with a great deal of formal education, and a child of the colonizers of Africa, should preclude me from entering in a conversation about equity in education. After all, at worst I am of the oppressive order and at best my presence may not be desired or required. However, as a scholar and teacher I offer myself as a volunteer researcher and co-learner. Due to my situatedness I have insight into the dominant culture; my education envisions tools to advance the cause of equality; and my colonizer heritage gives me an insider sense of the historical and emotional tensions found where the paths of dominant and marginalized communities intersect in the school space. I can only hope to be part of a conversation that moves forward the dialogue of inclusion and equality for my generation and the next.

I have made the commitment to educational equity so I may press forward with hope to a future that does no harm, for as the ancient prophet Jeremiah writes, “‘I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’”³¹⁸ When it comes to inequity it is not enough to claim ignorance or rely on good intentions, for as Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Nothing in the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity.” Ivan Illich boldly states, “To hell with good intentions.”³¹⁹ Assessing one’s evolving positionality is not merely reflection or self-awareness

³¹⁷ Murillo, 156.

³¹⁸ Jeremiah 29:11

³¹⁹ Ivan Illich, “To Hell with Good Intentions,” (address to the Conference on Inter-American Student Projects in Cuernavaca, Mexico, on April 20, 1968).

or even self-involved. It is the act of knowing how our positionalities influence how we educate and perpetuate or unfetter inequity. My particular past and present location influences the prospects of myself *and* those I teach.

My “fixed positions” are: thirty-seven, female, middle class, South African raised but residing permanently in the United States of America, and White. Goodall, a qualitative research scholar, writes that our “subjective positions” are found in experiences such as “birth, death, divorce, separation, natural disasters, war, violence, love, or illness.”³²⁰ At various times in my life, any number of these watershed experiences have been pivotal to my development in general, but my relocation to the United States, experience as an educator/student, faith as a Christian, and history as a colonizer have markedly impacted the trajectory of my work as a scholar and teacher.

My move to the United States opened education doors I had dreamed about since childhood. I received a scholarship to attend a private liberal arts college, so after earning my diploma in education from the Cape Town Teachers Training College in South Africa, I travelled to the United States via Europe to continue my studies. After receiving my Bachelor’s degree in Education I taught in geographically, economically, and racially varied school settings throughout the East Coast while my husband completed his training and residency. Being passionate about education, my own and that of others, I enrolled in the cultural studies program of a large southeastern state university and completed the master’s program. I was then accepted to the doctoral program where I now pursue my interests in equity and equality in education.

³²⁰ H.L. Goodall, “Writing the New Ethnography” (New York, NY: Alta Mira Press, 2000), 132.

These personal details of my positionality intersect in the materiality and performance of my roles of scholar and educator. Whiteness, faith, education, and colonizing are parts of my material positionality that trouble my performance of identity. As a White researcher and teacher I grapple with many of the same issues expressed by Patterson and Rayle, especially the problem of being a member of the dominant culture while my research participants and students are often members of targeted, minority, oppressed, and colonized communities.³²¹ To twist Abu-Lughod's words, I am a "halfie" – one of the "people whose national or cultural identity is mix by virtue of migration, overseas education, or parentage."³²² By all three accounts I fit the definition except that I have migrated from one dominant culture to another, one institute of higher education to other, and my mixed parentage is of not one but two colonizing nations: Dutch and English. Instead of my African heritage granting me access to those that have been targeted as "at-risk" and are experiencing "achievement gaps," it is a source of further bounding myself from the so-called Other.

My Christianity³²³ creates interesting intersections when it comes to being in academia and the classroom. Educated with the staples of critical theory, be it feminist, qualitative, or multicultural, I am surrounded by postmodernist thought that so valuably unpacks power, but to the point that Truth and Reality are inconceivable.³²⁴ As a believer in a concrete and absolute faith, this creates strange philosophical bedfellows. In a strange way at times I feel marginalized

³²¹ Jean Patterson and Joseph Rayle, (2004). "De-centering Whiteness: Personal Narratives of Race," in *Postcritical Ethnography : Reinscribing Critique*, ed. George Noblit, E. Murillo, & S.Y. Flores (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2004), 248.

³²² Lila Abu-Lughod, "Writing Against Culture," in *Recapturing Anthropology*, ed. R. Fox (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 1991), 137.

³²³ Christianity is practiced by adherents in different ways. I am referring to my particular beliefs which might be described as being of a Protestant orientation and evangelical. These terms are loaded with associations and meanings that may do more to obscure than define my faith, which I would describe as being relationally oriented, grace-infused, and manifest in daily practices of Bible reading, prayer, and desire to serve others.

³²⁴ Murillo, 157.

by discourses, such as postmodernism. Postmodernism's deconstruction of meta-narratives and questioning of power positions me as a believer in a meta-narrative (Christianity) that has historically been a dominating power and, at times, oppressive force which positions me as an oppressor. Understanding of who I am and how I am in different contexts helps me deal with the conflicts that arise when who I am and where I am come into tension. I need to try being all things to all people,³²⁵ but at times I have to navigate the need to be true to myself. I try to be a reasonable religious person, as described by Barbara Applebaum. She defines a reasonable religious person as one that doesn't cede Biblical authority, but is "willing to listen and be open to learning and understanding worlds that are different from the one he/she knows to be true," "can appreciate the institutional and cultural barriers" that marginalized members of society face," and acknowledges the privileges that they enjoy as dominant community members.³²⁶

As a historical colonizer I am driven by remembrances' of squatter camps; the milky smell of my nanny who had left her baby to come and take care of me; signs that let me go to the best beaches; and the moment as a little girl I realized that it wasn't right for me to go into the door marked "Slegs Blankes" (Whites Only) when I went to the doctor. This makes for a scholar deeply concerned with exploitative research and conscious of my "awkward forms of privilege."³²⁷

The implications of my positionality on my academic and professional pursuits have caused me to deliberate if it is right for me to engage in the cause of equity. As Goodall states, "'Who has the right to speak for a culture?' is very much a question about who is entitled to

³²⁵ 1 Corinthians 9:22

³²⁶ Barbara Applebaum, "Social Justice, Democratic Education, and the Silencing of Words the Wound." *Journal of Moral Education*, 32, no. 2, (2003): 160.

³²⁷ Murillo, 156.

represent it.”³²⁸ Whiteness, faith, and colonizing in my academic pursuits and teaching have brought me to a crisis of representation.³²⁹ As a member of the dominant community I have to negotiate a relationship of contribution devoid of hubris, for “[w]hen pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.”³³⁰ I am compelled to embrace my identity in two ways. First, through self-reflexivity, confessional tales, and humility to bring to the fore the voice of the majority I represent. As the marginalized are given voice as a means to challenge hegemonic forces that maintain oppression, so too must the dialogue include those in power to be true to the tenants of inclusion and “enlarged conversation.”³³¹ Second, by using methodologies and theories in my work such as relational (e)pistemologies, constructive thinking, critical theory, postcolonialism, and theories of difference I hope to continue a research and teaching agenda that engages issues of inequity in education that aspires to equality. It is my hope that difficult issues of representation and credibility will not be negatively impacted by my positionality but rather enhanced through thoughtful and reflective practices. My positionality on many levels compels me to action and so my academic and professional pursuits will continue to reflect a commitment to addressing issues of race, of longing for the peace and healing of faith for others, and the dismantling of colonizer/colonized dichotomies, in whatever form they may present themselves.

Situating my Positionality

As Chapter II demonstrated, our epistemological orientation is another thread of our positionality. Murillo’s work challenges objectivity and the deprecation of subjectivity,

³²⁸ Goodall, 120.

³²⁹ Ibid., 13.

³³⁰ Proverbs 11:2

³³¹ Goodall, 11.

ideology, or emotion.³³² Philosopher of education Thayer-Bacon's epistemological revision does the same thing. See the domino effect. Our conceptualizations regarding this "[t]heory about the nature of knowledge; how what exists may be known"³³³ determine what we see as knowledge and how it is constructed. This determines how we assume learning occurs and what should be taught. And, as the line of dominoes tumble, this affects how we teach (pedagogy) and what we teach (curriculum). Clearly this warrants the unpacking of every educators backpack. Our epistemological positioning must be made explicit for us to assess its role in establishing equitable practices in our classrooms.

I describe myself as a qualified postmodernist – postmodern in the sense that I believe in the human construction of knowledge. I concur with the postmodernist belief described by Nel Noddings that states

the search for an all encompassing description of knowledge is hopeless. Instead they emphasize how knowledge and power are connected, how domains of expertise evolve, who profits from and who is hurt by various claims to knowledge, and what sort of language develops in communities of knowers.³³⁴

This "hopeless" search is described in Ecclesiastes 1:16-17, "I thought to myself, 'Look, I have grown and increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me; I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge. Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind.'"

However, as I have noted, my qualification to this "chasing after the wind" is that I believe that Reality and Truth exist in the realm of my faith. My examinations include a religious dimension. I am the converse version of what Hatch describes as someone who is

³³² Murillo, 166.

³³³ Glesne, 6.

³³⁴ Nel Noddings, *Philosophy of Education* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995), 72.

“intellectually attracted to belief systems that challenge the notions of absolute Truth while at the same time holding that certain truths are unquestionable.”³³⁵ Examination of my faith reveals a sense of truth that can be known and is liberating.³³⁶ The phrase “I [Jesus] tell you the truth...” appears over a hundred times in the New Testament. Belief in the Bible as the inspired word of God makes these divine statement of fact true to me, but I embrace the postmodern view that human constructs of fact can be deconstructed and questioned.

This reiteration of my beliefs is not mere redundancy on my part; this self-reflection shows the work of a scholar and educator excavating and evaluating her positionality as it relates to epistemology. It has been noted that “position may be so important that it can be seen as an epistemological claim” such as is made in standpoint epistemology.³³⁷ Being conscious of how I am positioned affects what I think can be known (be it Truth, truth, or a warranted assertability); I am able to recognize this impetus thus making explicit the domino effect that ultimately determines how and what I teach. This causes my intentionality to be heightened exponentially as the background noise of my positionality is brought to the foreground and made audible. Here the work of equity and equality can begin in earnest; “[w]e now begin to probe other possibilities that will challenge institutions, regimes of knowledge and social practices that limit choices, constrain meaning, and denigrate identities and communities.”³³⁸

In addition to a qualified postmodern epistemology, standpoint epistemology’s acknowledgement of position and identity and their effect on knowledge creation and transmission form part of my understanding of how we come to know what we know.

³³⁵ Hatch, 20.

³³⁶ John 8:32 states “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

³³⁷ Noblit, 21.

³³⁸ Madison, 5.

Critical/Feminist epistemology also informs my understanding of knowledge being created and vetted in a subjective process of construction that is fundamentally influenced by our positionalities. This was echoed during a feminist epistemology course informed by the works of Arnot, Ellsworth, Pagano, Thornton Dills, and Thayer-Bacon³³⁹ amongst others. Through this engagement I wrote about my journey into critical consciousness³⁴⁰:

As a society we are all engaged in educative processes, formal (such as traditional schooling) or informal (such as raising children). However, some of us have also pursued education in the university setting, embarked on travel, or apprenticed in a trade. Not only have we continued our own education, we have become conscious of its processes, forms, and complexities. I come to our conversation as a cultural studies scholar, public school teacher, and mother, who has pursued credentialing as a professional teacher. In my graduate studies I have been introduced to the concepts and theories of critical pedagogy, multiculturalism, and feminism and they are in my “backpack” of tools that help me practice and ponder education and I would like to discuss their implications for me at this point in my journey, most especially in regards to my Whiteness.

Every parent is able to experience the great delight of discovering the world through the eyes of their children. One day I had the special privilege of getting to experience what was a first for both my children and myself that also is a metaphor for the trajectory I have been on as a White educator.

As an immigrant from South Africa it is always fascinating to watch the pageantry of American patriotic holidays. My children and I were downtown for a field trip and stumbled upon a parade; it was Veteran’s Day. The sun was shining, the skies were blue, and the city had poured itself onto the streets, basking in the surprising autumnal warmth and goodwill. All manner of people paraded past us, but I was most enamored by the matching bands. Majors, instrumentalists, baton twirlers, dancers, and handlers moved along the street, each with different banners, colors, and themed costumes, but there was an amazing uniformity evident in their marching, synchronized flags, and strident music.

³³⁹ Madeline Arnot, “Hegemony, Social Class, and Women’s Education,” in *The Education Feminism Reader*, ed. Lynda Stone (New York: Routledge, 1994), 84-104. Elizabeth Ellsworth, *Teaching Positions: Difference, Pedagogy, and the Power of Address* New York: Teachers College Press, 1997; Elizabeth Ellsworth, “Why Doesn’t This Feel Empowering: Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy,” in *The Education Feminism Reader*, ed. Lynda Stone (New York: Routledge, 1994), 300-327. Jo Anne Pagano, “Teaching Women,” in *The Education Feminism Reader*, ed. Lynda Stone (New York: Routledge, 1994), 252-275. Barbara Thayer-Bacon, *Relational (e)pistemologies*, New York: Lang, 2003. Bonnie Thornton Dill, “Race, class, and Gender: Prospects for an All-Inclusive Sisterhood,” in *The Education Feminism Reader*, ed. Lynda Stone (New York: Routledge, 1994), 42-56.

³⁴⁰ Yvette Prinsloo Franklin, “A Journey into Critical Consciousness,” *Encounter* 24, no. 4 (Winter, 2011), under “Table of Contents,” <http://ojs.great-ideas.org>. (Used with permission)

School after school came by, distinct but all of them followed almost bizarre (to the unacquainted eye) ritualized behaviors such as elbows in awkward positions and tiptoeing backward steps. They were adhering to a universal standard of marching band performance.

I later mused about how, off the Main Street, there were alleys and narrow roadways that one could imagine might have a lone street musician wailing on a bluesy saxophone. Or perhaps the sounds of vibrant guitars can be heard from the open doors of a busy restaurant. And maybe a few doors down a honky-tonk has an open-mic night and a soulful duet drifts into the street.

The marching bands and side street musicians offer a means to explain the process of conscientization³⁴¹ that I have experienced. As a White teacher I was so immersed in the workings of the classroom and the need to master practice that I had given little thought to the mechanisms of the larger educative structures. I was marching in the band, trying to learn the moves, keep to the beat, and stay on my toes. I didn't know where the band was going, why I was wearing spangles, or who wrote the music, but I felt a part of something good. After all we were in the parade marching down Main Street. That's a good thing, right? However, as I marched I began to look down the alleys, hear different strains of music, and wonder why they weren't in the parade. I presumed those not on Main Street simply needed help to get there and I wanted to invite them to the parade. I went to graduate school to find ways to learn how to teach myself and other educators how to let everyone have a fair turn to be in the marching band - spangles for all.

In graduate school I encountered critical theories, multiculturalism, and feminism. They took me by the hand and led me down the alleys. They forced me to look back to Main Street and see the structures that were in place making their access to the parade unattainable and even undesirable.

In the Fall of 2007 I took a class. But upon reflection, the class took me. It took me into the theory and practice of critical multiculturalism "as an approach to anti-oppression educational praxis."³⁴² It took me into the theory and practice of critical multiculturalism as an approach to anti-oppression educational praxis, where knowledge is translated into action. It provided a way for me to explore my "spangles for all" mantra. The theoretical texts, intensive journaling (from multiple voices), intentional and prolonged engagement of other cultures, movies, and classroom discussion (in large and small groups) brought about an engagement with issues of promoting cultural diversity, sociocultural justice, and educational equity. In other words, through the class I began to look at big picture issues about difference and their literal iterations and effects.

³⁴¹ "The process of developing a critical awareness of one's social reality through reflection and action. Action is fundamental because it is the process of changing the reality. Paulo Freire says that we all acquire social myths which have a dominant tendency, and so learning is a critical process which depends upon uncovering real problems and actual needs." Freire Institute, "Conscientization," <http://www.freire.org/tag/conscientization/> (accessed November 20, 2010).

³⁴² Course Catalogue Description, Syllabus, CSE 550 Cultural Studies in Education Program, University of Tennessee, Instructor: Dr. Barbara Thayer-Bacon.

As I reflect on the class years later, I do so by “reading through”³⁴³ it with the help of feminist scholars. To “read through” is to use the texts to help one work with, over, on, or reshape an issue one is attempting to process.³⁴⁴ For example, Bonnie Thornton Dill reinforces what I came to perceive in my multiculturalism class: that race, class, and gender come together in particular contexts to effect who we are, and that we need to see what is happening systemically and personally to be able to extend our understanding.³⁴⁵ I can remember precisely where I was sitting and the layout of the classroom the moment I realized I was a racist. Madeleine Arnot explains, in the context of her work on gender, how we come to embody our classification and internalize it and then “realize” it by living it out.³⁴⁶ I realized I was an embodiment of Whiteness and was unconsciously and consciously living out this classification. Once I realized this, I was able to conceive of the dominance of Whiteness and the consequent inverse dominatedness non-White classification produced. It was like a physical blow. I began to comprehend for the first time that I was complicit in dominance and oppression. It is unfortunate that I had to be shown my domination, but through the texts and experience-based learning (discussions and journaling) I was able to develop my critical consciousness. Critical pedagogical and multicultural issues explored in class and, due to the feminist sensibilities of the instructor, the pit-falls of Marxism and neo-Marxism, in the form of patriarchal, androcentric, and deterministic theorizing were also laid bare. I began to see the sum of class, race, and gender as complicated, contextual, and fluid. My journals show me grappling with not wanting to essentialize what it is to be poor, or of color, or fe/male. I had never thought so critically about these issues before. Although my life history placed me in many different cultural situations, it wasn’t until this class that I was able to use the tools offered me through critical feminist guidance to “attune [my] ears to the conversations and the subtexts beneath the surface of the foregrounded text.”³⁴⁷ I had begun to see the view beyond Main Street.

I was left with a problem. Approximately 80% of public school educators are White, middle class women,³⁴⁸ just like me. Some might enter “minority” schools with good intentions like I did. I had high expectations, went to community events such as church, visited the children’s homes, went to funerals, took children on field trips on the weekend, took children to dinner, I went to sports events with students, and played with my class at recess. But I felt I was not able to do enough. Like Jodie Foster’s character of a mother to a savant in the movie Little Man Tate, her care wasn’t enough to meet all his needs. He needed someone who understood his particular circumstance, understood what it was like to be him. Critical pedagogy, multiculturalism, and feminism have given me a new awareness of difference, a consciousness of systemic inequity, a drive for social justice, and a theoretical means to view my place in the marching band as a White teacher with critical eyes, always seeking context, interaction, and alternative views. However,

³⁴³ Ellsworth, *Teaching Positions*, 14-15.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Thornton Dills, 47.

³⁴⁶ Arnot, 100-101.

³⁴⁷ Pagano, 254.

³⁴⁸ Gina Barclay-McLaughlin, “Documenting Evidence of Quality Teacher Preparation on Novice Teachers Preparation and Performance” (paper presented at 2004 AERA conference), 8.

awareness of hegemony (the way we learn and agree to march with the band, even if it seems wrong), awareness of marginalization (there are others not in the band on Main Street because of economic, political, and social systems that are produced and reproduced by society that keep groups separate, allowing some to dominate and others to be subjugated), and awareness of my own privilege (I got the spangles) don't in and of themselves make me not dominant and don't make me an ally of the wailing street musicians, vibrant guitarists, and soulful duet singers.

However, *Relational (e)pistemologies* by Thayer-Bacon, the instructor in the instrumental multicultural class about the merits of multiculturalism, provided me with a way to resolve my quandary that my coming to consciousness did not stop the band and did not always open the doors along the alley. She describes how becoming aware of more than Main Street shows us our own fallibilities and helps us understand that we are all embedded and embodied and that critique helps us to deconstruct and construct new knowledge with the help of others. Thayer-Bacon encourages a theoretical framework that generously explores and critiques other perspectives, just as I experienced in the class, and that guides us past social determinism and brings us to a place of "transactional relationships with others."³⁴⁹

As an educator I aspire to teach using the tools of critical pedagogy, multiculturalism, and feminism to develop a consciousness as a way to begin to perceive, begin to be sensitive, begin to be critical, through transactional relationships with others. But my great concern is what to do with the band members, who like me, dutifully march, unaware in a deep and conscious way of the issues of power in the spaces of gender, race, and class. Feminist theories have helped me make sense of critical pedagogical and multicultural issues by becoming aware of differences and allegiances for those who are "different," and for exposing dominance, hegemony, and inequity, but they do not always offer a means to engage the band. Careful and necessary work is being done to reclaim the music of those not on Main Street and that work needs to continue; however, it is my hope that new collaborations and invitations will occur so that the marching band might be re-visioned and a Mardi Gras of celebration can break out from the established ranks and a cacophony of celebration can be heard.

I hope (through tools such as critical pedagogy, multiculturalism, and feminism) that we can pursue democracy, social justice, and freedom in a "revitalized public sphere characterized by citizens capable of confronting public issues critically through ongoing forms of public debate and social action;" a forum where individuals would be "empowered by social identities that affirmed their race, class and gender positions."³⁵⁰ With Madeleine Arnot, we must somehow be able to harness unity and diversity within our own groups and amongst those in other groups.³⁵¹ Bonnie Thornton Dills describes a

³⁴⁹ Thayer-Bacon, *Relational (e)pistemologies*, 255.

³⁵⁰ Ellsworth, 302.

³⁵¹ Arnot, 101.

*more pluralistic approach that recognizes and accepts the objective differences...Such an approach requires that we concentrate our political energies on building coalitions around particular issues of shared interest. Through joint work on specific issues, we may come to a better understanding of one another's needs and perceptions and begin to overcome some of the suspicions and mistrust that continue to haunt us.*³⁵²

*And I join with her in hope that through understanding each other's struggles we will start to perceive what is important and needed in the lives of others and use our differences to "enrich our political and social action, rather than divide it..."*³⁵³

By "reading through" the texts that inform us (in my present case these are feminist voices), seeking meaningful metaphors, and through critical reflection, it is my hope that each of us as educators will be sensitive to our embodiments (in my case, my Whiteness); be thoughtful in our practices (in my case, through critical pedagogical methods); and diligent with issues of difference (in my case, through critical multiculturalism). So doing, White educators like me can march tentatively to the new drumbeats we are hearing.

Feminist philosophical theory infused with positionality is at work to impact my transformation process. Philosophy and positionality help us (un)pack our backpack as educators, making our racial, class, gender, and epistemological embeddedness and embodiedness explicit. However if we are to attend to diversity and inclusion with a view to equity and equality, issues of multiculturalism must be considered.

Intersections of Positionality and Multiculturalism

As a scholar of philosophy of education and multicultural theory, White South African, and teacher, I am drawn to the idea of nexus; that all roads lead to where we are³⁵⁴ and that at that point of convergence important visioning can occur due to the unique perspective that nexus gives us. From the vantage point of the cross-roads of my educative realities, I continue to grapple with this question: *How can I make the case that there is an imperative need to change the trajectory of education in the United States?* After all, we set great store by what education

³⁵² Thornton Dill, 53.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Paul Hewson et. al., *Love Comes Tumbling In* "Wide Awake in America," Island Records, 1985.

can do for us as a nation. In a current book on global education reform, a chapter titled, “United States: America’s Orgy of Reform” describes our expectations:

American schools have been charged with creating unity out of a nation of immigrants from a hundred different cultures and languages and thus to perfect democracy; to mitigate, if not eliminate, economic and social inequity; to teach safe sex, safe driving, and the evils of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs; to provide recreation for children and sports and other entertainment for local communities; to provide first-line social services in a society whose public health and welfare system lags far behind those of most other industrialized nations; and now, of course, to educate children from that great diversity of backgrounds –all of them- to a high degree of technical and academic competence.³⁵⁵

And when our schools begin to fall short of our expectations, we establish policies to try reform them, most recently in the form of the amending of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 which became the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB). Reformers claimed NCLB would meet “the educational needs of low-achieving children in our Nation’s highest-poverty schools, limited English proficient children, migratory children, children with disabilities, Indian children” and close the so-called achievement gap between “minority and nonminority students.”³⁵⁶ When this law was enacted, I had just completed my traumatic first year as an elementary teacher in what is euphemistically referred to as a “diverse” setting or “urban” context. As a product of a teacher education program that only offered superficial overviews of the deeper issues of the social foundations of education and issues of social justice, I was ill-equipped to deal with the “gaps” I encountered as a White, middle class woman. Sonia Nieto helped me interpret my first-year experiences when she described the “achievement gap” as the “chasm that exists between the achievement of White and Asian

³⁵⁵ Peter Schrag, “United States: America’s Orgy of Reform” in *Balancing Change and Tradition in Global Education Reform*, 2nd ed., ed. Iris Rotberg (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 355.

³⁵⁶ U.S. Department of Education, *Elementary and Secondary Education Title 1 - Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged* (U.S. Department of Education, 2004), <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg1.html> (accessed August 20, 2011).

students on one hand, and Black and Brown students on the other.”³⁵⁷ She notes that NCLB was subtitled ‘An Act to Close the Achievement Gap’ but cites recent statistics indicating that that despite gains made by all students, a persistent scoring disparity remains equivalent to two full grade levels.³⁵⁸

The NCLB legislation, the efforts of the multicultural movement, and the niche courses for “urban” education have attempted to “deal with diversity” in an effort to “bridge the gap.” Part of my unique vantage point is that of the view of an outsider who is deeply acquainted with the lived, observable manifestation of apartheid which I perceive to be the subliminal reality of the American landscape. As a South African raised in apartheid and a product of society in transition to democracy, I am viscerally aware that apartheid is with me here in the U.S., too. My American-born and raised children’s schooling experience mirrors my own racially segregated education. I have taught students of different races within the United States, but always within schools and communities that were predominantly of one race. While Americans are theoretically free to live and, consequently, to educate their children wherever they choose--not in government assigned racial homelands as was the case in the country of my youth--the shifting bodies of the American populous nevertheless continue to retain racial, class, ethnic, and cultural segregation. Inequality is contained and maintained by the boundaries of segregation,³⁵⁹ a fact made painfully evident in the “gaps” experienced by many students of the American public school system.

³⁵⁷ Nieto. *Light in Their Eyes*, 11.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ Segregation is a complex issue beyond the scope of this work, but I conceive of it as caused by the residue of historical laws, socio-economic influences, cultural preferences, discriminatory practices, or self-imposed isolation or exclusion.

My experiences as a teacher and witness to apartheid's explicit policies of unequal and segregated education return me to my perpetual question, *How can I make the case that there is an imperative need to change the trajectory of education in the United States?* In the first chapter I expressed my assessment that NCLB has embarked on a reform agenda that has had the contradictory effect of increasing the "achievement gap" through high levels of "at-risk" students being retained; pushed into special education; being denied bilingual education,³⁶⁰ being schooled in resegregated schools;³⁶¹ and leaving high school³⁶² at alarming rates.³⁶³ Scholars point to these outcomes being as a direct result of high-stakes testing,³⁶⁴ narrowing of the curriculum through standardization,³⁶⁵ unequal distribution of resources,³⁶⁶ and the marginalizing effect of monolingualism³⁶⁷ that NCLB has perpetuated.³⁶⁸

The work of recent educational scholarship, especially that of multicultural theorists, not only points to the need for a change in course, but offers a starting point to push the scope of theory and pedagogy that seeks to create equity for oppressed groups. I wish to argue that to address evident education "gaps" and their far-reaching consequences, we must expand the participants. We must reach beyond those directly affected, namely marginalized and oppressed

³⁶⁰ Ana Iddings and Brian Rose, "Promoting Educational Equity" in *Culture, Curriculum, and Identity in Education*, edited by H. Richard Milner, 78-79. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

³⁶¹ Iddings, 12-13. Jonathan Kozol. *The Shame of the Nation: the Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America*. (New York: Crown Publishers, 2005), Spring, *American Education*, 66-69.

³⁶² Kris Sloan, "High-Stakes Accountability, Minority Youth, and Ethnography: Assessing the Multiple Effects," *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 38, no.1 (2007): 24-41. Nieto, 12.

³⁶³ Nieto, *Light in their Eyes*, 12.

³⁶⁴ Linda Darling-Hammond, "Standards, Accountability, and School Reform." *Teachers College Record* 106, no. 6, (June 2004): 1047-1085. Nel Noddings, "High Stakes Testing: Why?" *Theory and Research in Education* 2 (2004): 263-268. Harvey Seigel, "High Stakes Testing, Educational Aims and Ideals, and Responsible Assessment," *Theory and Research in Education*, 2 (2004): 219-233.

³⁶⁵ Linda Valli and Daria Buese, "The Changing Roles of Teachers in an Era of High-Stakes Accountability," *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 38, no.1 (2007): 57-75.

³⁶⁶ Spring, 52-53.

³⁶⁷ Jason Irizarry and John Raible, "Unpacking the Sociopolitical Context Surrounding English Language Learners" in *Culture, Curriculum, and Identity in Education*, edited by H. Richard Milner, 95-115. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

³⁶⁸ David Hirsh. "Assessing No Child Left Behind and the Rise of Neoliberal Education Policies." *American Educational Research Journal* 44, no. 3 (September 2007): 493-518.

groups and their educators, to include members of the dominant group in a jump start on Freire's "pedagogy of all [people] in the process of permanent liberation"³⁶⁹ to confront and transform the educational setting. Freire has two distinct stages, the first being the liberation for oppressed peoples, which is then followed by a "pedagogy of all people." It is in extending the reach of theory and pedagogy to *all* educators and students that true diversity, inclusion, and social transformation may be nurtured. I suggest that we must begin to teach like a people being transformed, while simultaneously addressing oppression, so we live out the process of liberation.

Multicultural scholarship and the field of multicultural education has long been troubling and seeking to address the issues that NCLB has recently identified and exacerbated. In our multiracial and multicultural democracy³⁷⁰ it has become increasingly evident that multicultural education cannot simply be added to school curriculum.³⁷¹ Multiculturalism is too large to be merely supplementary. It addresses issues of identity, values, inequities/privileges, history, power, and economics of the nation that extend far beyond the walls of our schools³⁷² and it is deeply personal as it addresses the identity, values, and inequities/privileges, histories, power, and economics of individual lived experiences that come with us into our schools.

I have argued (see Chapter 1) that multiculturalism means different things to different people and how these discourses each establish binaries. Even in discourses that seek to prepare teachers to work with "ethnically and culturally diverse students,"³⁷³ divisions are created. As stated previously, Nieto defines multicultural education as "embedded in a sociopolitical context

³⁶⁹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum Books, 1993), 36-37.

³⁷⁰ Theresa Perry and James Fraser, *Freedom's Plow: Teaching in the Multicultural Classroom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 3.

³⁷¹ Perry and Fraser, 3.

³⁷² Ibid., 4-9.

³⁷³ Gay, xi.

and as antiracist and basic education for *all* students that permeates all areas of schooling, and that is characterized by a commitment to social justice and critical approaches to learning” [emphasis added].³⁷⁴ Her definition includes dominant community members.³⁷⁵ I see this as an *all of us*, diverse but inclusive. I make this claim aware of the complexity that comes with such a call to inclusion given the realities of past and current experiences of oppressive structures and the problem of creating opportunities for *all of us* to be educated together.

This is a visioning of multiculturalism that is not assimilation, multiplicity, or separate-but-equal: it is sensitivity to diversity for equity with the imperative of inclusion for equality, because dealing with diversity without the end result of equality is simply oppression re-manifested. Thus, if NCLB shows us the rupture in our education system and standardization and high-stakes testing are not shrinking the “achievement gap,” what will? I suggest a trajectory change that seeks to go beyond prevailing in the battle for raised achievement for minority students, and seeks to win the war for creating a school system reflective of “one nation, indivisible with liberty and justice for *all*.”

The vital work of multicultural scholars, amongst others, has sought to address issues of diversity and inclusion of targeted/minority students. I am tentatively and humbly suggesting a new dimension to inclusion: that of dominant/nonminority groups. Renown multicultural scholar Asa Hilliard calls us to not only address the “achievement gap” but the other gaps experienced by minority students, like the “teacher-quality gap, the teacher-training gap, the challenging curriculum gap, the school-funding gap, the digital-divide gap, the wealth-income gap, the health-care gap, the nutrition gap, the school-integration gap, and the quality child-care gap.”³⁷⁶

³⁷⁴ Gay, xi.

³⁷⁵ Nieto, *Light in their Eyes*, 26.

³⁷⁶ Milner, *Culture, Curriculum, and Identity in Education*, xxi.

To close these gaps, requires the contributions, concessions, and consideration of *both* targeted/minority and dominant culture communities. In terms of education, “diverse” schools have majority minority student populations, but are being educated by White, middle-class, monolingual female educators.³⁷⁷ The case has been ably made for the benefits of increasing the numbers of minority teachers³⁷⁸ to teach minority students,³⁷⁹ but the reality is that 87% of public school teachers are dominant community members.³⁸⁰ The question becomes how this can change? I contend we must invite the nonminority/dominant group into the conversation.

By harnessing the reach of the dominant culture teacher through “a more central and explicit focus on...self-determination, racism, and ...epistemologies,” strategies such as culturally responsive schooling will increase their impact, rather than being “reduced to essentializations, meaningless generalizations, or trivial anecdotes.”³⁸¹ By open acknowledgement of identity and the vulnerability, discomfort, and confusion dominant culture teachers feel as they “teach across difference,” we will not sacrifice critique for the sake of “safety” and “comfort,” and the identity-perception gap that “forces teachers to relativize their experiences and question their perceptions” can be viewed as a resource rather than a hindrance to teaching.³⁸²

³⁷⁷ Ladson-Billings, “Preparing Teachers for Diverse Student Populations,” 226.

³⁷⁸ H. Richard, Milner, *Start Where You Are, But Don't Stay There: Understanding Diversity, Opportunity Gaps, and Teaching in Today's Classrooms* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Education Press, 2010), 173.

³⁷⁹ And I would argue, to the benefit of nonminority students too.

³⁸⁰ Marsha Rehm and Barbara Allison, “Positionality in Teaching Culturally Diverse Students: Implications for Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher Education Programs,” *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal* 34, no. 3 (March 2006): 260.

³⁸¹ Angelina Castagno and Brian Brayboy, “Culturally Responsive Schooling for Indigenous Youth” A Review of the Literature,” *Review of Educational Research*, 78, no.4 (December 2008), 941.

³⁸² Eric Toshalis, “The Identity-Perception Gap: Teachers Confronting the Difference between Who They (Think They) Are and How They are Perceived by Students,” in *Culture, Curriculum, and Identity in Education* ed. H. Richard Milner, 16-33.

By purposely engaging *all* the teaching force for *all* our students racism, classism, and sexism can be explicitly dealt with. For example teachers can be guided in an understanding that “racism is a pervasive and consistent element in the schooling experiences of [targeted] youth” experienced in multiple ways, including “paternalism, prejudice, harmful assumptions, low expectations, violence, and biased curriculum materials.”³⁸³ Minority and dominant culture educators need to be made aware of the fact that the nation has “never been a White nation, although White institutions and cultural norms have certainly held sway throughout most of the nation’s history.”³⁸⁴ By troubling the fact that the “achievement gap” has been drawn along racial lines and acknowledging the domination and normalizing effect of Whiteness, teachers will be able to better seek solutions to the “realities that disallow certain populations of students to reach their full capacity to learn” and ask the important question: why?³⁸⁵ When teachers begin to question and, in the words of Maxine Greene, “reflect on their own lived lives and the lives they lead in common with one another, transformation...to the end of overcoming oppressiveness and domination, ...[through] collective self-reflection....[and] attentiveness to one’s own history,” then they can start to learn to “promote the redistribution of privilege and social justice.”³⁸⁶

In the imperative changing of the trajectory of education in the United States by embracing sensitivity to diversity for equity and inclusion for equality, theory and pedagogy need to be taken advantage of to create equity for oppressed groups. Personal transformation of

³⁸³ Castegno and Brayboy, 950.

³⁸⁴ Perry and Fraser, 9.

³⁸⁵ Milner, *Start Where You Are*, 4.

³⁸⁶ Maxine Greene, *Landscapes of Learning* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1978), 54, 100, 103, quoted in Geneva Gay, *Becoming Multicultural Educators*, 18.

teachers needs to result in the utilizing of theory and pedagogies to make structural changes.³⁸⁷ This is vital for “diverse” students who “have to suffer from the negative racial attitudes, actions, and events perpetuated by schools and society, not because of any specific behaviors they exhibit but simply because of who they are.”³⁸⁸ It seems logical then to extend the personal transformation and structural changes to all teachers and all students, not just those working in “minority” schools or with students deemed “at-risk.” School reform that is anti-racist, exposes bias, sees all students as having aptitude and strengths, has high expectations, and “is empowering and just” cannot truly succeed in a vacuum; minority *and* dominant culture groups will have to participate to actualize these goals.³⁸⁹ As Gay quotes, “It is desirable and necessary for human beings to examine the society in which they live, possibly as a step toward making fundamental improvements.”³⁹⁰

To end current oppressive education practices and to create a generation of students that are ready to embrace diversity for equity and inclusion for equality, as I have argued, the scope of multicultural education will have to be broadened. To get at the roots of inequity (myth of meritocracy, funding inequality, segregation, inequitable access to learning, underrepresentation of teachers of color, practices of cultural assimilation³⁹¹) and privilege, a paradigm shift is needed in *all* teachers. They need to see themselves as social reconstructivists naming neglected histories and ways of being and thinking. All educators need to teach their students, as teacher educator and scholar H. Richard Milner (channeling his mentor Asa Hilliard) states, “how to dismantle systems of racism, inequality, and oppression;” to advocate for others; to “tackle

³⁸⁷ Nieto, *Light in their Eyes*, 155.

³⁸⁸ H. Richard Milner, *Diversity and Education: Teachers, Teaching, and Teacher Education* (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 2009), xxiv.

³⁸⁹ Nieto, *Light in their Eyes*, 190.

³⁹⁰ Gay, *Becoming Multicultural Educators*, 18.

³⁹¹ Nieto, *Light in their Eyes*, 51-69.

issues of structural inequality;” and to “address apathy, ignorance, and racism wherever they exist.”³⁹²

Having made the case for situational sensitivity to diversity for equity with the imperative of inclusion for equality (Chapter I), the question then becomes, how will members of the dominant groups/non-minorities/Whites be prevailed upon to confront the educational setting, for it will ask much of them? They will have to acknowledge that at this point in our society we cannot escape the bounds of race, class, and gender, and that it has become necessary to use ones positionality to further the goal of educational equity and equality. Dominant culture members must become allies³⁹³ and use their influence to trouble “collective positions of privilege,” to “identify actions we can take to share power with non-white [minority] people,” and to engage in “dialog and coalition building.”³⁹⁴ Here my idea of affirmation action reinserts itself, for this kind of engagement requires much grace and trust. This will require dominant culture members to learn to step aside, listen, share, find ways to connect with minority culture members in meaningful ways, and be students of culture and alternate pedagogies.³⁹⁵ The seemingly simple act of listening to criticisms from minority communities is part of the large scale actions of engagement, empowerment, and equity in educational contexts.³⁹⁶ Dominant culture members will need to engage in serious personal reflection to address the disconnection between liberal

³⁹² Milner, *Culture, Curriculum, and Identity in Education*, xii.

³⁹³ Connie Titone, “Educating the White Teacher as Ally” in *White Reign: Deploying Whiteness in America*, ed. Joe Kincheloe and Shirley Steinberg (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 167. Adapting Titone’s concept I frame an ally as a teacher willing to be aware of their positionality. S/he is willing to engage the subjects of race, class, and gender and is pedagogically mindful of the interplay of race, class, and gender. S/he encourages the exploration of positionality for enlightenment and emancipation in the lives of her/his students. It is a teaching role that is proactively working to combat inequity and positions the teacher as an antiracist (and anti-classist and –sexist) role model. An ally’s dominant community power precludes being an insider within the marginalized community, but is offered as a resource if the marginalized community should chose to utilize it.

³⁹⁴ Sleeter and McLaren, 22.

³⁹⁵ Rehm and Allison, 260.

³⁹⁶ Kincheloe and Steinberg, 101.

ideologies that support equity and equality in education in theory, but in practice manifest in self-interested educational choices.³⁹⁷ Dominant culture members will have to confront their own ideologies that allow them to “bridge disparate streams of thought and salve the dissonance that results from the contradiction between their desired liberal identity and [their actual] positionality.”³⁹⁸ Prevailing attitudes demonstrate that many Whites still perceive injustice can be rectified without altering of their status.³⁹⁹

Through confronting one’s own positionality as it effects one’s own reality in education in this context powerful change is made more possible. Partnership can then alternately be garnered by the acknowledgement that teachers pragmatically have to have the competency to teach for equity and equality because the demographic reality is that the United States *is* a diverse nation. Teachers need to be able to meet the needs of all the students in their classes and prepare their students for life in a diverse society. State and federal policies require teachers to be equipped to teach in diverse populations. Additionally, educators are compelled by economic reasons to equip themselves and their students to function in a globalized marketplace cross-culturally in diverse environments. But this sort of rationale to court dominant member participation is not ideal. Rather I am suggesting empowering the teacher with awareness that will cause them to enact microcosmic acts of justice in the form of sensitivity to equity within their classroom communities to challenge educational inequity that is representative of macro level inequalities.

³⁹⁷ Ellen Brantlinger et. al., “Self-Interest and Liberal Educational Discourse: How Ideology Works for Middle-Class Mothers.” *American Educational Research Journal*, 33, no. 3 (Fall 1996), 572.

³⁹⁸ Brantlinger, 572.

³⁹⁹ H. Richard Milner. "Race, Culture, and Researcher Positionality: Working Through Dangers Seen, Unseen, and Unforeseen." *Educational Researcher* 36, no. 7 (2007): 391. Gloria Ladson-Billings, “Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education” *Teachers College Record* 97, no. 1 (1995): 55.

Inclusion of dominant members becomes a vital part of changing the trajectory in education because extending the audience without engaging them can be just as detrimental. In teacher education courses that prepare dominant culture members for minority school settings, Milner identifies the danger of teacher resistance, “silence in the face of important information about racism, injustice, and inequity,” inadvertent continuation of negative stereotypes, and the misinterpretation of what the needs are of targeted/minority students. He advocates a process of inquiry into oneself, oneself in relation to others, and oneself in relation to larger systemic structures. Milner suggests that this racial and cultural introspection is vital in settings that are seemingly homogenous (either predominantly dominant culture or predominantly minority communities) and settings where dominant and minority groups converge.⁴⁰⁰ It is by knowing our positionality and our cultural and social values, viewpoints, and biases on an individual and societal level, creating affective awareness, and exposing these values and behaviors in the classroom context, that I perceive we will be able to more ably confront practices that impede equity and equality.⁴⁰¹

Inclusion of dominant groups for the purpose of situational sensitivity to diversity for equity with the imperative of inclusion for equality will not only require teacher introspection regarding their positionality,⁴⁰² but a commitment to teacher education⁴⁰³ that develops skills for sensitivity to cultural diversity with a view to developing cultural competence. Texts and courses “delineating characteristic and issues, lesson ideas, and varied strategies pertinent to specific cultures,” coupled with “immersion in experiences with people of other cultures to stimulate genuine relationships” to foster “understanding and responsive actions when working

⁴⁰⁰ Milner, *Race, Culture, and Researcher Positionality*, 397.

⁴⁰¹ Milner, *Race, Culture, and Researcher Positionality*, 397, Perry and Fraser, 105.

⁴⁰² Perry and Fraser, 99.

⁴⁰³ See Chapter V for more on teacher education.

with students of varied backgrounds” is one scholar’s recommendation.⁴⁰⁴ By developing a degree of cultural competence, educators will be able to become sensitive to the different ways of knowing (epistemologies),⁴⁰⁵ engaging the community they will teach in (participating and collaborating in community projects), and embrace a culturally responsive curriculum that understands that knowledge is co-constructed⁴⁰⁶ and connects the curriculum to the students’ culture and language.⁴⁰⁷

Nieto suggests that it is the teachers who should do the institutional transforming to promote learning through careful implementation of curriculum and pedagogy through a critical lens, and I agree. Despite the limitations of curriculum, and in many instances pedagogy, teacher’s philosophically positional awareness and situational sensitivity can value constructive thinking, relational (e)pistemologies, and create democratic learning communities. Nieto states that it is beliefs and values that produce affirmative learning communities, beliefs such as: “all students have talents and strengths, all students are capable of high levels of learning, students’ families and communities are meaningful partners in promoting learning, students learn best when they are engaged, active, and working in collaboration with others, student learning is promoted when there is a strong connection to teachers, schools, and learning.”⁴⁰⁸ Nieto provides examples of tools for dominant culture teachers to confront and transform the education setting by encouraging teachers to learn about their students, connect with student families, and develop collaborative relationships with fellow educators. Through reflection on issues of positionality, it is my hope that a positive transformative effect to advance educational equity will start with

⁴⁰⁴ Rehm and Allison, 263.

⁴⁰⁵ Milner, *Race, Culture, and Researcher Positionality*, 395.

⁴⁰⁶ See Barbara Thayer-Bacon, *Relational “(e)pistemologies*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003.

⁴⁰⁷ Angelina Castagno and Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy. "Culturally Responsive Schooling for Indigenous Youth: A Review of the Literature." *Review of Educational Research* 78, no. 4 (2008): 947.

⁴⁰⁸ Nieto, *Light in their Eyes*, 101-129.

the educators when they perceive systemic inequities, personal experiences of domination and oppression, different ways of knowing and being, and begin to rationally distinguish the effect race, class, and gender have on educational outcome. This awareness of equity, diversity, and inclusion will then effect educator's choices of curriculum and pedagogy which will positively impact student achievement, and ultimately undermine the oppressive forces in play that perpetuate the inequities within education.

There are a number of challenges and questions regarding the inclusion of more diverse and inclusive voices, the most glaring being that the risk of decentering⁴⁰⁹ minority voices. The call for inclusion of dominant voices in the field of multicultural education may simply be the need for White scholar's and educators such as myself to find a niche.⁴¹⁰ The specter of the "White Savior" looms as dominant group members attempt to address issues of equity and equality without being prescriptive, paternalistic, or patronizing. Can White teachers seek justice and mercy, while retaining humility?⁴¹¹ When does inclusion become encroachment and reenactment of domination? Do minority communities want to collaborate with dominant group members given histories of oppression and marginalization?

Additional difficulties include challenging unjust high-stakes testing practices, finding consensus, and compromising when it comes to curriculum⁴¹² and adjusting pedagogical

⁴⁰⁹ Decentering is a process whereby those who have been marginalized create a new center on the edges of the dominant discourses and create their own counter-narratives that foster stories which can be shared with dominant groups to address their blindness to issues of oppressive power. My goal would be to encourage an inclusive discourse incorporating multiple voices and a dialog between dominant and marginalized groups to counteract domination, but the risk is that White voices will shift focus away from the margins or supersede new centers of marginalized discourse. See Suzanne Gallagher, *Educational Psychology: Disrupting the Dominant Discourse* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 23.

⁴¹⁰ Rosa Hernandez Sheets. "Advancing the Field or Taking Center Stage: The White Movement in Multicultural Education." *Educational Researcher* 29, no. 9 (2000), 15.

⁴¹¹ "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8

⁴¹² Nieto, *Light in their Eyes*, 180.

practices to reflect a focus on equity.⁴¹³ Conversely, the challenge remains to create teachers with a transformative agenda *and* the skills to “participate competently and responsibly in a reciprocal, complex teaching-learning process with our children.”⁴¹⁴ Another difficulty is the “situated nature of oppression (whereby oppression plays out differently for different people in different contexts) and the multiple and intersecting identities of students”⁴¹⁵ hence my call for a situated sensitivity.⁴¹⁶ Dominant voices will continually have to resist essentializing and generalizing. They will have to remain ever sensitive to issues of oppression as they manifest themselves uniquely. They will have to realize that they can never fully know or teach about the “Other,” and that they will only ever have a partial perspective.⁴¹⁷ Navigating what oppression is, critique, and transformative action and the discomfort that comes with this process will be a life-long endeavor that may not appeal to members of the dominant group. Additionally, they will be compelled to navigate a “different route to ensure the growth and development of their students” as their philosophy, pedagogy, and personal commitments change.⁴¹⁸ They will be challenged to redefine what a “normal student” is, disrupt their own “deficit discourses and beliefs,”⁴¹⁹ trouble their views of the pervasiveness of the effects of socioeconomic status,⁴²⁰ and deal with race and racism,⁴²¹ not to mention reflect on who they are in relation to their students,

⁴¹³ Nieto, *Light in their Eyes*, 181.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴¹⁵ Kevin Kumashiro. "Toward a Theory of Anti-Oppressive Education." *Review of Educational Research* 70, no. 1 (2000): 30.

⁴¹⁶ My concept of situational sensitivity is explained fully in Chapter I and describes a strategy that is constantly looking for patterns of discrimination, their effects, and possible solutions.

⁴¹⁷ Kumashiro, 34.

⁴¹⁸ Gloria Ladson-Billings. *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994), 15-29.

⁴¹⁹ Milner, *Race, Culture, and Researcher Positionality*, 389.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, 390.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*

the community they serve, and the society they are members of,⁴²² and confront the effects of their power and privilege.

However, there are benefits. Exposures to theories such as critical theory help educators examine race, privilege, and normativity.⁴²³ Connections can be made between race, class, and gender and new social vision can be envisaged as the specific groups converge⁴²⁴ with a view to developing sensitivity to diversity regarding equity while striving for inclusive equality. We can find inclusion and transformation in solidarity, rather than seeking consensus⁴²⁵ and work together to bring about mutually beneficial change.

Educational benefits include the valuing of multiple epistemologies⁴²⁶ and the extension of pedagogies employed⁴²⁷ to improve achievement for all students. Students also benefit from these curriculum and pedagogies, not simply by being able to achieve academically, but by being equipped to be change agents. Banks asserts how the problems of this world are not the result of not being able to read and write, but rather because we don't know how to get along and collaborate to solve our problems. He states, "[s]urely all students, not only those outside of the mainstream, need and deserve learning opportunities that provide the knowledge, skills, awareness, and understanding necessary to combat these and other social problems and perhaps experience the world more fully."⁴²⁸ I am convinced of it.

⁴²² Milner, *Race, Culture, and Researcher Positionality*, 394-97.

⁴²³ Kumashiro, 30.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁴²⁶ Castegano and Brayboy, 952.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, 954.

⁴²⁸ James A. Banks, "Teaching Literacy for Social Justice and Global Citizenship," *Language Arts* 81, no. 1 (2003): 18. Quoted in Milner, *Start Where You Are*, 106.

Critical Theory Again and Again (and of course Positionality)

The call to end oppression in the school setting requires appreciation of the critical theory that is often infused within these ideas. Critical theory⁴²⁹ (or when it intersects education, critical pedagogy⁴³⁰) is woven into the fabric of the multicultural education, qualitative research theory, and philosophy of education that have impacted me. Critical theory informs these disciplinary fields in nuanced and differing iterations. For example multicultural education scholar Geneva Gay has noted the “ideological, conceptual, and operational parallels between multicultural education and critical pedagogy,” as they relate to “issues of educational access, equity, and excelling in a culturally pluralistic society and world.”⁴³¹ Gay describes multiculturalism and critical theory as both philosophies and methodologies that adhere to the ideals of “personal liberation, critical democracy, and social equality and an acceptance of the political and partisan knowledge, human learning, and the educational process.”⁴³² I bear the imprint of critical theory’s support of the mindset that “promotes criticism in the search for quality education” and enables “critique in order to forge alternative and less oppressive social arrangements.”⁴³³ This is a necessary tool for dominant culture members, such as myself, to come to understand how domination and oppression occur and how social systems influence individual experiences and visa versa.⁴³⁴

This critical conscious-raising is manifest in my interest in philosophically positional personal preparation for situational sensitivity. Positionality reminds us that we are raced,

⁴²⁹ I use the term critical theory while some scholars use “critical social theory” or “critical social science.”

⁴³⁰ Kincheloe and Steinberg, 24.

⁴³¹ Geneva Gay, “Mirror Images on Common Issues: Parallels Between Multicultural Education and Critical Pedagogy” in *Multicultural Education: Critical Pedagogy and the Politics of Difference*, ed. Christine Sleeter and Peter McLaren (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 155.

⁴³² Gay, “Mirror Images,” 156.

⁴³³ Zeus Leonardo, “Critical Social Theory and Transformative Knowledge: The Functions of Criticism in Quality Education.” *Educational Researcher*, 33, no. 6 (Aug.-Sept., 2004): 11.

⁴³⁴ Leonardo, 11.

classed, and gendered, and that our knowledge is socially constructed. Analysis of our situatedness and embodiedness, the questions of dominance and power, and the negotiated, contested, and mediated working out of our identities is a critical endeavor.⁴³⁵ Since educators are positioned, their identities and knowledge are situated. Thus the work of perceiving the social construction of knowledge from multiple perspectives is “essential to understanding how to create equitable and culturally representative pedagogical strategies.”⁴³⁶ The connection is made between multiculturalism, critical theory, and positionality in that “many potential teachers remain unaware of their positionality as racially privilege, class dominant...or as advantaged (or disadvantaged) because of gender;” these theoretical bed-fellows can be the site of developing consciousness of oppression and challenging of our perceptions of ourselves and others.⁴³⁷ Critical theory focuses on how domination occurs and critical theorists do the work of stimulating “an individual’s consciousness of himself or herself as a social being.”⁴³⁸ As critical multiculturalists Kincheloe and Steinberg explain,

An individual who has gained such a consciousness understands how and why his or her political opinions, socio-economic class, role, religious beliefs, gender role and racial self-image are shaped by dominant perspectives. Critical theory thus promotes self-reflection that results in changes of perspective. Men and women come to know themselves by bringing to consciousness the process by which their view points were formed.⁴³⁹

In educational contexts the consciousness that critical theory brings to bear helps educators see issues of power, privilege, illusions of neutrality, misapprehensions of objectivity, and inequity

⁴³⁵ Renee Martin and Dawn Van Gunten. "Reflected Identities: Applying Positionality and Multicultural Social Reconstruction in Teacher Education." *Journal of Teacher Education* 53, no. 1 (2002): 46.

⁴³⁶ Martin and Van Gunten, 46.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 46-47.

⁴³⁸ Kincheloe and Steinberg, 23.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 23-24.

within school structures and curriculum.⁴⁴⁰ This may sound familiar; it is an echo of the philosophical discourses of Thayer-Bacon and Martin that have informed me.

Returning to the qualitative theorists that have influenced me, we see again the imprint of critical theory. Madison quotes Jim Thomas: “[Social critique] implies evaluative judgment of meaning and method in research, policy, and human activity....Critical thinking implies freedom by recognizing the social existence, including our knowledge of it, is not simply composed of givens imposed on us by powerful and mysterious forces.”⁴⁴¹ Consequently, critical theory creates a space to seek “possibilities in institutions and agency in individuals.”⁴⁴² Madison later articulates her role or agency as it is informed by critical theory as: to name the hidden forces, turn our gaze to include others, to make power structures blatant, to attend to what is intuitively sensed, and to “provide insight and inspire acts of justice.”⁴⁴³ This role is certainly one I would like to value in my own work as I engage in a personal project that is contextualized within a large-scale societal milieu. This balance between institutional and individual possibility is essential when engaging teachers. For, with critique comes possibility (the wonderful coupling of theory with action), but this often brings with it a sense of responsibility and even culpability.

However, examination of positionality is not an exercise to simply place blame at the feet of teachers for the institutional inequities of the nation. I engage in critical reflection to expose inequities for the sake of germinating possibilities within individuals, not to assign or assuage guilt. Carol Morgaine, a professor and coordinator of child and family studies, offers an example of the possibilities of critical theory to guide family life educators and teacher educators in helping their students think about their assumptions and expectations to better understand our

⁴⁴⁰ Kincheloe and Steinberg, 24.

⁴⁴¹ Madison, 13.

⁴⁴² Leonardo, 16.

⁴⁴³ Madison, 13.

complex educational spaces in a “Critical Theory of Self-Formation.”⁴⁴⁴ Morgaine notes that critical theory perceives that systems are in place that advance certain communities at the expense of others and that critical theory exposes the ways “social and cultural realities may be hindering the human potential of all people.”⁴⁴⁵ I have suggested that oppressed communities *and* dominant community members need to examine societal structures as well as their own values, beliefs, and assumptions about everyday life (in other words, their positionality) to be, as Morgaine frames it, “enlightened about hidden influences in [our] own personal and social situations.”⁴⁴⁶

During a process of personal critical inquiry Morgaine as a family life and teacher educator realized that mastery of the content and skills was not prevailing over her pre-professional student’s original values, beliefs, and assumptions despite her attempts to seek to facilitate praxis. “[I]nstead of valuing diversity and justice, the students allowed their value judgments to influence their actions.”⁴⁴⁷ Morgaine’s reflections revealed that student acknowledgement of bias and prejudice was often shaming or resulted in denial. So to encourage students to move beyond being paralyzed by guilt or becoming resistant, Morgaine helped her students look at subordination and domination to critically examine their own oppressive life experiences. This fostered enlightenment, which in turn spurred emancipatory action toward making equitable changes in the professional behavior of the students (praxis). Students using critical inquiry to look at their own experiences of oppression and how oppression works, were more inclined to increase just and ethical professional actions. Morgaine models the process of critical inquiry by paying attention to herself: listening to her own processes of

⁴⁴⁴ Morgaine, 325.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

thinking and feeling while teaching, and being mindful or thoughtful of her pedagogy and her students responses. It was in this process of critical reflection that Morgaine was able to perceive her student's presuppositions based on prior learning that were impeding their coming to consciousness regarding issues of equity and equality.

To facilitate enlightenment Morgaine attempted to equalize power⁴⁴⁸ between herself and her students, created a dialogue between herself and the students to encourage reflection, included students in curricular choices, and integrated interpretive forms of knowledge (personal journals, films, novels, etc.) into her course texts.⁴⁴⁹ Morgaine then began to "peel back the layers of meaning" through dialogue that attempted to be non-elitist and non-manipulative while engaging in dialectical thinking that looked for contradictions and competing arguments. Discrepancy analysis identified the gaps between the desired ends and the realities. Finally, rational arguments were given to persuade these pre-professional family life and education students regarding privilege and other hidden forms of oppressive social relations. Morgaine suggests that the students were consequently more likely to begin to see themselves as being positioned and the potential was fostered to change their views of themselves and others upon examination of their self-formation.

This critical theory of self-formation suggests that an individual's self-formation is influenced by power and may result in a sense of abandonment, shame, defenses, addictions, prejudice, and oppression. It assumes that human beings' authentic selves are distorted when they live in hierarchical social systems. As individuals reflect upon concepts embedded within the theory, enlightenment may be facilitated. Praxis, or emancipatory actions – both personal and societal- are expected as enlightenment begins. This action creates a transformative effect as it critiques and seeks alternatives.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁸ It must be noted that it is a fallacy in the classroom environment where grades are given to create equality between students and instructors. However, I believe Morgaine's intent is to make a concerted effort to try and foster greater equality where possible in the classroom space.

⁴⁴⁹ I have emulated the use of interpretive forms of knowledge in my own graduate course "Teachers, Schools, and Society" for students seeking teaching credentials through the use of film, blogging, journaling, etc.

⁴⁵⁰ Morgaine, 333.

Morgaine notes that her student's, through exposure to her critical theory of self-formation, were more likely to develop greater awareness of "diverse realities of life and realization of the ways historical and macro-sociopolitical factors have influenced individuals and families" and become committed to addressing injustice. Similarly, with this sort of expanded critical theoretical outlook, I am hopeful that teachers might embrace pedagogies such as strength-based instruction, promote talent potential and cultural assets, and develop student funds of knowledge.⁴⁵¹ These sorts of teacher practices would foster new possibilities to address "achievement gaps" and facilitate classrooms that will be receptive to issues of diversity and inclusion.⁴⁵²

Conclusion

Failing reforms should cause us to pause and assess our strategies for addressing "achievement gaps." Philosophy and positionality help us (un)pack our backpack as educators as we proceed on this transformative route. Positionality reflects our "frames of reference," "ideological positions and normative assumptions,"⁴⁵³ and "goals, knowledge, beliefs, [and] strategies."⁴⁵⁴ One's gender, class, race, religion, epistemological and ontological orientations, and geographic and historical context all form part of the embedded, embodied nature of positionality and its effects on our identity and actions (in the case of educators, our perceptions of students, choices of curriculum, and pedagogical practices). In the light of postmodern critique that implodes myths and deconstructs metanarratives while questioning our construction of knowledge, power structures, hegemony, and the social constructiveness of our institutions, educators need to explicitly examine their positionality. Myths of impartiality, color-blindness,

⁴⁵¹ Milner, *Diversity and Education*, xxii-xxiii.

⁴⁵² These sorts of possibilities will be explored in Chapter V.

⁴⁵³ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum Books, 1993), 36-37.

⁴⁵⁴ Rehm and Allison, 261.

and neutrality or fears of domination, meritocracy, and decentering are embodied in the current high-stakes testing and accountability reforms. Teachers need to be able to unpack these myths from their positionalities, (through conscious-raising) and repack situational sensitivity for nurturing diversity and fostering inclusion (through personal preparation), that ultimately manifests in equitable pedagogical praxis.

Multicultural and critical theories and qualitative research methodologies help us attend to issues of diversity and inclusion that philosophy and positionality bring to the fore. I believe sensitivity to diversity for the sake of equity and the imperative of inclusion for equality will alter the trajectory of the education setting through engagement of all our educators for the success of all our children. In connecting theoretical work to my own personal preparation for situational sensitivity pedagogical, praxis has followed. In Chapter IV I will explore the incorporating of potentially transformative theory into the practice of designing and teaching graduate level social foundations of education course. Chapter V will conclude this project with how engagement with the educationally theoretical and ideal can possibly impact our practice as teachers literally and feasibly.

CHAPTER IV

Introduction

And the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom. — Anaïs Nin⁴⁵⁵

I have shared the impact of philosophy of education, multicultural education, critical theory, and qualitative research courses on my journey as an educator. Being exposed to certain theoretical curriculum conveyed through particular pedagogies has influenced my philosophically positional personal preparation and has set me on a course of a life-long transformative hike striving towards educational equality. This approach has resulted in a manifestation of pedagogical praxis that is unique for me as an evolving practitioner and for every group of students I teach, as I now seek to use curriculum and pedagogy in an equally transformative way. In this chapter I will explore the effects of incorporating potentially transformative theories and practices into the designing and teaching of a graduate level social foundations of education course, “Teachers, Schools, and Society” (see Appendix 2 for syllabus). My section of the course was intended to promote conscious-raising through exploration of positionality and philosophy of education, with an end goal of teachers pedagogically enacting praxis that demonstrates equity sensitivity.

In my attempt to facilitate “the development of self-consciousness for teachers”⁴⁵⁶ regarding issues of sensitivity to diversity for equity with the imperative of inclusion for equality I designed “Teachers, Schools, and Society” to formatively and summatively incorporate the sharing of narratives. The formative narratives took the form of journal or blog entries. Six of

⁴⁵⁵ Anaïs Nin and Gunther Stuhlmann. *The Diary of Anaïs Nin*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971.

⁴⁵⁶ Geneva Gay, *Becoming Multicultural Educators: Personal Journey Toward Professional Agency* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003), xii.

these reflective journals or blog entries were responses to their reading of American Education by Joel Spring. I encouraged the students to incorporate into their journal/blog entries connections to prior learning and/or experiences, connections professionally, connections personally, and connections to the course lexicon (our shared vocabulary that included words such as classism, complicity, dominancy, ethnocentrism, power, co-optation, invisibility, privilege, sexism, racism, hegemony). Each student also viewed four popular culture movies and responded in their journal or blog, making the same connections as the text-based responses. These narratives placed value on connections to prior learning and/or experiences, professionally, personally, and the course lexicon, rather than act as an assessment of student reading comprehension or to police student completion of the readings assigned. I did this to establish inclusion and validation of student experiences, to show appreciation of their diverse responses, to start involving the students in construction of knowledge by engaging their contributions, and to lead their gaze from the textual contribution, to themselves, and on to their practice. I asked the students to either journal in a different font and color than they used for papers or use the medium of a blog. My attempt was to at least to some degree help the students move away from performance for me as their instructor to personal reflective practices that were candid and authentic renderings of their engagement. Students later noted that this guidance was effective in moving them away from writing to represent the thoughts of others to sharing their own voice. This kind of engagement is vital for exploring positionality, developing sensitivity, conscious-raising, and life-long reflexivity in practice.

The summative narratives were in the form of a traditional final paper with the goal of summarizing what they had discovered about their positionality and sharing their philosophy of education theoretically (their aim, role of teachers and students, curriculum and context,

pedagogy, and epistemology) and practically (represent with written description or other media what their classroom will look like). I did this to value students that place importance in traditional academic rigor as represented by assessments such as writing papers. It also helped students revisit the philosophy and positionality texts that they had been absorbing and develop and express their own philosophy's of education and positionality's. Additionally, despite its traditional approach, the final paper still offered a means for me to demonstrate to the students how to be inclusive, think about the problem of normativity, and value different learning styles. Inclusion was modeled in that the students were involved in creating the rubric that I would use to grade the papers. Normativity was challenged in that I made explicit the nature of this sort of assessment, its dominance in our educational setting, and what sort of learners it implicitly valued. Different learning styles were valued by including a model of their classroom that would afford spacial, visual, and creative opportunities to excel in an assessment.

In this text thus far I have incorporated the theorizing of experience infused with illustrative narrative to explain my development of situational sensitivity. In this chapter I would like to bring in the voices of the graduate students of "Teachers, Schools, and Society" found in their afore mentioned writings. Using these narratives I will share four student voices and tentatively evaluate my attempt to encourage similar journeys of transformation to my own, as "the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom."⁴⁵⁷ These narratives were selected as evidentiary material to illustrate the potential of increasing sensitivity in educators. I selected four student's narratives based on their representations of various positions on a continuum of situationally sensitivity approach towards diversity and inclusion. The nature of my selection and the continuum draw on my emersion in transformative theory and

⁴⁵⁷ Nin.

extended engagement with my participant students and their journals/blogs and final papers. Deep engagement with theory and the participant students evolved into an intuited sense of progression. I resisted classification, retaining a fluid continuum to avoid the quantifying of stages of consciousness or sensitivity. The four voices, beginning with the first narrative, each represent an evolution towards greater sensitivity to equity and inclusion. I selected these four because their narratives reflect differing points along a range that includes emergent understanding of situational sensitivity, relational (e)pistemologies, constructive thinking, and democratic community. Its array comprises the perpetual process of personal preparation, increasing in consciousness of dominant discourses, cultural diversity, privilege and power, and hidden curriculum. Continued progression along the continuum demonstrates reflexivity and the ability to contest, critique, and contextualize. Students show appreciation of the relevance and applicability of critical education theory and this is manifest in their views on curriculum and pedagogy. Advanced progression exhibits ideas of emancipation and empowerment of others, cultural competence, and a movement away from monocultural view points and assimilationist ideals. The models, continuums, imaginings, descriptions, and recommendations that inform my nebulous composite description will be laid out for the reader at length in Chapter V.

Voices on the Trail

As I mentioned in Chapter I, Gay's 2003 work Becoming Multicultural Educators is my exemplar of evolutionary stories of educators who are discovering and committing to similar goals of equity, opportunity, and achievement of targeted students.⁴⁵⁸ Gay's text reflects the process of conscious-raising I have tried to nurture in "Teachers, Schools, and Society"; the

⁴⁵⁸ Gay, *Becoming Multicultural Educators*, xi.

“becoming critically conscious of one’s own knowledge, attitudes, and skills....and the process of how these evolve.”⁴⁵⁹ The teachers in the Gay text share narratives that are “personal, professional, and autobiographical”⁴⁶⁰ of their emergence as multicultural educators to stimulate conversation about teaching diverse students. I have similarly sought the philosophically positional stories of teachers. I have also taken up Gay’s focus on “personal preparation”⁴⁶¹ because it is uniquely transformative and gives the hope that sharing stories of “how individuals are engaging with the challenge of personal growth...[will] illustrate the dynamic, complex, and developmental nature of the process.”⁴⁶² I have suggested that conscious-raising can be supported, but cannot be prescribed, so I will tentatively consider the movements of my students along a continuum. This continuum represents the evolving process of a journey of sensitivity to equity and inclusion.⁴⁶³

My hope as the instructor of “Teachers, Schools, and Society” was to develop sensitivity within students through troubling the hidden curriculums that denigrate the marginalized and to broaden the students’ views on inclusivity. I did this based on the belief that sensitivity is an essential step towards enacting the theories I laid out in Chapter II such as Barbara Thayer-Bacon’s relational “(e)spistemologies,” constructive thinking, and democratic community. Through appreciation of theories that stimulate sensitivity, I hoped to foster greater consciousness regarding equity, inclusion, care, and appreciation of diversity within the graduate students which would in turn affect their educational practices. My goal was to create a

⁴⁵⁹ Gay, *Becoming Multicultural Educators*, xi.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁶² Gay, 4. Sonia Nieto. *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education* (New York: Longman, 1992), 273.

⁴⁶³ The models, continuums, imaginings, descriptions, and recommendations that inform my analysis will be laid out for the reader at length in Chapter V.

classroom space where binaries, such as the productive and reproductive, mind and body, and theory and pedagogy were explored.⁴⁶⁴ I hoped that the classroom community would find new points of validation and potential for inclusion. I sought to explicitly engage in consciousness raising regarding gender, race, and class, because they are impacting student achievement in a fundamental way and are part of the fabric of our society. I wanted students to start to think about how to attune curriculum and pedagogy to their classroom contexts and to begin to think about how to do the work of crossing over the “gaps” and consequently reducing them. Since gender, race, and class are so deep-seated we must attend to them in educational theory and practice, failure to do so would be “[i]mplicitly reinforcing the very stereotypes and unequal practices [society] claims to abhor, it makes invisible the very problem it seeks to be addressing.”⁴⁶⁵ I wanted students to grasp that if the problem of normativity of dominant culture remains generally obscured and the job of addressing the dangers of sexism, racism, and classism is relegated to those intimately affected by it, an infinite loop of dominance, marginalization, and resistance is unfortunately the outcome rather than sensitivity to diversity for equity with the imperative of inclusion for equality.

I asked the students in “Teachers, Schools, and Society” to consent to being part of a pilot project that would help me assess the use of textual materials to inform students about the role of perspectives, philosophy, positionality, and praxis in a social foundations course. I needed their help to assess my modeling of pedagogical practices informed by the textual materials used and evaluate their process of coming to consciousness vis-à-vis philosophy of education and

⁴⁶⁴ Frances Mayer and Mary Kay Thompson Tetreault. *The Feminist Classroom: Dynamics of Gender, Race, and Privilege*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001.

⁴⁶⁵ Jane Roland Martin, *Reclaiming a Conversation: The Ideal of the Educated Woman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 195.

positionality and how it affects teaching and learning in educational settings. The research participants were thus graduate students of education recruited by me, their former instructor, in a researcher capacity. The students' of "Teachers, Schools, and Society" participation was entirely voluntary and they were informed in writing regarding the purpose and procedures of the study and were provided a written consent form to sign outlining their rights and participation requirements (see Appendix 3). I only approached them once they had completed the course and all grades were final. After contacting the students, explaining the risks and benefits of the study, and obtaining their consent (see Appendix 3) I asked them to complete an on-line survey (see Appendix 4) and I asked to have access to their class journals/blog entries and final papers/projects.

Nine students agreed to participate in the anonymous on-line survey which provided me with demographic information and open-ended responses that dealt with the didactic elements of my research, such as student opinions of the texts and my teaching strategies as modeling philosophically positional situational sensitivity. Their contribution also included their writings (ten journal/blog entries and a final paper each). The latter provided me with an abundance of personal narratives. I utilized a heuristic approach to make meaning of the rich data I now had. I tried to remain open to new concepts and attempt to allow the data to change my perceptions and endeavored to keep the topic of research as preliminary and subject to change during the exploration. Initially I was struck by the strands of race, class, and gender that were found across the student narratives. However, after this preliminary reading for significance I determined to present a selection of self-contained student voices for the majority of my analysis. This was a move to mimic Abu-Lughod's "ethnographies of the particular"⁴⁶⁶ which seek to unsettle the

⁴⁶⁶ Lila Abu-Lughod, *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present* (Pennsylvania: Sar Press, 1991), 466.

boundaries of the group and the individual, despite this not being an ethnographic endeavor. This tactic seeks to avoid hegemonic assumptions by valuing exceptionality.⁴⁶⁷ Such an analytical research approach reflects the ying-yang of Thayer-Bacon's treatment of the individual and community and the work of positionality to attend to the individual and the effects of their positions in community.⁴⁶⁸ I decided to focus my thematic analysis⁴⁶⁹ on student philosophies of education and positionality and keep the individual narratives intact as much as possible so as to preserve the particular embodied and embeddedness of each voice for the reader.

Our Route: "Teachers, Schools, and Society"

The voices I share are those of students who enrolled in the graduate level education course "Teachers, Schools, and Society" which I taught for the first time during a recent semester at a large southeastern state university. "Teachers, Schools, and Society" is a social foundations of education course that is directed by the Cultural Studies in Education masters program. It used to be a required course for all teacher education students as part of the university's teacher licensure program. "Teachers, Schools, and Society" remains part of the graduate elective course offerings available to teacher education students, 90% of whom elect to complete a masters degree. The teacher education program at the university follows a model in which students complete four years of undergraduate requirements and one year of masters work, leaving only 12 credit hours necessary for students to obtain their masters degree should they

⁴⁶⁷ Abu-Lughod, 467.

⁴⁶⁸ Barbara Thayer-Bacon with Charles S. Bacon. *Philosophy Applied to Education: Nurturing a Democratic Community in the Classroom*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Merrill, 1998.

⁴⁶⁹ Carol Grbich, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Introduction* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007), 3-15.

elect to do so. The course attracts educators from primary, secondary, and higher education, and ranges from pre-service teachers to veteran educators.

The students that consented to be a part of my project were all women. Thirty-three percent of the group had a bachelors degree, while 66% had also obtained a masters degree. The majority of the group taught in kindergarten through eighth grade classes, while the others taught high school and in higher education, and one student was a distance education teacher. Twenty-two percent self-identified themselves as working class, 33% as middle class, and 44% as upper class. The majority of the participating women self-identified as White, with a smaller number describing themselves as African-American, and the smallest percentage as Native American.

I carefully crafted the course to not only cover topics but to model the philosophical, epistemological, and pedagogical approaches in my curriculum selection, assessment, and pedagogy. The course was structured around four key topics: educational perspectives, philosophy of education, positionality, and pedagogical praxis. At the onset we created a class lexicon to foster a shared language to guide classroom discussion, journal/blog reflections, and the final positionality statements and philosophy of education papers. Students engaged in creating the class lexicon, journaling or blogging in response to the text, journaling or blogging in response to movies, and their final papers. In order to demonstrate curricular choices that valued inclusion and diversity and modeled equity in the validation of marginalized voices, I selected the texts of an indigenous scholar and a feminist scholar, both outstanding contributors in their respective fields. The primary texts were American Education⁴⁷⁰ by Joel Spring to provide historical and sociological perspectives and context regarding the goals of education,

⁴⁷⁰ Joel Spring, *American Education* 14th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010.

equality of opportunity in education, issues of diversity, multicultural education, and so forth. Philosophy Applied to Education⁴⁷¹ by Barbara Thayer-Bacon with Charles Bacon was used to relate “philosophical perspectives to actual classroom contexts so that the theoretical can be more easily understood and teachers can see how theory is translated into practice.”⁴⁷² This text also (re)introduced the students and myself to the key concepts of relational “(e)pistemologies”, constructive thinking, justice and care, and cultural diversity in a democratic classroom. Two texts of fellow philosopher Jane Roland Martin (Cultural Miseducation and Educational Metamorphosis⁴⁷³) were also incorporated into brief class lectures and were used to generate discussion and activities. The topic of positionality was explored as it intersected with issues of gender, race, and class using scholarly articles from current research and seminal works.⁴⁷⁴ Pedagogical praxis was modeled and made explicit throughout the course. Setting arrangements, ice-breakers, assignments, groupings were all made clear and discussed. I strove to use as many strategies as possible to show the link between the theory we were studying and my practice in the hopes that this would translate into students incorporating the theories into their own pedagogical repertoires. Praxis was also facilitated through sharing resources to make

⁴⁷¹ Barbara Thayer-Bacon with Charles S. Bacon. *Philosophy Applied to Education: Nurturing a Democratic Community in the Classroom*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Merrill, 1998.

⁴⁷² Thayer-Bacon, *Philosophy Applied to Education*, v.

⁴⁷³ Jane Roland Martin, *Cultural Miseducation: In Search of a Democratic Solution*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2002. *Educational Metamorphoses: Philosophical Reflections on Identity and Culture*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007.

⁴⁷⁴ Jean Anyon. “Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work” *Journal of Education*, 162, no. 1 (1980): 67-92. Peggy McIntosh. “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.” *Independent School* 49, no. 2 (1990): 31-36. H. Richard Milner IV, “Preservice Teachers’ Learning about Cultural and Racial Diversity: Implications for Urban Education.” *Urban Education* 41, no 4 (2006): 343-375. H. Richard Milner IV, “Race, Culture, and Researcher Positionality: Working Through Dangers Seen, Unseen, and Unforeseen.” *Educational Researcher* 36, no. 7 (2007): 388-400. Carol Morgaine, “Enlightenment for Emancipation: A Critical Theory of Self-Formation.” *Family Relations* 1 (1994): 325- 350. Kate Rousmaniere, “Losing Patience and Staying Professional: Women Teachers and the Problem of Classroom Discipline in New York City Schools in the 1920s.” *History of Education Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (1994): 49-68. David Sadker. “Gender Equity: Still Knocking at the Classroom Door.” *Educational Leadership* 56, no. 7 (1999): 22-26. James Scheurich, “Toward a White Discourse on White Racism.” *Educational Researcher* 22, no. 8 (1993): 5-10. Renee Martin and Dawn Van Gunten. “Reflected Identities: Applying Positionality and Multicultural Social Reconstruction in Teacher Education.” *Journal of Teacher Education* 53, no. 1 (2002): 44-54.

connections to practices of sensitivity to diversity and inclusion. Resources included “Teaching Tolerance”⁴⁷⁵ activities, “Civil Discourse in the Classroom”⁴⁷⁶ materials from the Southern Poverty Law Center, professional journals,⁴⁷⁷ and sharing and modeling throughout the course the Tribes⁴⁷⁸ method to facilitate a community of learners. The book Reel Diversity⁴⁷⁹ was used to demonstrate the use of media to model theoretical principles of equity towards diversity. Students selected four films from a list⁴⁸⁰ of contemporary and commercially popular movies whose subject matter pertained to education and issues of gender, race, and class, and used the class lexicon for personal reflection and analysis. I also included a number of mini-lessons using film vignettes.

Enacting Pedagogical Praxis in “Teachers, Schools, and Society”

The reader is by now familiar with the texts that informed my personal preparation regarding philosophy and positionality (see Chapters II and III). During “Teachers, Schools, and Society” we explored as many of the same texts as was feasible in multiple ways (reading, reflecting, graphic organizers, cooperative learning groups, discussions, journaling, blogging, etc.), engaged in author recommended activities and patterns of questioning, and drew connections between our personal experiences and other texts (books, articles, movies, songs, events in the news, etc.) It is tempting to share synopses of the texts, their value, and our

⁴⁷⁵ Teaching Tolerance Project (www.teachingtolerance.org)

⁴⁷⁶ *Writing for Change: Raising Awareness of Difference, Power, and Discrimination*, a resource of the Southern Poverty Law Center

⁴⁷⁷ *American Educational Research Journal, Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, Educational Researcher, Review of Educational Research, Review of Research in Education, Education Week, Harvard Education Review, Education Next*

⁴⁷⁸ Jeanne Gibbs. *Tribes: A New Way of Learning and Being Together*. Windsor, CA: Center Source Systems, 2001.

⁴⁷⁹ Brian Johnson and Skyra C. Blanchard. *Reel Diversity: A Teacher's Sourcebook*. New York: P. Lang, 2008.

⁴⁸⁰ *Tortilla Soup* (2001), *Becoming Jane* (2007), *Crash* (2005), *Amazing Grace* (2006), *Dangerous Minds* (1995), *Freedom Writers* (2007), *Guess Who* (2005), *Remember the Titans* (2000), *Swing Kids* (1993), *A Walk to Remember* (2002), *Princess Kaulani* (2010), *Blindside* (2009), *My Fair Lady* (1964), *I Buried My Heart at Wounded Knee* (2007)

engagements with them. However, I will spare the reader a rehashing of questionable scholarly value and the dull reading that would make. I would, however, like to take some time to briefly share two texts that helped me enact pedagogically what I had discovered theoretically. These texts offered a vital bridge that linked theory to practice so that I could walk the walk of praxis, not just talk the talk.

The book Tribes offered a means to foster a new pattern of interaction within the classroom space that dove-tailed with the philosophically positional theoretical grounding I wished to establish. The Tribes model invites people to reflect upon and share their own experiences in a step called inclusion. Tribes maintains that experiences of education matter, such as being told to be quiet, pay attention to the teacher, provide the right answer, and don't talk to your neighbor.⁴⁸¹ Tribes acknowledges the false message of sensitivity and inclusion students receive when they enter classrooms, such as: this is our classroom but decisions are made by the teacher, you are in charge of yourself but lots of rules are on the board, everyone is special but culture and ethnicity will be ignored, Native Americans and Latina/o's are welcome but bilingual education won't be found here, and we live in a democracy but not when in school.⁴⁸² Tribes positions teachers as facilitators and students and teachers engage in dialogue and work to create a positive environment that promotes human growth and learning. Tribes offered me a great practical means to implement the theories that were the basis of the curriculum, such as using multiple strategies to reach and teach students, teaching critical thinking and collaborative social skills along with academic content, assessing individual and group accountability as a classroom community, and integrating the democratic principles of community and choice. Tribes is also a process that fosters resiliency, caring and sharing, active

⁴⁸¹ Gibbs, 16.

⁴⁸² Ibid., 16-17.

participation, and positive expectations in an echo of the multicultural, philosophical, and critical theories that were informing my pedagogy.

Jeanne Gibbs, the author of Tribes, states that we need to help students develop tolerance, appreciation, and respect for diversity because since 2000 only 56% of the population of the U.S. is White and 5 billion of the world's 6 billion people were people of color.⁴⁸³ Gibbs suggests that we can equip students for the cooperative pluralism that is needed for their cultural landscape by fostering active involvement in a culturally transformed learning community, having a mission statement centering on diversity, having high expectations for students, redistributing power/authority within the learning communities, using multicultural resources, through cooperative learning, respect for individual learning styles, and providing multiethnic, well-trained teachers.⁴⁸⁴ Gibbs proposes that socialization that occurs in our learning spaces needs to develop identity, self-worth, social responsibility, and bonding to positive groups through a process like Tribes. Globalization reminds us that our communities need to have the capacity to cooperate, be interdependent, conserve, and respect the diversity of people and nations.⁴⁸⁵ In our classroom community of graduate students, based on the Tribes model I attempted to foster:

- Negotiation rather than hostility (ex. class discussions and small group activities to create opportunities to practice this skill)
- Cooperation not just competition (ex. cooperative learning groups)
- Sharing and conserving resources (ex. electronic turning in of journals and final paper, use of blog to reduce paper consumption)
- Community building through consensus (ex. deciding on final project grading rubric together)

⁴⁸³ Gibbs, 34.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., 35.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., 37.

- Decentralized rather than authoritarian management (ex. instructor as facilitator)⁴⁸⁶

Tribes promotes inclusion (caring), influence (participation and being valued by others), and community (positive expectations and support) which can protect students while they develop resilience. I attempted this positive classroom environment by implementing:

- An atmosphere of trust (ex. community agreements of appropriate conduct that included attentive listening, appreciation/no put-downs, the right to pass, and mutual respect)
- A sense of belonging and community (ex. community building activities)
- Involvement in decision making (ex. deciding on final project format individually)
- Kindness and encouragement from peers (ex. appreciation activities)
- Teacher's energy and morale (ex. instructor exudes this)
- Teacher's authenticity and non-judgmental attitude (ex. instructor models this)
- Clear expectations, goals, and learning outcomes (ex. laid out in syllabus and verbalized)
- Fairness and equity in participation (ex. participation grade)⁴⁸⁷

As an example, let me analyze the participation grade. Students were asked to reflect on classroom readings from American Education and self-selected movies. They were given points regardless of content for contributing and they were given freedom to choose which chapters and movies they wished to respond to. This participation valued textual, visual, creative, and analytical contributions and avoided relegating participation to only verbal contribution in large group discussions. Increase in personal voice was encouraged by not grading what the students said, only their participation. Another component of this grade was involvement in small group activities that concluded each of the five chapters of Philosophy Applied to Education. This sort

⁴⁸⁶ Gibbs, 37.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., 47.

of participation valued creativity, the visual arts, analytical, and kinesthetic expression and involved working in small groups. This allowed for diversity in expression and did not favor one way of contributing over another. This was done to demonstrate pedagogical choices that validated students, included students, fostered equity, and troubled normative practices. Finally, the participation grade included a presentation to the large group of their final paper. This prepared students for academic contexts that required speaking in large group settings and equipped them with the sometimes hidden curriculum of preparedness for professional presentations, fostering the ability to cross into multiple contexts to express themselves. Thus fairness and equity in participation was achieved through valuing diversity and accommodating difference, while fostering learning.

I made a conscious move from the teacher-centered classroom model to a student-centered classroom by minimizing traditional direct instruction. I attempted to be sensitive to issues of inclusion and equity by structuring activities to avoid exclusion and pointing out stereotyping or linguistic bias.⁴⁸⁸ Tribes also challenged me as an instructor to reach learners with different styles of learning:

- Verbal/linguistic (ex. large group discussions, journals, small group discussions, blogging, paper)
- Interpersonal (ex. analyze texts, cooperative activities, find relationships between things in movies/texts, look at issues of positionality)
- Intrapersonal (ex. personal reflection in journal/blog/final paper, analyze thinking patterns, autobiographical activities)
- Existential (ex. philosophical issues and texts, learning placed in context through praxis and positionality)

⁴⁸⁸ Gibbs, 61.

- Visual/special (ex. create a visual representation for final project, graphic organizers during activities)⁴⁸⁹

Additionally the Tribes model encourages brain compatible learning. Brain compatible learning works to reduce student's feeling threatened or excluded by positive, safe environment to avoid physiological "downshift" to lower brain function that inhibits thinking and disrupts emotional balance.⁴⁹⁰ Even in the limited time-frame of an accelerated summer course, participant student responses reflect that difficult topics were discussed forthrightly and there was a sense of community that made this possible. The safety that our community created was not one that avoided troubling topics or difficult interactions or sought the absence of stress, but engagements were contained within a network of care. This care was fostered by Tribes ice-breakers and activities that guided students to express statements of appreciation, encouragement, preferences, and humor. Additionally, care was nurtured by instructor attention to particular student needs, concerns, successes, and life-events. There is much more to the implementation to this classroom community model and I cannot do credit to the full scope of its potential, however, the reader can see it created a matrix complimentary to the theories that formed the curriculum of the course and advanced the potential for raising-consciousness regarding issues of equity and inclusion.

An additional resource that was incorporated into my repertoire for "Teachers, Schools, and Society" is Brian Johnson and Skyra Blanchard's text Reel Diversity. Johnson and Blanchard posit that every film is political in that it has a message.⁴⁹¹ There are no inadvertent films; multiple people approve a film before it is released. They suggest that using mainstream

⁴⁸⁹ Gibbs, 64.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., 67.

⁴⁹¹ Johnson and Blanchard, 3.

films in one's classroom can be seen as assessing a reflection of our national opinion and exploring issues of diversity; for example, films about schooling are often formulaic, such as "Dangerous Minds," "Freedom Writers," and "The Blackboard Jungle." Johnson and Blanchard wonder what noncritical viewers take away from such films as for all intents and purposes the formula indicates that students of color appear to be in need of a (White) savior.⁴⁹² They note conversely that White schooling experience films focus on affluence, college preparation, and marriage ("Dead Poets Society," "Mona Lisa Smile," and "School Ties"). Astutely Johnson and Blanchard point to a scene in "Dangerous Minds" where a student challenges the White teacher with these words, "So, now you gonna try and psychologize me. You're gonna figure me out. Let me help you, I come from a broken home and we're poor, alright...I've seen the same movies you did." Movies are a powerful tool to help explore diversity and understand cultures, deconstruct dominant White culture, and develop a multicultural outlook that leads to an action orientation. Films, as representative of the thoughts, beliefs, and agendas of our society, help us explore how we think about diversity. As the authors note, for many diversity seems like an us/them binary, a minority issue, and mere acknowledgement of difference.⁴⁹³

Johnson and Blanchard's approach and activities support the philosophical, critical, and multicultural theories that foster inclusion and attention to equity that I am wishing to encourage. He encourages the realization that there is more to what is perceived in terms of observable behavior. Knowing what is typical in a culture, like food, clothing, and music, does not build understanding of diversity. But a deeper look will begin to excavate the reasons why and how the culture eats, dresses, thinks the way it does. A profounder look at culture and diversity as represented in film challenges us to look at issues of power and oppression. Reel Diversity

⁴⁹² Johnson and Blanchard, 4.

⁴⁹³ Ibid., 5.

points to the idea that in classrooms that value diversity, cultural identities need to be affirmed, ethnocentric assumptions need to be challenged, and we need avoid the blame-game or trying to be politically correct.⁴⁹⁴ Political correctness is a form of passive aggressiveness and conflict avoidance, according to Johnson, that leaves unspoken misconceptions and biases to breed intolerance and hate.⁴⁹⁵

Activities in Reel Diversity help direct classroom attention to issues of diversity beyond a celebration of diversity to a better understanding of difference, giving everyone a voice, and ensuring equity of opportunity. Speaking to my concept of positionality, Johnson and Blanchard reiterate that we need to question our cultural shaping, in this case by examining contemporary mainstream films. I chose to incorporate movies because they make space for Thayer-Bacon's constructive thinking that harnesses rationality with imagination, intuition, and emotion. It is powerful to see the pervasiveness of hegemonic forces at work in our society as mirrored in the movies we make and see. Movies, with the class lexicon and reflective journaling, opened new doors to metaphors, assumptions, perceptions, and misconceptions for our classroom community dialogues and personal reflections. Relationships were fostered over shared favorites and dislikes, and new movies were recommended. Our community found new spaces of common ground and engagement regarding difference. Teaching diversity through film gave us the chance to have an honest dialogue about issues that affect our society, gain new perspectives, and have meaningful discussions,⁴⁹⁶ hence my incorporation of Reel Diversity into the course.

I will now turn to introduce the voices on the route of "Teachers, Schools, and Society." Each student completed a statement of their positionality and philosophy of education. I am

⁴⁹⁴ Johnson and Blanchard, 7.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

sharing four of these narratives as intact as possible so as to avoid decontextualization and disembodiment. My fingerprints are already on their work as their teacher and researcher, so I have avoided editing and abridging their narratives, because I do not want to distort or alter their voices. I caution the reader that I will reserve my analysis of the effectiveness of incorporating potentially transformative theories and practices into the course until after they have said their peace to allow the reader to hear these student's voices unaccompanied although I am a fellow-traveler on this journey. This is not narrative analysis, so my contribution is purposely limited; this is narrative evidence for my case of praxis. I present these full narratives in a critical move that resists claiming the voices of others and determining for the reader what they mean. The work of this chapter is to give precedence to the particular narratives of the journeys of personal preparation of Leigh-Ann, Lakesha, Jenny, and Lakota as narrative evidence of the potentiality of theories to transform regarding issues of equity.⁴⁹⁷ This is done in the hopes of advancing reflection in all educators regarding their philosophically positioned roles in alleviating the "achievement gaps" found in schools in the United States.

Leigh-Ann

Positionality

I am stepping into a profession where I will have a position of authority. The way I handle this position of authority will greatly affect others, so it is important for me to recognize my position in the world before I step into my own middle school classroom. I am a twenty-two year old young woman. I will only be ten years older than my future students when I step into my first year of teaching. I think my age will be both a blessing and a curse during my first couple of years of teaching middle school students. On one hand, I will be able to relate to my students as far as pop culture references go. On the other hand, my students may not perceive me as an experienced teacher and may not take me seriously at all times. Also, I foresee parent teacher conferences to be difficult when the parents are probably going to be older than I am. By recognizing the obstacle of my age now, I will be better prepared to deal with the difficulties that lie ahead of me as an educator. My age is not the only aspect of myself that encompasses my

⁴⁹⁷ Pseudonyms (assigned by researcher as per Informed Consent Statement, see Appendix 3)

positionality in the world. Race is another aspect of myself that must be addressed when determining my positionality.

I am a white young woman. I have never thought of my race before taking a race and ethnicities literature course in my undergraduate courses. I felt uncomfortable in the class because the majority of my classmates were African American. I always wondered why white people (myself included) did not care about their own race... In this undergraduate course, we read many texts written by African Americans authors, Asian Americans authors, Native Americans authors, Jewish authors, and many more. We did not read any texts written by white authors because my teacher claimed that white authors overtook all of our other literature courses. I could definitely see her point, but I was also frustrated that my race was not being represented in a course titled "Race and Ethnicities in American Literature." The reason I am sharing this anecdote is because it is helpful for me to remind myself of the feelings I had when I felt misrepresented and unappreciated in the classroom because of the color of my skin.

Today, I still struggle with what it means to be a white person in America. I am not proud of the color of my skin. I am not ashamed of the color of my skin. I almost feel disconnected from the color of my skin. Why? Is it because I feel guilty? Is it because I have a privileged life? I do not have an answer to these questions, but I do know that the color of my skin will affect my positionality in my classroom, in my community, and in my relationships. With that being said, I will not allow the color of my skin to define me nor will I allow skin color to define my students. Of course, as Milner warns, "ignoring the racial component of our students' identities is equal to treating students as incomplete beings," so in no way do I plan to do this. Instead I plan to encourage students to explore the barriers of race on a systematic level and understand the implications of being a certain race through the study of literature in the classroom. As Milner reveals "we cannot conquer racism by ignoring it."

Socio-economic status is something that impacts an individual's position in society, especially in the school systems. In Joel Spring's book, American Education he discusses the importance of a student's cultural capital in relation to their academic performance. Students from the working class are disadvantaged in comparison to middle class students. In fact, Spring infers that "middle-class children have learned the verbal and social skills to advantage themselves when interacting with teachers and school staff...the opposite is true for working-class children" (Spring 55). The cold hard facts that Spring reveals in his text are very hard to deal with as a future educator, but it is important for me to be aware of these realities before stepping into my classroom.

Socio-economic status is a part of my positionality as an educator because often times it is a central focus of school demographics. Many like to romanticize the outdated American Dream, but if one were to critically look at American society today through the lens of an educator one would see that this dream is impossible for many students to make a reality. I do think that if a person is born into a family with low socio-economic status that person will have to face many limitations and disadvantages in contrast to a person born into a middle class family in American society. My future students who have a low socio-economic status may feel as though I am too idealistic about their futures because I have grown up in a middle class family and never had to struggle economically. However, I sincerely hope that I will not come across the wrong way to these students. I will try my hardest to ensure that these students will

have the opportunities as other students in my classroom even if the educational system has given up on them.

Religion is another aspect of my positionality. I think if a person is religious it will influence his or her life no matter what. I cannot allow my religion to be known in the classroom because I do not want to impose my beliefs onto any one of my students. Gender will affect my positionality more than religion. The majority of teachers are female, and I think this must be hard for male students. Like race, I cannot ignore gender in my classroom. I do not believe in a genderless classroom or a gender neutral classroom. In my classroom, we will explore the gender roles that are assigned by society through our study of literature and each other. With that being said, I do not want to be a central focus in my classroom because I think it dominates every other aspect of my students' lives. My gender will allow me to identify more with my female students, but I will not be biased towards my male students because I will consistently make myself aware of my gender and how it affects my teaching through daily reflections. I will also select books for students to read that will be written by male and female authors, so each student will feel represented.

It is interesting to examine my position in different spheres of my life. I think my positionality in each sphere changes. For example, my position on a systematic level is very different from my position with my students. I will not have much control of the educational system, but I will have some control on a smaller scale in my classroom. When I say control, I do not mean an authoritarian type control. Instead, I will have my agency in my classroom as opposed to the system. The community can bridge the gap between the classroom and the system. If the community is supportive of what I'm doing in my classroom then there will be more power in numbers. I think it is crucial to understand the community I will be teaching in because my classroom community will have many of the same components of their community, so I should not dismiss or diminish the students positions in their community.

Philosophy of Education

Originally, my philosophy of education has been influenced by other theories of learning. I agree with the constructivist theory because it demands the learner to be in an active role and the teacher to facilitate learning. I will draw from constructivist ideas in my teaching, but I will be making these ideas my own throughout my experiences in the classroom. I believe my philosophy of education will change over the years because being an educator is also being a researcher. With that being said, the aim of education will remain the same for me. In my opinion, the aim of education is to provide students with the skills they need to be successful in American society. Often times people associate success with economic success but this is not the case. Success is different for each individual student. For one it may be going to college and getting a degree. For another it may be graduating high school and becoming a plumber, either way both of these students will be successful. I will know each of my students individually and differentiate my instruction to meet their needs.

As stated before, the teacher is in a role of authority in the classroom and like all positions of authority this power can easily be abused. I want to create a community in my classroom where each individual can vote on decisions. I will also participate in the voting and offer suggests as well. I will be more of a facilitator than a dictator in classroom discussions. Through my consistency and caring attitude students will develop a sense of self which is my

most important goal as a future middle school language arts teacher. I hope through analyzing literature in a guided practice of perspective taking my students will gain a sense of identity and self-concept in my classroom and eventually prepare them to become life-long learners.

As a teacher, I will have a very structured classroom so students will know what I expect of them each day. A concrete example of this structure will be a class syllabus. At the beginning of each week I will go over the week's assignments, explain to the students why the assignments are necessary, and confirm that the students understand their responsibilities and why they have them. The majority of students do not enjoy coming to school every day and working hard, but I hope to make them understand why education is important for them to have an enriching life.

I do not want to present myself as a teacher with a lack of personality because I feel that removes the teacher from the rest of the community in her classroom. In my experiences in the classroom, some teachers do not let their personalities be known to their students but they do with other teachers. I think this creates a huge gap in the relationship between teacher and student. My personality will be evident through my lesson plans by implementing popular music and movies in my lessons that I enjoy when applicable. I will respect each of my students as developing human beings with a potential for greatness in all aspects of their lives and hopefully in doing so I will gain the same respect from them in our classroom community.

My expectations for students will be clearly stated on the first day of class and continually repeated throughout the first couple of weeks of the school year. My classroom will have a set of rules created by my students and myself. The reason for including students in designing classroom guidelines is because I want them to have a sense of ownership in the function of our classroom. Middle school students have many rules they have to follow inside and outside of school, so I do not want to overload them with rules in my classroom because it will disrupt our community of learners. Therefore, as a class we will collectively decide on a list no greater than three rules to insure the best learning environment. During this process, I will also explain and tell the students why it is important to have rules in a community and society as a whole. So, when a student breaks a rule he or she will understand that it is a disruption to the learning process of the classroom as opposed to obeying the rules just because they exist and is an expected behavior.

Students in my classroom will be responsible for their own actions and thoughts. Respect for one another will be a concept that my students will focus on daily. I want each student to feel that they are appreciated not only for following the classroom rules and getting good grades but also for their development as human beings. By my focus on students' humanistic developments, hopefully, they will gain more than just a good grade in my class. Students will be asked to work together on many assignments because I think that students will develop a deeper understanding of the material by discussing it with one another as opposed to me constantly lecturing and supplying them with worksheets to complete individually. Also, students who may be shy in large group discussion will have a chance to voice their ideas and perspectives in a smaller group.

In my opinion, curriculum should be innovative and changed every couple of years. There are always new methods to use in the classroom, but often time's teachers cannot use these new methods because of their out dated curriculums. Testing should not be a number one priority in the classroom, but unfortunately legislation has forced this abundance of testing in our school system today. Constantly forcing students to take these high-stakes test will only add

to their anxiety and dislike of school. In my future classroom, I will have to test my students regularly and this will affect my teaching plans in some ways.

Unfortunately, I may not always have the creative liberty I want in the classroom because of time restraints, but as mentioned before being an educator is also being a researcher. It would be a disservice to my students if I did not continue to read about new theories of learning and methods in education journals after earning my masters degree. I decided to study to become a teacher because I love learning, so I would consider myself to a life-long learner. If I want my overarching goal as an educator is to establish skills to promote life-long learning in my students, it would be hypocritical of myself to not continue to study the ever-changing field of education.

Lakesha

Positionality

When you observe my physical traits, you see that I am a young, I am black, and I am a woman. You may see my three characteristics as a strike against me. As a woman, you may see me as inferior to the male species. As an African American, you may see me as someone that is “ghetto” and cannot be educated. As a young person, you may see me as someone that does not have much to offer society. With a combination of all three, you may not see me at all or even waste your time to formulate opinions about me. I recognize my gender, race, and age, not as degrading factors, but as encouraging factors. As a woman, I was given the task to continue the human race, provide, nurture, care, and have the ability to do what any man can do. As an African American, I have the pleasure of having a rich cultural background, a background that has taught me that when times get rough, you do not quit, you fight. As a young adult in America, I have new ideas and ways of thinking that may inspire the next generation. I was born with these physical characteristics, but they are not the only factors that define me as a person. They are my blue prints of life that effects my interaction within the world I live in.

On March 31st 1984, I made history! I was the first African American born in a new German hospital. My mom always told me stories of how the nurses were shocked to see that I looked like a normal human baby. A baby with fair skin and hair that was not kinky, but curly. I guess you can say my destiny for educating was determined. My family consisted of my mother, father, and brother. We moved around until I was 5, but settled down in Memphis, TN were I was raised and an additional sibling came along. We are a very close net family; when something is wrong with one of us, we are all affected. This type of family relationship influenced my abilities to care for myself and others. As I continued to grow up, my parents used Christianity to shape my moral views, discipline to shape my egotistical ways, and tough love to shape my fighting spirit.

My first moment of change was during my junior high school years. I was hell on wheels. No one could tell me anything. I was rebellious toward all of my upbringing. I cut class and was disrespectful to adults, but I continued to care about my grades. Even though I had good grades, I had a teacher tell me that I would not be anything in life and that I will be pregnant before I graduated from high school. I really did not understand why she felt this way about me. I knew I was smart and brought up better than my actions showed, but I did not realize that my actions

spoke louder than who I was in the inside. From that day forward, I vowed to myself that I would not let her image of me come true.

My second moment of change was when I was invited to participate in a program called Bridge Builders. Bridge Builders was designed to bring high school students of different backgrounds together to bridge the gap of ignorance. I did not realize Memphis had diversity. In my neighborhood it was all blacks. The program gave me my first chance to interact with other individuals who were different from me. I realized that even though we all had different backgrounds, we all had a story to tell and could learn from each other. I even met my first “white” friend, which surprised me because I did not think I had any thing in common with a “white” person. How could a privilege “white” girl deal with the same life experiences as a under privileged lower-class African American girl? Through exposure of our differences, I realized that we had more similar life experiences than different. She was struggling with creating her own identity and living up to family expectations, and so was I. I appreciated the program because it made me face differences in a caring environment. The program helped me look beyond what was in my neighborhood.

My third moment of change occurred when my brother passed away. This event put me in a state of confusion and denial. I was lost; what I had once known was altered within a couple of minutes. Without taking care of self, I hid my emotions because I was the one my family relied on. The night of my senior prom was when it hit me. My brother was actually gone. I did not have that moment when a big brother talks to their little sister’s date. Life without my brother has made me cherish every moment with my family and friends.

It did not take long to encounter my fourth change, University of [REDACTED]. I crashed into [the university]. Going to a predominantly “white” school caused me to face my prejudicial opinions about people. I did not realize I saw myself as being oppressed by another race. I did not know that being a part of the out-group made me inferior. I was unaware that my education was not as prestige as a student that was classified in a higher class. It was a time of self-actualization. I went through college feeling as though I had to prove something to the privilege white people. I refused to be seen as the affirmative action person, who did not have the credentials to be at the school. As I continued with school, I realized that I was projecting my own thoughts on them.

Throughout my lifetime, I have learned to appreciate my experiences and use them to shape the person I am today. So who am I today? I am a confident wife, mother, and high school biology teacher. As a wife, my life experiences helped me understand that everyone can have their own opinion and ways of thinking, but it’s the respect that you show towards a person that means the most. As a mother, my life experiences helped me think, provide, and guide my child with an open heart and mind. I cannot expect my child to be me or live his life under my expectations, but use his up-bringing to deal with his world. As a teacher, my life experiences have shaped me into an amazing teacher, a teacher that lives out her ever-changing philosophy of teaching.

Philosophy of Teaching

Aim of Education

What is education? Education is not just the materials teachers teach in a building during the hours of eight to four. Education is not just the standards that the state decreed as important information. Education is not just training students to be great citizens in the society. Education is not just producing the global competitors of tomorrow. And education is not just being able to take tests. Education is any situation that teaches students life skills and lessons about the world around them, which includes what is being taught between the hours of eight to four, teaching state standards, training good citizens, providing global leaders of tomorrow, and taking high stake tests. Education cannot be defined by time, but by how education relates to the time. With this definition of education, students can be exposed to the forever-changing world around them and teachers exposed to a new way of addressing their job requirements. This education can't be seen as a one size fits all. Students should be able to apply their knowledge to the different situation they may encounter in their lifetime. This knowledge may be applied during an interview where the student displays the knowledge of the particular job and how they will be an asset to the company. It could be a student searching for the cure of a disease, which would have students display the prior knowledge on the subject and inquiry future research opportunities. Or it could be as simple as taking a test to qualify for a position. In other words, whatever the child needs to survive has to be the aim for education. We do not want students to have a one-dimension education because it could cause them to be unable to adapt to situations and solve problems.

Role of the Teacher

The role of the teacher is never ending. It includes so many roles that there is no way to cover them in this paper alone. Teachers are mothers, fathers, counselors, nurses, supervisors, judges, friends, and many other things. Sometimes the best way to describe the role of a teacher is imaging a chameleon, an organism that changes with the need of their environment. Teachers have to be there for their students in every aspect of their lives. Students bring all of their problems to school with them and unfortunately teachers have to adapt. We have to counsel students, comfort students, and befriend students. We have to understand what is going on in their lives that may have a positive or negative effect on them. Be there to congratulate them on their new brother or sister, or be there to comfort them when they have a family member to pass away. We have to develop a relationship where the students understand that we are here to provide a safe learning environment which includes a caring environment. The teacher must understand that a student will not allow you to educate them, if they do not trust you or see you as someone that cares for who they are and what life experiences they have encountered.

Once the teacher creates a secure bond with the student, the teacher's task is to create a mindset within their students that education is important. Many students may not understand why they have to go to school because it is not seen as a vital accomplishment or need to be successful. In the world that we live in today, especially America, education takes the backseat to entertainers and athletes. Education is a backup plan to other occupations that does not require an education. After teachers secure a bond with the students and convince them that education is important, learning the required curriculum can begin. When presenting the curriculum, I see my role as many of the great philosophers. Taking on different teaching roles can help ensure

that students learn different approaches of gaining and attaining knowledge. The first philosopher would be Aristotle, guiding and providing resources for students at the beginning to build up self-confidence. Then the teacher could include other philosophers' teacher roles like Descartes and Peirce. Descartes philosophy states the role of the teacher is to teach students how to become critical thinkers. Peirce believes that the teacher should teach students skills on how to become good scientific inquirers through active learning. As an educator, I do not feel I should only educate my students on curriculum. I feel I should also educate my students to become better individuals all around, like the great philosopher Kant. I should help them become more productive and responsible individuals. I plan to do this by making sure that my students understand and obey the rules and regulations we created in our classroom. I want my students' input on the rules and regulations when school starts because it will give them a voice and ownership of how the class is ran on a day to day base. This furthermore gives the student a voice in their own repercussions once these rules or regulations are not followed.

Role of the student

The role of the student is no longer passive, but very active. Students can no longer expect teachers to take the responsibility for their education. In the past, and even now, society puts the blame on the teacher instead of the student. Society has to shift the responsibility onto the student. So why does this shift have to occur? Simple, students have the power of choice. Yes, teachers can create an environment that stimulates students' mind for thinking, but what if the child does not want to think. Yes, the teacher has to provide instruction that is differentiated for all learners, but what if the child goes to sleep in class or just decides not to participate in learning. And yes, the teacher can flip, sing, dance or even perform magic tricks, but if that child chooses not to be educated than what can a teacher do? Students taking charge of their own education is the only role the child has to play. With ownership, students will come to class with materials; students will stay awake in class; students will do their homework; students will meet or at least strive to meet education's high expectation.

Once students take responsibility for their education, they will mirror the images of many great philosophers. A student under Plato's influence would actively try to find answers and truth in the world they live in. A student under Aristotle's influence would develop individual ideas and find solutions. A student under Peirce's influence would develop good habits of reasoning and inquire about life. A student under Freire's influence would be able to empower and think for him or herself. Having a combination of these philosophers' traits in the role of a student, they would not only ensure a responsible student, but also a person that is equipped to take responsibility for themselves and issues they may ensue in society.

Epistemology/ Pedagogy Issues

Students gain knowledge in many ways. Before they even begin their education they get a lot of their knowledge from observing the people and things around them. Children are very observant creatures so the base for their knowledge comes from their home environment and the people that they grow up with i.e. siblings, family members and parents. These people have a big influence on their lives before they even set foot in a classroom setting. It is very important that teachers take this into consideration with their students. Not all students are raised the same nor do they come from the same environment therefore; it is very unreasonable to assume that they will all learn the same or respond to the same instructions.

They also gain knowledge by trying new things and experimenting, like Aristotle and Peirce students. Ever thought you could tell a child not to touch the stove because it could burn them, they may not learn this until they touch the stove and it burns them. You learn things by trying and experiencing them for yourself. If all students did was listen to what the teacher had to say and never put any of it into practice, which would have been an ideal classroom for Locke, then they would not be learning anything because they did not have the opportunity to apply their knowledge.

So the ideal learning environment for class is a classroom that is set up with lab tables to support lab activities and cooperative learning, but also can be changed to fit the lesson for that day. Yet the classroom should not be the only location where learning can take place. Some class sessions may be outside the classroom to provide a more authentic learning experience. Differentiated instructions and assessments will be offered. As a teacher you must know that not all students are going to learn the same way. With this in mind it is imperative to be very flexible in order to accommodate for the diverse learners. Being that students do not fit into a one size fits all category of learning, class curriculum should be presented in a variety of ways as well. These ways would include but should not be subject to only one or the other: lecture, PowerPoint presentations, inquiry, games, student taught lessons and etc. Diverse instructions also include using more than a textbook to teach critical concepts. Learning concepts could be them reading a newspaper article, a peer teaching them a technique they have mastered, or observing something that spurs curiosity. Student assessments should be presented as choices. Provide different assessments for the same standard so students choose the best way for them to demonstrate what they have learned. Making these adjustments will help provided an equitable learning environment for my students.

Conclusion

A teacher has an ongoing job. It is not one that you can leave at the workplace very often because of the unique students that come with their unique problems that you will worry about constantly. It is a teacher's job first and foremost to make sure that their students are getting the education that they deserve and are able to succeed in life. It is very unfortunate that teachers have to take so many different roles in student's lives, but at the same time it is rewarding. I hope that one day society will grow to love and understand the hard job that teachers have and recognize that we are key components in society.

Jenny

Personal Positionality

I am a white, heterosexual female from an upper-middle class, Christian family. When I state it that way, the "categories" seem so clear. I could easily complete a survey and have no difficulty knowing which "box" I should check. In reality, I believe that each of these markers is complex and impossible to consider independently of their connectedness with one another. As Steinberg and Kincheloe (2009) note, "though we understand that connections among race, class, and gender exist, we never can predict the effects of the interactions" (p. 7). With that being said, certain groups in the United States clearly receive additional privileges by mere membership. I am given many advantages by being a part of "white" culture, by being

“straight,” by being Christian, and due to my economic situation. I would also argue that my economic situation is at least someone affected by my race (Spring, 2000). While being female has the potential to affect me adversely, I believe my other characteristics provide far more privileges than hindrances. Being from the South, I feel that my race and class have the greatest impact on my day-to-day life. Religion and sexual preference are qualities which are much less visible and therefore seem to have a lesser overall effect.

My racial and cultural background greatly influences how I view the world. I recognize that by being white, I am afforded many advantages which other people are not. Many of these advantages are subtle and I believe that a lot of people from other racial backgrounds may not even realize that these advantages exist for others. I know that my race and culture influences me because I have seen it in action. For example, I applied for a job as a full-time Sociology instructor a few years ago. I was one of two finalists. The position was offered to a black male. I found this out through an acquaintance who worked at the institution. She apologetically said, “I’m sorry to hear you did not get the sociology position. They (the institution) probably just needed to meet a quota.” It is hard for me to even imagine living in a world where all of my qualifications could so easily be dwindled down by a disparaging remark about my race.

Also, I have further heard racial views expressed within my family. My parents are both from a small town in Louisiana – part of the “deep South.” I remember my father’s parents making racist comments when I was a child. I also remember seeing pictures of my father playing high school football. In every team picture, my grandmother had cut out the faces of my father’s black teammates. It is hard for me to even imagine a hatred that runs so deep. In Cultural Miseducation, Martin (2002) mentions two cultural liabilities which she feels are the most harmful: violence and hatred. Martin poses the question, “are cultural liabilities being transmitted” (p. 3)? I am not proud of the racism displayed by my grandparents, although I acknowledge they grew up in a different context. Ultimately, their actions are part of the “cultural wealth” equation. While white culture has assets, it is important that the liabilities be recognized as well to avoid repeating parts of history fraught with hate and injustice.

Over the past few years, I have tried to become more aware of how my race and culture impact me and how others’ race and culture impacts them. I think this awareness creates some sensitivity to and appreciation for the differences we experience. While I have certainly tried to become more aware, I also acknowledge that I can never really know how it feels to walk in something else’s shoes – or skin, rather. I feel that people of various races and cultures are treated differently and likely often in unintended ways. I do not believe a lot of racism is overt, which is why I think it is so dangerous. To combat this systemic, institutionalized racism, I try to actively look for it because so much of it is hidden and deeply ingrained in our society. As Milner (2006) suggests, “we cannot teach in a color-blind or culture-blind fashion if we wish to affirm the students under our charge” (p. 369). Students are far too savvy for such treatment. I think it is important to search deeper to see how we can improve things in the small microcosm where we have impact. In a classroom setting, I need to be sure to ask myself, “Do I call on students equally?” “Do I penalize students equally?” “Do I have the same expectations of all of my students?” While it might be appropriate to differentiate instruction at times, if I answer “no” to any of these questions, my next consideration must be “why?”

In my first semesters teaching, I made a lot of mistakes which I wish I could go back now and correct. I have since learned that teaching in itself is a learning process. In the second sociology course I ever taught, I was confronted with a very difficult situation. I was “teaching” (i.e. following my PowerPoint slides!) on sexual orientation. One of the discussion questions posed at the end of the chapter asked something along the lines of “do you think sexual orientation is a personal choice or biologically determined?” A typically quiet student sitting in the back of the class raised his hand. He said, “I know for me it never felt like a choice. I grew up in a deeply, Christian, Southern Baptist family. I fought being gay for years!” Regardless of how anyone feels about sexual orientation, the student’s comments were personal and courageous. Yet, I had not created a safe, respectful, democratic classroom. Immediately, another student raised his hand and said, “I think we should just call it a day. It’s about to get really ugly in here.” Being new, unprepared, and generally just intimidated by the situation, I completely changed the direction of the conversation to something else less polarizing. I also ended class early that day because I felt there was too much tension in the room.

What a great dialog lost. I will always wonder what impact (most likely negative) that discussion had on my student who courageously raised his hand. In Teaching to Transgress (1994), bell hooks states, “any radical pedagogy must insist that everyone’s presence is acknowledged. That insistence cannot be simply stated. It has to be demonstrated through pedagogical practices” (p. 8). Had I acknowledged everyone’s presence and given all students a safe place to speak their voice, the discussion on sexual orientation might have gone much differently that day. I hope to have learned from my mistakes and use them as lessons to help me create healthier classroom environments in the future.

Philosophy of Education

My current philosophy of education has been shaped by things I have read, things I have seen, things I have learned in class, and largely by the mistakes I have made teaching as mentioned above. I believe that race, culture, gender, religion, and sexual orientation all have an undeniable impact on American education. I would also like to add physical health or disability to this list as suggested by Berry (2009). My new philosophy of education involves creating a classroom environment in which everyone feels appreciated and included – a democratic classroom. A part of creating a democratic classroom will involve using a text and/or outside resources which incorporates a wider range of cultures. This will likely involve going outside of the traditional curriculum. More broadly, as noted by Thayer-Bacon (1998) in Philosophy Applied to Education, democratic classrooms need to be “caring and just, inclusive and affirming, balanced and harmonious, and allow for dissonance and discord, striving to meet the needs of the individual selves and the group” (p. 31). Certainly, this is no easy task. As a teacher, I must regularly reflect on my day-to-day actions. I see it as a balancing act in many ways. Are students engaging in activities which help them build their individual thinking skills? Are they also working in groups to develop their interaction skills and to learn to appreciate others’ contributions?

Several years ago I wrote a teaching philosophy statement. I was interested to see how my original statement might look different if written today. Below, I have pasted a copy of my teaching philosophy statement from 2008. I have made comments, suggestions, and/or changes in parentheses.

Revisited Teaching Philosophy Statement

I believe that the most important goal of teaching is to develop students' independent thinking skills. [I no longer believe this. I believe the aim of education is to develop thoughtful, respectful citizens. In accordance with that aim, I think that developing students' independent thinking skills only represents ½ of that goal. As bell hooks (1994) acknowledges, "Excitement is generated through collective effort" (p. 8). The power of collective learning should not be underestimated.] I want my students to be able to analyze issues thoroughly and draw their own conclusions. [I still believe this is very important. I do not want students to simply regurgitate the information I present. I want their thoughts to be heard. I see the role of a teacher as more of a facilitator, and the role of the student as co-learner.] An important aspect of this growth involves the student listening and potentially incorporating others' perspectives. Even if a student does not agree with alternative viewpoints, I believe differing perspectives are valuable and must be approached with an open mind. I strive to help my students develop an appreciation for other's experiences and backgrounds. [In Philosophy Applied to Education (1998), Thayer-Bacon describes Freire's teaching methods as "problem-posing." When such a method is used, Thayer-Bacon contends that teachers "treat their students with respect, as co-learners who are capable of authentic thinking" (p. 18). This is my ultimate goal.]

I also have a responsibility to my students to teach them about the foundations, research methods, and critical topics related to sociology. The sociological perspective offers a unique way of viewing the world. This way may challenge some students' perceptions of race, class, and gender in a manner that will affect them far beyond the context of class discussion. [I see one of the greatest benefits of sociology as its direct focus on these "categories." Few classes provide a specific outlet for acknowledging, yet alone outright discussing such crucial concepts. This point should have greater attention in my philosophy of education.]

I strongly believe that student engagement in class discussion and debates is the most effective way to teach a subject as complex and dynamic as sociology. [I now believe that there are many more ways to teach. I wrote this statement in opposition to my original teaching method – PowerPoint! I was not yet ready to see the benefits of dynamic group work, thoughtful individual work, and journaling.] This is not to imply that lectures and other activities do not have a place in my classroom. Rather, I use these other methods to facilitate class discussion. Most importantly, lectures, handouts, and student writings can help provide a clear understanding of the definitions and frameworks to be used in discussions to make them more meaningful. [While I allude to student writings here, I really did not practice "independent" or target writing with my classes. Any student writing was more of a short essay format with the intent of verifying that students had read the material.]

Recognizing that students have different learning styles, I use hands-on, group activities on a regular basis. For example, in our discussion of stratification, I have students work in small groups on an activity called "Life Happens." For this activity, students are given a note card with information on their "family" along with their family's particular financial situation. A sheet of required expenditures and amounts is provided to each group so they can prepare a budget for the upcoming year. Some families are afforded plenty of money to make ends meet with excess to spare. Other families are forced to cut all luxuries. After students have prepared

their budgets, one group member randomly selects another note card with a “life happens event.” Some events are positive, while others are negative. Completing this exercise allows students to appreciate the extent of stratification in our society and how differently families at either end of the spectrum live. [I still like this activity. Now, I wonder how journaling might be paired with this exercise. For instance, I wonder if any of my students feel connected to this exercise through personal experience.]

At this level, I have found that the more involved students are in their own educational process, the more they ultimately will get out of my classes. As often as possible, I try to encourage class discussion and collaboration while realizing that I also must provide discipline when necessary and fundamental understanding of concepts to make collective engagement meaningful. [The biggest aspect missing from this Philosophy of Education relates to the classroom environment. As mentioned earlier, I think it is imperative to create an environment of openness and trust. Discussions on controversial issues typically make students uncomfortable, but this discomfort does not have to equate to “harm” or a preferred focus on surface level learning. I want students to feel “safe” in terms of expressing their feelings, but I want them to do so in a respectful manner in which they understand that discomfort can lead to some of the most profound learning experiences.]

Day-to-day Praxis

While a philosophy of education is a crucial step in developing one’s approach to teaching, it is also important to consider practically how the philosophy will affect the classroom setup. In order to truly embrace a democratic classroom, I believe the traditional classroom setup is inappropriate. Since I teach in a higher education setting, I am provided a reasonable amount of flexibility with my classes. Thus, I would like for my room to take on different formats depending on the lesson plan for the day. One setup would involve a circular formation of students’ chairs. When we initially did this setup in our class, I was a little skeptical. However, there was clearly a difference in our interactions when we were in a more traditional class setup. For example, I remember everyone starting to raise their hands when we were in rows of desks – that rarely happened in our circle group. This setup might be useful for particularly sensitive topics to make everyone feel included and aware of those around them. I also liked the classroom setup used by Erin in “Freedom Writers.” Erin pushed all of the desks to the edges of the classroom and had students step towards a line in the center of the room to demonstrate how much everyone in the class had in common. This setup might be appropriate for icebreakers to allow students a little freedom within the room. Additionally, this setup may help students see the classroom as a place where learning is created, opposed to a traditional room where learning is seen as objective and rigid.

Further, in Philosophy Applied to Education (1998), Thayer-Bacon also describes the initial classroom setup used by “Jed.” Jed’s classroom was designed to be inviting for students who preferred to work alone as well as those who preferred to work in groups. Jed wanted to see how students chose to work on the first day of class, and then make adjustments as needed throughout the semester. I think this is a provocative concept. I really like the idea of giving students some choice and respecting that their personal learning preferences might be different than mine.

Additionally, I am not so vain any more to think that student learning can only happen within the confines of my classroom walls. Consequently, I plan to allow my students to find their own place to work at times, be it outside or in a coffee shop (I loved the day we all went to Starbucks). I have found that when left alone to work individually or in groups, students can complete assignments perfectly well, perhaps even better. I also believe that they appreciate the trust and flexibility.

Collectively, my positionality and my philosophy of education (both the practical and theoretical) greatly affect how I teach. I cannot detach myself from who I am. I am white. I am female. I am middle-class. I am able-bodied. I am Christian. I am heterosexual. All of these things separately and collectively shape how I see the world. My philosophy of education is intended to depict the democratic classroom that I hope I am able to create in conjunction with my students. Practically speaking, I intend to change my classroom setup so that it no longer conforms to the traditional teacher-learner roles. Considering all of these elements will certainly help me become a more aware, effective teacher going forward.

Lakota

Positionality

My positionality is greatly affected by factors both within and outside of my control, and all of them are equally relevant and impacting. I was born as a race, classed, able-bodied, and gendered being, and these lived realities affect my teaching, and how I relate to my students, in every way. When I was growing up, although my light skin meant that in most contexts I could pass as white, I was acutely aware of my racial identity and how Native Americans were portrayed (and not portrayed) in the K-12 curriculum. My experiences of feeling left out of the classroom, of never hearing the names of people I respected and considered to be heroes, of finding that genocide was neatly swept under the proverbial rug, have greatly affected the way I design my instruction and the materials I utilize in my classroom. I know that coming from a marginalized group in society is part of what drove me to be an ESL teacher. ESL teacher is an identity, a positionality, I chose; however, my decision to join this field was a result of my upbringing and experiences as a student. I am also aware that my cultural background plays out in the classroom in the activities I ask students to engage in, and especially in the expectations I set. Cooperative learning and discussion are the two instructional strategies that I call on the most in my teaching, because I was raised to believe that all voices are valuable, that everyone has something worthwhile to share, that we all learn from each other, and that the goals of the community matter. I do not necessarily believe that the desires of a community should supersede the desires of an individual; rather, as Thayer-Bacon alludes to, communities and individuals act in concert with one another to make a mutually beneficial relationship. A perfect symphony is created when we build a democratic classroom community where students feel safe, important, and are confident that their contributions are worthwhile.

Because my classroom is always diverse—in languages, races, ethnicities, religion, socioeconomic status, and educational experiences—I work on community building from day one. My students know that they can have differences of opinion and can disagree without being disrespectful. I know that many of my students come from backgrounds that value communalism, and that these values are likely to be in tune with their own personal beliefs; I also realize that

there are students in my classes who are more individualistic. I respect their backgrounds and personalities by allowing them to work individually as they please and by listening to all opinions in the classroom. A democratic classroom should not ever make individuals feel uncomfortable or unwelcome; it should be a safe space where learning is the key goal and it is understood that every step we take in learning builds on something that comes from within.

My religious identity is quite distinct from that of the majority of my students, who mostly hail from Christian (Baptist, Presbyterian, and Catholic) backgrounds. Although I was raised with some traditional Hopi beliefs as well as attending Southern Baptist churches with my dad's family, I consider myself to be an atheist. While I am aware that we always bring ourselves to the classroom, and cannot separate our beliefs and positionalities from our role as educators, I am vigilant about not letting my religious beliefs affect my instruction or classroom practices in any way that I can. While my students are always free to discuss their religious beliefs, I will never share mine publicly, and have become very good at deflecting comments. Of course, I am aware that these exact deflections send their own message, but while I invite students to share anything and everything they please in an open, safe space, I do not desire to engage in theological discussions in my classroom. Although I have let students share their opinions on myriad controversial topics, knowing that I am the teacher and thus, in many of my students' eyes, an authority figure, I do my best not to steer their beliefs in a direction more favorable to my own. Only in private reflection will I remark on religious issues, as when I assigned students a writing topic about when they were a "stranger in a strange land" and an atheist student wrote about going to church and being the only one not praising god—I wrote to her that I could relate to that experience and that experience is very much akin to being an outsider. My classroom community is about the opposite—no one is a stranger in a strange land; we are all family, though our interests, beliefs, life experiences, and connections to instruction diverge.

Most of my students are from low socioeconomic classes, although some are certainly more fortunate than others. I know that I am privileged in comparison to the majority of my students and have been throughout my life. I was raised in the "borderlands" between working-class and lower middle-class society—a place my bicultural students are often familiar with. This sense of identification with working-class society has affected how I view equity, equality of opportunity, and social justice: it is my goal to do anything I can to show students how treasured they really are and to make discussion in my class an open forum for topics like discrimination, racism, and the effects of poverty on academic success. Problems like these can't be ignored; they don't go away just because we're uncomfortable with addressing them. Furthermore, our students are not ignorant of these realities; the pieces begin to fit for them at a pretty young age and when teachers refuse to acknowledge these concerns, they only internalize that their experiences and worldview are not important to us.

Paulo Freire's theories have influenced me greatly—although I teach ESL through content-based units, the focus is always on literacy and giving students access to different Discourses. Literacy is another area in which I have been privileged; although my great-grandparents were illiterate and my mother didn't finish high school, she read to me every night from the time I was in her womb, and I was reading on my own before I turned three. This access to literacy has given me a forum for sharing my thoughts, working out ideas, connecting to people both near and far, and deepening my understanding of social justice issues. When students do not have access to multifarious Discourses, they are kept out of worlds in which they

should be a part, and denied entrance to crucial avenues for self-expression. Literacy, for me, is about empowerment, and I resolve to make sure that all voices are heard in my classroom. I may not be able to always ensure that students experience equity in every aspect of their education, but I fully intend to advocate for my students in any and all viable ways, and my classroom will be a safe space where everyone's opinions, feelings, and thoughts matter.

Although I can often relate to and empathize with my students because of these shared encounters with marginalization, and the majority of English language learners are born in the United States, I have worked with many English language learners who do not share my nationality. Regardless of my home culture, I am still an American, and acknowledging that means recognizing the privileges—and baggage—my nationality has given me. I must work hard to ensure that I do not pass on a hidden curriculum, and that I respect and value the social and cultural capital that my students bring to the classroom. This means that multiculturalism has to be an ideology that I give credence to in my instruction, and that I absolutely cannot take a one-size-fits-all approach to any lesson. Although we learn as a community, our experiences color our perceptions of what we learn and affect how we will later remember the knowledge we have constructed. With that in mind, I must strive to show that people of all racial, cultural, religious, gender, and abled backgrounds can be and have been successful, and that success did not have to be preceded by assimilation to a dominant culture.

Although I have always tried to walk some sort of primarily gender-neutral line, and I have never felt much like a girl in the typical American sense, I know that my gender positionality affects all my students—male, female, or otherwise. After reading about gender in American Education and other texts, I am going to make it a point to consciously monitor my instruction and classroom practices to ensure that all children are given equal say. I think I will try the moving the wristband from one arm to another idea to observe how often I call on the boys and girls in my classroom, and I will do my best to never stereotype anyone based on gender. This is crucial, because in my internship I saw a lot of a hidden curriculum toward gender, where teachers (implicitly and perhaps unknowingly) passed on values and beliefs about what girls and boys can and are supposed to do. We cannot assume that girls won't like a book about baseball; similarly, when we play cooperative games in the classroom, it shouldn't always be boys versus girls. It is easy for children to absorb these values when they see them modeled by adults, and so it is my job as an educator to guard against any biases the best I am able. If I make a mistake in this area, it is important for me to apologize to students and point out why I was wrong. Other positionalities besides gender will come into play here, and I must also be careful not to judge someone of a differing cultural or religious background because of their beliefs. I believe that I can maintain a flourishing democratic community where no one's rights are impinged upon without sacrificing important ideals like equality, equity, and justice.

Milner's writings resonate with me greatly. There really is an opportunity gap in this country, and my students are almost always on the receiving end of that disparity. My positionality has allowed me to see and experience some of that opportunity gap firsthand, but I have also experienced much privilege. I can use this privilege for good—I can use the knowledge that I have gained throughout my life to ensure that I do not perpetuate an opportunity gap in my classroom. I think that is an attainable feat as long as I never forget my positionality, or the positionalities of my students. Colorblindness is not an option. I think many teachers turn to colorblindness as a way to cope with diverse classrooms because they believe that differences

are inherently divisive, but I do not agree with that idea. In fact, diversity is an asset to any classroom, especially in an increasingly connected world. In my classroom, I will make it a point to draw on my student's experiences and show the ways that we are alike and different. I have found that students truly love learning about other perspectives and ways of life; so why not engage them through deepening their understanding of positionalities other than their own?

Milner's digital divide gap, related to the acquisition of 21st century skills, is another concept that is close to my heart. Most of the classrooms I have taught in have no technology at all; that is a bitter pill to swallow when I can walk down the hall and see that every other teacher has at least an ActiveBoard. This digital divide gap is occurring in the homes of students from low socioeconomic classes, and is then perpetuated in our K-12 classrooms when we do not give all students access to computers, software, and other technologies. 21st century skills prepare students for a job market that is increasingly dependent on their ability to participate in technological Discourses; not just to use technology, but to be able to critical analyze and evaluate the purpose of information presented through multiple mediums. Equality of opportunity is certainly not a realizable outcome when students never receive admittance to the world of 21st century skills. Our students are not in positions of power, but we as educators do hold some sway, and it is up to us to lobby on behalf of our students to ensure that they are given a fair shake. After all, every single one of my students is marginalized in at least on area of their life; I cannot allow them to be marginalized further because of a lack of resources in my classroom.

Philosophy of Education

My philosophy of education is multifaceted and supports the creation of a safe, orderly, and supportive classroom environment where all members in the community of learners feel respected and are willing to take risks. For me, the aim of education is to enhance student understanding of and connection with the world. This can be accomplished by activating students' prior knowledge and experience, what Piaget would call schema, and building on this background knowledge through instruction, activities, and assessments that are responsive to students' interests, learning styles, and positionalities. Taking a deficit-model view of students, where what they are perceived to lack is considered to be a hindrance to learning, is not an option. In hearkening back to philosophers, I am the opposite of Kant—I do not believe that the teacher is the ultimate authority figure in the classroom who makes all the decisions and can teach what he or she wants as long as he or she exhibits perfect moral character. I am probably most like Peirce; learning is about discovery and by working together, we achieve the best possible achievement and educational attainment for each individual student. Everyone has an equal role in the classroom; my voice is only more substantial than others when community agreements are broken (meaning that I have an obligation to step in as the classroom leader when disputes cross lines of respect).

Any curriculum I implement, any lesson I design, must be culturally responsive in nature; this is a key aspect of my pedagogy. My role in the classroom is to facilitate and scaffold student learning by ensuring that everyone is represented in the curriculum. Thus, it is my duty to become familiar with my students' positionalities and to learn enough about them as individuals to effectively teach them in ways that are relevant and engaging. A simple survey at the beginning of the year will not suffice; rather, it is my goal to learn something new about each student every day. I feel that this can be accomplished through a student-centered learning

environment where discussion is a central focus. Students should feel comfortable to take risks, and it is my job to enforce community agreements so that all students know that I will protect them. It is important that I never stifle a student's creativity by being too rigid; I must be flexible with activities and assessments to allow students to construct their understanding in myriad ways.

Another huge part of my pedagogy is empowerment. As Freire says, "To wash one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and powerless is to side with the powerful, not to be neutral." I cannot be silent about issues of social justice, and when students have concerns, they should feel free to express them. Student needs come first; if we take time out to have these discussions, even if it takes ten minutes away from the state-based objectives of the day, student understanding has been enhanced and the long-term results are much more important than any short-term losses of instructional time. I must make sure that all students know they have a role to play in creating a just world, and that empowerment starts in our democratic classroom community. In other words, I have to recognize that my students are all human and these experiences make life-long learners.

The student's role is both simple and complex—they are to work on enhancing their understanding, by being willing to open themselves up to new experiences so that they can make stronger and more meaningful connections with curricula. A respectful, productive classroom environment is dependent on students 'buying in' to my conception of a democratic classroom and, while the onus is on me to establish a solid community from day one, the onus is also on students to exercise self-regulation. Students should bring all of themselves to the classroom; there is no holding back when we participate in constructive thinking. Logic, emotions, feelings, background experiences, cultural values—all are a part of learning following my epistemological beliefs. As Milner says, achievement is not an independent variable; students do not exist in a vacuum. There is so much that I can do as an educator to enhance student achievement, and if I stick to my philosophy of education—if I demonstrate authentic caring toward my students, recognize and respect their positionalities, and build a democratic classroom where all voices are valued—then I truly believe all students will be successful.

Conclusion

These narratives of Leigh-Ann, Lakesha, Jenny, and Lakota came at the end of our time together engaging in potentially transformative theories and practices. As members of the classroom community we had formed that summer, we were on a journey that was intended to promote conscious-raising through exploration of positionality and philosophy of education, with an end goal of all of us pedagogically enacting praxis. The narratives reflect my attempt to encourage similar journeys of transformation to my own, since "the risk to remain tight in a bud

was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.” When designing the course, its tenor and direction were the blossoming of my desire to develop equity sensitivity. In keeping with ideals of reflective practice I listen to the voices of theorists and my students to evaluate my endeavor.

Gloria Ladson-Billings helps me first ask the important questions regarding my instruction. *Did I apprentice my students in a learning community rather than teaching them in an isolated and unrelated way?*⁴⁹⁹ I answer in the affirmative. *Were my student’s “real-life” experiences valued as part of the curriculum?* Again, I say yes. *Did I value my student’s home cultures?*⁵⁰⁰ Indeed, their cultures were an essential course “text.” *Did I perceive classroom literacy as both written and verbal?*⁵⁰¹ Discussion and narrative was deeply valued in conjunction with the interactions with the printed texts. *Did I work with my students to challenge the status quo?*⁵⁰² That was certainly my commitment. *Did I treat my students as though they were competent?*⁵⁰³ This was my intent and feed-back from students indicates that they felt esteemed. *Did I scaffold my student’s knowledge, moving from what they know to what they need to know?*⁵⁰⁴ I think much of the knowledge I introduced was new to some, but they made connections to their past, present, and future education contexts. For others the course seemed to be a continuation of a journey they were already on towards awareness of social justice and issues of equity in education. *Was my classroom focused on instruction and extending student’s thinking and abilities?*⁵⁰⁵ Absolutely. *Did I know my material? Did I know*

⁴⁹⁹ Ladson-Billings, *Dreamkeepers*, 117.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., 117, 138.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., 117.

⁵⁰² Ibid., 118.

⁵⁰³ Ibid., 124.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., 124, 125.

my students?⁵⁰⁶ In many ways I was familiar with the material, but time and experience would have provided richer insights and increased ability to share information on my part. I know I was learning as I went. I made it my job to consciously come to know my students, through questionnaires regarding their expectations and preferred learning styles, to ice-breakers, through their journals and blogs, and in the many discussions and group interactions that were woven into “Teachers, Schools, and Society.” The foundation was there for culturally relevant instruction. Hopefully the same can be said for my creating a multicultural classroom. The scene was set for a transformative experience with potentially transformative texts and theories. The question is: was any one transformed?

All my participating students responded to questions regarding the efficacy of my modeling of situationally sensitive pedagogical practices in a democratic classroom as informed by the textual materials used in “Teachers, Schools, and Society.”

The instructor did a great job of modeling various pedagogical practices through the use of Tribes and the placement of the furniture in the classroom. She was always giving different ways of doing things through her modeling the various examples.

Yes, I loved the way the room moved around from time to time and the unique style of expository teaching was something I really enjoyed.

I really enjoyed our democratic classroom environment, the including of the community circle, Tribes icebreaker activities (although I groaned a bit, they were quite pleasant!), and our discussions. Our discussions, which were always started and maintained very effectively by the instructor, gave me insight into others' worldviews, something that is very rare and precious.

Yes, I especially admired the fact she practiced what she preached. She not only introduced a new teaching style with the communities and Tribes, but she implemented this teaching style into her classroom. This gave me a visual on how the teaching style works.

⁵⁰⁶ Ladson-Billings, *Dreamkeepers*, 125.

The instructor modeled the Tribes concepts in order to create a democratic classroom. The class was held both in a community circle of chairs and in desks arranged for group work. The modeling was effective and instructive, and I think many class members will try to use the Tribes concepts in their classrooms.

Absolutely. The modeling and discussion helped clarify what was read in the text.

Yes, the instructor always modeled practices effectively and provided explanations.

Absolutely. The modeling in the classroom helped me understand the ideas presented in Thayer-Bacon's text.

Absolutely. It is rare to see a professor "practice" what they preach. I liked the group circle we were arranged in for some part of every class. It might not be appropriate in all contexts, but for this subject matter, it worked great.

Finally, when asked if they had any other comments regarding “Teachers, Schools, and Society” student responses reflected their valuing of a philosophically positional situational sensitivity, but point to the on-going challenge of pedagogical praxis. Students shared through the anonymous survey:

I felt like we talked a lot about my distance from certain populations that I will be teaching and "meeting students where they are" but there was not much about how exactly to do this. I know becoming aware of positionality is very important, but a little more focus on praxis would have been nice. Perhaps this is because our course was so short though.

Only that I wish there were more undergraduate courses in this arena. I took a Sociology course as an undergrad entitled “Race and Ethnicity” which was wonderful, but did not relate to praxis or education whatsoever. This is a course every educator needs, especially with the amount of pre-service teachers (and in-service teachers) who remain unaware of their positionalities and how they affect classroom teaching and learning.

I believe watching the movies was a great tactic. This helped me to view thoughts and positions from different perspectives.

The class provided an open arena to discuss different aspects of race and identity in a low-anxiety environment. The decisions made at the beginning of the class to be respectful of others was literally taken and an atmosphere of freedom and openness was created.

It was informative to hear the many positions on race and identity among my classmates. I know that identity is very important to individuals, but was surprised that so many

people with so much else in common (upbringing, education, values) could have such unique identities.

They are factors that all teachers need to recognize if we want to produce effective teachers.

I honestly did not know what I was getting myself into when I walked into this classroom everyday. The lack of consistency made me cringe sometimes... Now that I am finished taking “Teachers, Schools, and Society” I am more in touch with myself as a future educator. This course pushed me to do things and examine aspects of my life that I never would have before. I feel like if we had more time together than just one month I wouldn't have been so apprehensive about the ideas discussed. I feel like I was just coming to grips with things concerning my positionality when I had to write my paper and the class was over.

I think everyone who wants to teach should be required to take a course in cultural studies. I think having an awareness of positionality is extremely important for new and experienced teachers! I sincerely believe that the students who took this class will be better teachers because of it.

I had sought to help students think about how to cross over “gaps” in educational settings, to be conscious regarding equity, inclusion, care, and appreciation of diversity. Our journeying together did advance these issues in our consciousnesses and for some may impact their practice, although, like me, this is an unfolding process.

Revisiting my philosophy of education statement below from fifteen years ago brings my reflections full-circle to the beginning of my journey as a teacher. But this coming full-circle in my story is not the end. Retrospectively I see the lack of substantial theoretical knowledge underpinning my ideals hence my call for attending to philosophy of education complimented by multicultural education, critical theory, and qualitative research methodologies.

My Philosophy of Education

My focus as an educator is to provide for the full development of the individual child. This includes their academic, physical, social, affective, and moral development. I believe that the individual child should be perceived to be on a continuum of development and that as teachers we support movement along that continuum. I feel as an educator it is my responsibility to prepare learning situations, to present material and learning strategies, and lead the student to make generalizations that can be applied in more than the given learning context.

It is my opinion that learning should be experimental and information be presented in a variety of modalities making use of all the senses. I wish to create a learning environment where the students realize the importance of learning and where their characters are developed. The use of cooperative learning is a most useful tool to achieve this aim.

It is my responsibility to not only provide the content of information the child needs to acquire at their developmental point, but to empower them to have the tools to access knowledge for a lifetime. This affects how I will teach and what I will teach. I will teach to convey information but also to show how to learn. I want to be a role model of a learner, to be a facilitator of learning, and to be a resource and guide to learning.

I am of the opinion that teachers can create a positive setting in their classroom, where the students feel secure in a safe and consistent environment. As teachers we are capable of making a better society by giving children a microcosm of harmonious interaction of people of varying abilities and backgrounds.

Reflecting on my statement I do see that I am in a course of personal preparation that is progressing, responding to imaginings, and attempting to attend to recommendations. My transformation has advanced. I am thinking. I am aware. I am developing sensitivity.

Reading Leigh-Ann's narrative of a young, White, pre-service middle school teacher tells of her transformation. She demonstrates understanding of power in her authority and a new awareness of the complexity of race. Leigh-Ann draws on her own experiences of oppression to understand the experiences of others. Ideas about collaboration, democratic communities, and identity are sprinkled throughout her story. Leigh-Ann explores her age, race, class, and gender forthrightly, while reserving religion for the private sphere, not yet comfortable with its implications. Identification and representation are explored. Leigh-Ann is thinking.

Lakesha's voice as a woman, African American, teacher, mother, and wife is so strident and strong. Her experiences of difference and diversity are challenged and changed, but also form a rich resource of familiarity. Lakesha demonstrates she is thinking about issues of epistemology. She is doing pedagogical praxis by working out how philosophy of education

works for her practice as an experienced high school educator. Able to plot her growth, Lakesha is exploring her role and the function of education. Lakesha is aware.

Jenny's voice is doing the work of carefully unpacking her backpack and struggling with race and family issues and race as it relates to employment. She is reflecting deeply about these issues in her context of higher education. She ponders what cultural liabilities and assets are brought with her positionality and she judiciously considers how to address them pedagogically. Jenny wants to improve her practice and is doing so through understanding philosophical and positional theory. Jenny is developing sensitivity.

Lakota's voice has found a new strength because she feels she isn't alone, despite the marginalization associated with being Native American and an ESL teacher. Appreciative of her people being represented in our course texts (or in the case of Joel Spring, writing the text), Lakota is building community. She is carefully thinking about the rights of the individual and the community and writes how "communities and individuals act in concert with one another to make a mutually beneficial relationship. A perfect symphony is created when we build a democratic classroom community where students feel safe, important, and are confident that their contributions are worthwhile." Lakota's experiences of oppression and marginalization bring great wisdom, resilience, and cultural competence. Like Leigh-Ann, her views on religion are withheld from her classroom, another space of alienation still too tender and risky to contribute freely to her school community. However, engagement with the course has increased her theoretical grounding and broadened her base of allies. Lakota is doing personal preparation and situational sensitivity!

True to the uniqueness of the process, the students, and the season, geography, and history of the course, duplication of these movements along the gamut of personal preparation for situational sensitivity cannot be assumed. But I am optimistic that fostering this *potential* can be replicated for students of education and in any classroom of any age. For more on possible application and to conclude we turn to Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

Introduction

Throw your dreams into space like a kite, and you do not know what it will bring back, a new life, a new friend, a new love, a new country.
— *Anaïs Nin*

Recently my husband's grandfather turned ninety-two and three generations gathered to celebrate his birthday. As part of the festivities the youngest family members wrote notes about what they loved about their great-grandfather and attached them to balloons. Against the backdrop of a perfectly clear blue spring sky over twenty balloons were released in unison, sweet messages attached, and drifted off into space. It was a touching moment. But it was sheer sentimentality. A philosophical rendering such as has preceded this chapter risks drifting similarly off into space, a romanticized gesture of no practical significance. My hope is that my sharing of my philosophical (re)visioning and theoretical journey that is unfolding profoundly in my teaching practice is more like throwing "dreams into space like a kite."⁵⁰⁷ Although I don't know what each journey of personal preparation will look like, I hope the kite I have released will bring back something.

I have attempted to answer the question *How can I make the case that there is an imperative need to change the trajectory of current efforts to reduce "achievement gaps" in the United States and (re)vision a transformation of our school settings through conscious-raising sensitivity regarding issues of equity towards equality amongst educators that harnesses the work of philosophy of education scholars?* This work is a theoretical project that has been a hike

⁵⁰⁷ World of Quotes, "Anaïs Nin," <http://www.worldofquotes.com/author/Anais+Nin/1/index.html> (accessed February 12, 2012).

through an argument for attending to philosophical theories of education (amongst others) seeking an ideal of education that pursues equity towards equality. However, this metaphorical hike also contains within it an invitation to the reader to reflect on their own journey and (re)consider alternative paths in the on-going pursuit of equity in education.

My explanation of a transformative hike across educational theory suggests a constant process of sorting provisions in a figurative backpack, which I argue needs to be (un)packed concerning our assumptions as educators regarding sensitivity to diversity for equity and inclusion for equality. In terms of preparation for the hike I selected the trail of philosophical research as a means to “advance educational practice” through establishing a philosophical argument.⁵⁰⁸ I looked particularly to two philosophers of education to help guide my journeying. I extended Jane Roland Martin’s theory of situated sensitivity⁵⁰⁹ by adding race and class to the original gender application to help me develop discernment about what to pack and what to take out of my backpack. My constant guidebook along the trail has been a synthesis of Barbara Thayer-Bacon’s work,⁵¹⁰ particularly relating to her application of philosophy to education through relational “(e)pistemologies,”⁵¹¹ constructive thinking, and a vision of schooling as a democratic community. Extending the hike analogy, I have guided the reader

⁵⁰⁸ Barbara Thayer-Bacon and Diana Moyer, “Philosophical and Historical Research,” in *Doing Educational Research: A Handbook*, ed. Kenneth Tobin and Joe Kincheloe (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2006), 141.

⁵⁰⁹ Jane Roland Martin. “The Ideal of the Educated Person.” *Educational Theory*, 31 (1981), 97-109. *Reclaiming a Conversation: The Ideal of the Educated Woman*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985. *Cultural Miseducation: In Search of a Democratic Solution*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2002. *The Schoolhome: Rethinking Schools for Changing Families*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.

⁵¹⁰ Thayer-Bacon, Barbara J., with Charles S. Bacon. *Philosophy Applied to Education: Nurturing a Democratic Community in the Classroom*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Merrill, 1998. Barbara Thayer-Bacon, *Transforming Critical Thinking: Thinking Constructively*. New York: Teachers College, 2000. *Relational “(e)pistemologies*.” New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003. *Beyond Liberal Democracy in Schools: the Power of Pluralism*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2008.

⁵¹¹ Thayer-Bacon symbolically places the word *epistemology* in quotations to differentiate it from the traditional use of the word and brackets and places the ‘e’ in the lower-case to help the reader attend to her reorienting epistemology as non-traditional theory of a relational way of knowing based on lived-experience. (Thayer-Bacon, *Relational “(e)pistemology*,” 5.)

along my own process of transformation by exposure to educational theory (particularly that of philosophy of education, but also including multicultural, critical, and qualitative research theory). I shared my progression in the hopes of encouraging similar, yet unique, processes of personal preparation for sensitivity to equity in other educators. I have discussed how I attempted to foster this process in other educators through the designing and teaching of a graduated level social foundations course. This route has followed the argument for the transformative work of philosophy of education theory in the quest for schooling equity and equality through three key points of interest: philosophy, positionality, and pedagogical praxis. At the culmination of this project I would like to conclude with how engagement with the educationally theoretical and ideal can possibly impact our practice as teachers literally and feasibly. I pray my kite offering might bring back “a new life, a new friend, a new love, a new country.”⁵¹²

In this chapter I will briefly restate my contribution and share the kites of two equity allies, introducing the thoughts of Connie Titone and reprising the work of Barbara Thayer-Bacon. Finally in a move to consciously decenter dominant voices, I will share the kites of possibility found in the works of Gloria Ladson-Billings, Sonia Nieto, H. Richard Milner, and Angelina Castagno and Bryan Brayboy that have permeated this text. I caution the reader not to view this chapter as prescriptive or as a traditional recommendations chapter since consciousness-raising is an essentially intrinsic movement along an interminable continuum that cannot be reduced to formulaic external behavior modification. What I offer is the potential application of theory to start a process of perpetual sensitizing of educators equipped to (re)vision a life-long transformative hike towards educational equality. How this will manifest in pedagogical praxis

⁵¹² Nin.

will be, in fact, must be, unique for each practitioner for every group of students they teach. This is evident in Chapter IV where these authors helped me see the movements of my students along a continuum. Before I share the possibilities of the theories I have elucidated I need to address the issue of teacher preparation.⁵¹³ I am suggesting facilitating a process of on-going transformation of teachers to alter the trajectory of our education system and the obvious locus of this process of conscious-raising would seem to be within teacher preparation programs. Although the journey of personal preparation does not have to be facilitated within a formal educational setting, I cannot make my claims without justifying their credibility within this context. I am not an expert in teacher preparation history or policy. However, I can make the move to apply my own theory to that of teacher preparation in order to attend to the question of what situational sensitivity born of a philosophical critique and a narratively positional approach might look like in teacher preparation programs.

It is no longer an option, quite frankly, for schools of education to prepare teachers who do not have the competency to strive to teach for equity and equality. The reality is that the United States *is* a diverse nation and teachers need to be able to meet the needs of all the students in their classes and prepare all students for life in a diverse society. Here theories of cultural competence help give shape to what the embodiment of a competent educator, and indeed competent teacher preparation program, may look like. Cultural competence is described as being an on-going process “by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, sexes, ethnic backgrounds,

⁵¹³ I am using the term *teacher preparation* to include all the disciplines that form the basis of teaching programs. Under this umbrella I have placed *educational psychology* and *teacher education* for the purpose of my argument that uses work of scholars in each of these particular fields but whose contributions are pertinent to teacher preparation in general.

religions, sexual orientations, abilities and other diversity factors” in a way that distinguishes, supports, and values, defends, and preserves the dignity and worth of communities and the individuals within them.⁵¹⁴ This kind of competence is not simply awareness, it means being able to assimilate knowledge about diverse groups into “specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services; thereby producing better outcomes”⁵¹⁵ such as educational achievement.

Indigenous scholar Terry Cross’s work on cultural competence is pertinent here. Cross’s model gives individuals and institutions a means to assess cultural competency as a movement along a continuum in areas such as race, class, and gender. The model moves through stages, beginning with cultural destructiveness, incapacity, and blindness, then transitioning through cultural pre-competence, basic competence, and advanced competence. When describing teachers as being competent regarding equity and equality, Cross’s advance cultural competence can give us a description of what this might look like. Teachers with advanced cultural competence will have moved beyond

accepting, appreciating, and accommodating cultural difference and begin to actively educate less informed individuals about cultural differences, and seek out knowledge about diverse cultures, develop skills to interact in diverse environments, and become allies with and feel comfortable interacting with others in multicultural settings.⁵¹⁶

A general survey of common attributes of cultural competence⁵¹⁷ suggests individuals are aware of their own culture, values, and biases. Additionally they are aware of how their biases

⁵¹⁴ Jason Mak, “What is Cultural Competency?” Diversity and Human Rights Consortium, http://peer.hdwg.org/sites/default/files/T%20%20Cross%20Model%20Information_0.pdf (accessed March 10, 2012).

⁵¹⁵ Donald B. Pope-Davis and Hardin L. K. Coleman Davis, *Multicultural Counseling Competencies: Assessment, Evaluation, Education and Training, and Supervision* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996) quoted in Jason Mak, “What is Cultural Competency?” Diversity and Human Rights Consortium, http://peer.hdwg.org/sites/default/files/T%20%20Cross%20Model%20Information_0.pdf (accessed March 10, 2012).

⁵¹⁶ Mak, “What is Cultural Competency?” 2.

⁵¹⁷ Rohini Anand, *Teaching Skills and Cultural Competency: A Guide for Trainers*. Fourth

can affect others. This is the excavating work of positionality that I have put forward. Culturally competent individuals acquire culture-specific knowledge coupled with understanding of “institutional barriers that prevent some populations from accessing resources.”⁵¹⁸ They demonstrate ability to build relationships and communicate effectively across difference, are willing to be allies and mediate cross-cultural conflict, and are flexible and adaptable in diverse settings. Educators on such a journey are vital for equitable, caring, and inclusive classrooms (which Thayer-Bacon’s work envisages for us later in the chapter).

Even in the face of threatened obsolescence, social foundations courses and teacher preparation programs should do the work of preparing culturally competent teachers for the reality of the diverse local and global world. They can be the locus for deep reflective practice, narrative, educational research, social inquiry, critique, and conceptual frameworks such as social inquiry, ways of knowing in communities, and practical inquiry.⁵¹⁹ Education programs, in general, need to make amendments if there are not courses dealing with race, diversity, and social justice. They need to recruit and prepare students to teach in diverse settings. Teacher preparation needs to facilitate the potential coming to consciousness of their student population if pre-service teachers do not “come to the program with some understanding of and affinity toward teaching for social justice.”⁵²⁰ With this bigger picture of teacher preparation in mind, let me turn to briefly restating my contribution and share the possibilities of the theories two equity allies. Then I will attend to possibilities of application found in the work of African American,

Edition. (Washington, DC: National Multicultural Institute, 2000) quoted in Jason Mak, “What is Cultural Competency?” Diversity and Human Rights Consortium, http://peer.hdwg.org/sites/default/files/T%20%20Cross%20Model%20Information_0.pdf (accessed March 10, 2012).

⁵¹⁸ Mak, “What is Cultural Competency?”

⁵¹⁹ Ming Fang He and William Ayers, “Research with a Heart: Activist Practitioner Inquiry on the Landscape of Diversity” in *Diversity and Education: Teachers, Teaching, and Teacher Education*, ed. H. Richard Milner (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 2009), 198.

⁵²⁰ Milner, *Start Where You Are*, 170.

Native American, and Latina scholars in my intentional move to decenter my own dominant community member voice.

Educational Psychology: Modeling Philosophical Critique Within Teacher Preparation

My principal argument is for personal transformation of individual educators who influence the microcosm of the unique learning community they are a member of. It is not the work of this project to affect macro-level policy changes, although I must give them due diligence. Thus in light of my exploration of the efficacy of developing situational sensitivity in educators it is necessary to focus on the culture of teacher preparation that can either assist or impede this process. The disciplines where students of education are traditionally prepared for their role as teachers are *themselves* in need of the process of guided consciousness-raising towards the ideal of embracing sensitivity to diversity for equity and inclusion for equality. This process can occur through the exposing and expanding of the dominant discourses within teacher preparation at a systemic level. I draw on the work of two scholars, one from the field educational psychology (Suzanne Gallagher) and the other from teacher education (H. Richard Milner), to briefly address the issue of teacher preparation.

Educational psychologist Suzanne Gallagher models the process of coming to consciousness and the awareness of the dominant discourse that affects her discipline, the teachers it informs, and students it impacts. Rupturing the illusion of neutrality and problematizing learning as an “enculturation into a particular meaning-making system,”⁵²¹ Gallagher embarks on a self-consciously political process of exploring who is served by the

⁵²¹ Suzanne Gallagher. *Educational Psychology: Disrupting the Dominant Discourse*. (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 1.

dominant discourse within her field with a view to a “more liberatory and ultimately more just” education.⁵²² Through a process of reading mainstream educational psychology texts,⁵²³ Gallagher becomes aware that much of the discipline’s neutral facts are actually socially constructed and are permeated by political agendas.⁵²⁴ She identifies educational psychology’s dominant discourse as

an authoritarian and neutral body of knowledge that can guide educational practice and facilitate better learning. The current mainstream educational process in this country, in which this discourse is embedded, is organized around the modernist project, i.e., it celebrates reason and the individual subject, and has faith that a neutral science promotes progress, certainty, order, efficiency, and control.⁵²⁵

Gallagher assumes an alternative view, that of critique. While remaining skeptical of any notion regarding the discipline as a neutral body of knowledge, she affirms her responsibility and right to “read, understand, and transform” her teaching and learning of educational psychology. In this process she is able to explore how “modern societies exert control over human persons through the practices and knowledge claims of modern sciences.”⁵²⁶ She begins to develop the sensitivity necessary to identify and resist “oppressive perspectives and processes” and “support a more emancipator pedagogy concerned with a critical and democratic social order”⁵²⁷ by critically theorizing about the discipline in a move towards transformation.⁵²⁸

Gallagher’s following statement mirrors my concerns from my philosophically positional vantage point:

when teachers are simply trained to apply the mainstream tenets of the discipline to their practices, albeit with great expertise and sincerity, we assist students in fitting into the

⁵²² Gallagher, 3.

⁵²³ Ibid., 8.

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

⁵²⁵ Ibid., 12.

⁵²⁶ Ibid., 13.

⁵²⁷ Ibid., 9.

⁵²⁸ Ibid., 10.

current system, not to question the system. Our students, our future teachers, may accept this system that fails so many children. Through a more critical examination of the discipline we question the way things are, we “make the familiar strange” and we accept the possibility that things can be different, that we can help to make things different.⁵²⁹

Thus the normative view of teacher as technician becomes challenged by discourses of transgression and transformation. Gallagher critically reads and analyzes the dominant discourse of her field and through interrogation and explicitly troubling the status quo she hopes to make teachers aware of conscious and unconscious manifestations of oppression in our practices.⁵³⁰ Hence the imperative for an expanded discourse in order to include development of awareness of the philosophically positional approach I have explained in previous chapters can be seen in the field of educational psychology. This occurs by being made aware that texts aren’t impartial and value-free, that knowledge is socially constructed and not neutral, that there is a relationship between knowledge and power, and that the disciplines we study need to be deconstructed and analyzed. It seems to me that Gallagher has experienced a similar awakening as my own, through the same post-modern, critical, and feminist theories that have informed my thinking. It stands to reason that this process can be facilitated for other educators.

Teacher Education: Modeling Positional Narrative Within Teacher Preparation

Milner, a teacher education scholar and practitioner, states that it is vital that teacher educators examine their own practices because of the effect they have in the lives of their students and the students of their students. Like Gallagher, he acts as a model of the positional exploration of issues of sensitivity to diversity and equity within his field. Using narrative inquiry and self-study he examines his own practice and curricular choices. Narrative is a

⁵²⁹ Gallagher, 14 (quoting Foucault).

⁵³⁰ Ibid., 20.

powerful tool for pre-service teachers to explore their own positionality, but here Milner uses it to address practice within the discipline of education to speak to systemic issues within teacher preparation. He suggests narrative, self-study, and action research can be harnessed to expose our biases individually and systemically, and challenge the dominant discourses. Milner suggests there is a lack of systematic self-examination to improve their own pedagogies by those who instruct future teachers. If individuals can engage in deep levels of introspection in order to come to terms with both conscious and unconscious phenomena and experiences, this reflective process can also “shed light on situations that can help teacher educators reconceptualize their work.”⁵³¹ He sees educators as part of the curriculum they teach which speaks to the issue of positionality. Milner reiterates how our individual, lived experiences or “autobiographies and social realities” inform our pedagogies and curriculum choices.⁵³²

Milner has informed my use of narrative to help identify and explore the complex relationships between who we are and how we teach, privilege and power, and cultural diversity in education. Within teacher education the sharing of experiences by instructors can help students connect intellectually and affectively and act as models of thinking, discussing, and understanding (race and racism, in Milner’s case).⁵³³ Additionally, by engaging in narrative inquiry every educator can study teacher education, as I have inquired into individual educators backpacks in Chapter IV, exploring what seems contradictory or interesting to them and fostering knowledge, sensitivity, and awareness⁵³⁴ to race, class, and gender.

⁵³¹ H. Richard Milner. “Race, Narrative Inquiry, and Self-Study in Curriculum and Teacher Education,” in *Culture, Curriculum, and Identity in Education*, ed. H. Richard Milner (New York: Palgrave, 2010), 182.

⁵³² H. Richard Milner, “Race, Narrative Inquiry, and Self-Study in Curriculum and Teacher Education,” 188.

⁵³³ Milner, *Culture, Curriculum, and Identity*, 198.

⁵³⁴ Milner, *Culture, Curriculum, and Identity*, 194.

Milner suggests that the dominant discourse within teacher education can be challenged by deriving theory from practice from the experiences of “organic intellectuals” – particularly teachers of color. The implications of practice-to-theory for teacher education is a shift from “diversity of others, individual achievement, problem-focused diversity” to “shared fate of all, opportunity for all, [and] solutions and community benefits for all.”⁵³⁵ Utilizing this process of “researching backwards” Milner focuses on successful practitioners and “then adjust[s] and transform[s] the teacher education curriculum, pedagogy, and related learning experiences (such as student teaching) accordingly.” This is done to close “opportunity gaps” in traditional or nontraditional teacher education programs.⁵³⁶

Milner acknowledges that there are challenges in teacher education such as substantial variation based on the differing views of each teaching program that can cause “uneven learning opportunities for teachers,”⁵³⁷ but pragmatically suggests not focusing on the format and deficiencies. Rather we are to take full advantage of preparation in whatever iteration. Teacher education is after all essential to the preparation of teachers in light of the significant reform needed to really prepare teachers in terms of diversity, equity, and social justice⁵³⁸ through, amongst other things, courses that facilitate “cultural awareness and insight, critical reflection, and a bridge between theory and practice.”⁵³⁹

⁵³⁵ Beverly Cross, “Messages to Teacher Educators from the Margins: Teachers of Color on Equity in Diverse Classrooms,” in *Culture, Curriculum, and Identity in Education*, ed. H. Richard Milner (New York: Palgrave, 2010), 218.

⁵³⁶ H. Richard Milner, *Start Where You Are, But Don't Stay There: Understanding Diversity, Opportunity Gaps, and Teaching in Today's Classrooms* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Education Press, 2010), 147.

⁵³⁷ Milner, *Start Where You Are*, 168.

⁵³⁸ H. Richard Milner, “What Does Teacher Education Have to do with Teaching? Implications for Diversity Studies,” *Journal of Teacher Education* 61 (2010): 119.

⁵³⁹ H. Richard Milner, “Preservice Teachers’ Learning about Cultural and Racial Diversity: Implications for Urban Education,” *Urban Education* 41, no.4 (July 2006): 343-375.

With this mind-set Milner encourages a forum to address the concerns some have regarding the relevance of issues of diversity and to deflect the idea that those focused on social justice are making something out of nothing.⁵⁴⁰ The dominant discourse encourages a color-blind mentality that in fact contributes to the fostering of inequity, thus Milner explains that as a teacher educator he has to guide students from a point of *why* diversity to *how* to address diversity.⁵⁴¹ Then unexamined mind-sets and practices are better addressed and made explicit by abandoning a false political correctness. Positionality and narrative help in this process that requires dealing with “historical and familial roots,”⁵⁴² stereotyping, and low expectations.⁵⁴³ Milner wants to challenge the dominant discourse that forces teachers to think in a certain way by advocating that teachers feel “empowered to voice their positions and to construct knowledge and ways of knowing.”⁵⁴⁴

Milner identifies some key issues at a systemic level that threaten the fostering of an awareness of teacher positionality that values diversity and challenges dominant discourses. He names the distraction of dealing with the issues of increased external pressure to provide evidence of program’s effectiveness and structural incoherence between programs where there is perhaps too much variation in terms of the level of curricular and instructional emphasis on opportunity and diversity. Milner advises increasing the numbers of teachers and teacher educators of color and from diverse backgrounds in the field. Additionally he suggests constructing and deconstructing curriculum and instructional experiences that meet the needs of all students, not just White students. Further, he advises addressing the uneven stress and burden

⁵⁴⁰ Milner, *Start Where You Are*, 150.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., 152.

⁵⁴² Ibid., 156.

⁵⁴³ Ibid., 162.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid., 166.

placed on teacher educators of color to be the diversity go-to person in teacher education programs⁵⁴⁵ and redirects attention to teacher positionality to address issues of diversity.

Milner recommends that teacher preparation needs to have the priority of preparing teachers for student learning, not solely for test scores; to prepare teachers to understand, teach for, and practice equity; and prepare teachers to recognize the assets of students.⁵⁴⁶ As educators deal with an era of accountability, competition, and meritocracy it is easy to slip into discourses that identify deficits and forget there are children involved, or that we are involved, thus the imperative to explore the positionality of ourselves and our disciplines. So doing, teachers and teacher educators can address their “conceptual repertoires of diversity.”⁵⁴⁷ These concepts include color-blindness, meritocracy, deficit conceptions, and low expectations.

Social Foundations: A Home Base in Teacher Preparation

Social foundations courses offer the scope for dealing with issues of teacher preparation, positionality, and sensitivity to diversity and inclusion. This is not to say that this sort of work isn’t and couldn’t be incorporated into coursework elsewhere. It should be manifest in all aspects of teacher training, after all this infusion of pedagogical praxis into all subject areas is what I would hope for teachers in public school classrooms. What I am advocating is not subject or even discipline specific; it is an encompassing matrix of being and teaching. That being said, social foundations courses can create an explicit space in teacher preparation curriculum for the exploration of the philosophical, critical, multicultural, sociological, and historical theories that inform the process of personal preparation I am championing.

⁵⁴⁵ Milner, *Start Where You Are*, 176.

⁵⁴⁶ H. Richard Milner and Darrell Cleveland, “In Pursuit of Democratic Practices in Teacher Education,” *Teacher Education and Practice*, 22, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 468-471.

⁵⁴⁷ Milner, “What Does Teaching Education Have to Do With Teaching,” 118.

However, the space to do this seems at risk in the face of a culture of high-stakes testing, standards-based teacher education that focuses on curricular alignment with state and national standards, and market-driven orientations that advocate the deregulation of teacher education. Additional risks include the expansion of teacher education beyond colleges/universities into alternative routes to certification and fast tracks to teaching. This climate speaks to a focus on efficiency, accountability, behavior engineering, and management expertise. But what is required to have a focus on issues of equity and equality, social spending, social justice, and emancipator thinking that encourages critique and demystification of the formalized world.⁵⁴⁸ Teacher educators have to struggle with the performance-based teaching programs and instructors often are not prepared themselves to “engage students in developing interpretive, normative, and critical perspectives.”⁵⁴⁹ It is here that social foundations courses offer a home base for such an effort to explore the connections between what we believe and how that determines how we teach, accessing connections between educative goals and educative means, and describing schools as they are and how they should be. Social foundations courses can expose detrimental hidden curriculum and how to counteract such oppressive practices. They afford us the freedom to ask ourselves “Why do American [U.S.] schools operate the way they do?”⁵⁵⁰

Social foundations scholars have suggested teacher preparation programs encourage faculty to model pedagogical methods. They have encouraged the comparing of school contexts, teaching as co-teachers not student teachers, infusing transformative, democratic and critical

⁵⁴⁸ Steve Tozer and Debra Miretzky, “Social Foundations, Teaching Standards, and the Future of Teacher Preparation,” in *Teaching Social Foundations of Education: Contexts, Theories, and Issues*, ed. Dan Butin (London: Routledge, 2005), 3-27.

⁵⁴⁹ Kathleen DeMarrais, “Reflections on a Social Foundations Approach to Teacher Education,” in *Teaching Social Foundations of Education: Contexts, Theories, and Issues*, ed. Dan Butin (London: Routledge, 2005), 168.

⁵⁵⁰ DeMarrais, 168.

pedagogies into the curriculum and practice, and heterogeneous learning cohorts to foster communities of learners.⁵⁵¹ This again dove-tails with the philosophically positional approach I have laid out for K-16 learning communities. Certainly, this may be a case of the chicken or the egg; I am after all a product of a social foundations-style graduate program which has informed my work. Nevertheless due to my prior teacher preparation experience devoid of this kind of critical and theoretical coursework, I entered the teaching profession ignorant of transformative, democratic, or critical pedagogies, but have been informed by exposure to social foundations material. Regardless, the reality is that there are state, federal, and university politics to consider, issues of accreditation, and the deregulation of teacher education that make the culture of teacher preparation extremely challenging when wanting to foster awareness to issues of equity and equality. This is not unlike the challenges to our K-16 school environments.

If teacher preparation programs can create or retain courses and instructors that desire to help “students understand, to analyze, and to critique traditional models and practices of our educational system”⁵⁵² (the dominant discourse), certain criteria need to be included.

Prospective teachers need to have an opportunity to learn (to have a handle on theoretical subject matter and pedagogical possibilities); opportunity to practice (“engagement in real world clinical practicum”); and the opportunity to change (to be “exposed to and grapple with counterintuitive and counter normative ways of thinking about and engaging with our education system”).⁵⁵³ If schools of education promoted these opportunities they could facilitate the raising of awareness

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., 172-174.

⁵⁵² Dan Butin, “How Social Foundations of Education Matters to Teacher Preparation: A Policy Brief,” *Educational Studies*, 38, no. 3 (2005): 214.

⁵⁵³ Butin, *How Social Foundations of Education Matters to Teacher Preparation*, 215.

of one's own positionality as a key part of conscientization (consciousness and action) regarding equity.

The accountability movement calls for competent teachers equipped for diversity. Instead of reducing social foundations courses and focusing on prescriptive teaching practices, as is the current trend, teacher preparation needs to value social foundations courses as a means to address diversity. Social foundations offers a forum to educate teachers through substantial and sustained inquiry and critical engagement in order to eliminating educational inequities through awareness of the challenges of “at-risk” school teaching situations.⁵⁵⁴ Courses within social foundations can create a forum for exploring issues related to diversity. Breathing room is made for exploration of positionality and contesting and contextualizing issues in education, such as race by dispelling the misnomers of neutrality and color-blindness. This critical stance allows for a more reflexive discipline and fosters social justice sensibilities⁵⁵⁵ to achieve the end goal of educating competent teachers equipped for diverse learners and learning contexts.

Again review of educational policy documents, such as NCLB legislation, indicate the need for teachers to be prepared for diversity. Therefore, the need remains for teachers to be equipped with an infusion of theoretical knowledge, experience, and multicultural education throughout their training to prepare them for culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Teacher education programs will need to change if they are going to pay more than lip service to equitable education and ask themselves if they are “really *practicing* a social justice teacher education mission” (emphasis in original).⁵⁵⁶ Key structural issues need to be addressed, such as

⁵⁵⁴ Dan Butin, “Is Anyone Listening? Educational Policy Perspectives on the Social Foundations of Education,” *Educational Studies* 38, no. 3 (2005): 286, 295.

⁵⁵⁵ Gallagher, 5.

⁵⁵⁶ Milner, *Start Where You Are*, 170.

who teaches, what instructors think is central to the curriculum, who enrolls in the courses, what experiences are brought to the learning space, and what the main focus is of their program to diversity and social justice.⁵⁵⁷ Some practical suggestions for change in teacher education, regarding race for example, are:

Specific course work that looks at race, racism and White privilege and the type of critical reflection that pre-service teachers must do in examining their ‘multiple identities’. Without this type of self-exploration pre-service teachers will leave their teacher education programs without the necessary understanding of how their racial identity impacts students of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Further, they will continue to perpetuate racial stereotypes and low expectations for students of color creating the continued academic achievement gap.⁵⁵⁸

Further suggestions include field experiences in diverse settings where students will be “required to get an understanding of the community by talking to various stakeholders to learn about their concerns.”⁵⁵⁹ Additionally pre-service teachers will need professional development in the practices of multicultural education and training in culturally relevant pedagogy.⁵⁶⁰

My Kites

My own contribution has been to suggest that inadequate reforms should cause us to reassess our strategies for addressing continuing “achievement gaps” and to pay attention to an alternative approach: the personal preparation of educators for equity that can be found in the offerings of philosophy of education (and by extension feminist, critical, qualitative, and multicultural) theorists. First, I harness the work of philosophy of education scholars in Chapter II to help me make my case that educators need to explore theories that can inform them

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁸ Kathy L. Wood, “Pre-Service Teachers’ Experiences in Teacher Education: What we Taught and What They Learned about Equitable Education,” in *Diversity and Education: Teachers, Teaching, and Teacher Education*, ed. H. Richard Milner (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 2009), 172.

⁵⁵⁹ Wood, 172.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

regarding the efficacy of raising sensitivity towards the ideal of equity and equality and suggest the means to create inclusive learning spaces. Second, we have seen in Chapter III that reflection on positionality can be a tool used to address evident education “gaps” and their far-reaching consequences. Awareness of the power of positionality will equip educators to work towards a realization of the ideal of equality through creation of democratic learning spaces that foster mutual growth particular to student and teacher embodiments, embeddedness, historical context, and geographical location. When teachers begin to reflect and critique their positionalities and how they intersect with others, this self-reflection and attentiveness to one’s own positionality can cause a transformation that promotes equity and seeks to overcome privilege, oppression, and domination. I have suggested that inclusion of dominant community educators and marginalized/minority community educators in a discourse of *all of us* that attends to difference while being inclusive is imperative to advance equity and equality.

My third approach in suggesting a trajectory change in education through the transformation of educators is the incorporation of narratives as the means to develop critical awareness, personally explore the transformative potential of philosophy and positionality, and to demonstrate how practices of sensitivity to equity and equality in classroom spaces play out in reality. Narrative is helpful to this exploration and process of critical reflection in the telling of our stories of how educators are thinking, acting, and feeling as we consider our frames of reference. It seems logical that these reflective stories be included in my empirical work because they are a product of the process.

Theories and narratives have consequently informed my pedagogy, fostering what I have coined as pedagogical praxis. Pedagogical praxis is teaching practice that is informed and transformed by a personal preparation regarding equity and equality (see Chapter IV). Personal

transformation of teachers needs to produce the utilizing of theory and pedagogies to make structural changes.⁵⁶¹ Through reflective research of the self, the self in relation to others, and the self within the system,⁵⁶² educators can possibly develop the tools for the vigilance required to create learning communities attentive to issues of equity.

Not attending to the conscious-raising potential of philosophical theories of education (and other theories that have transformative capabilities) and their possible iterations in our classrooms risks retaining the status quo. It limits the benefits of an on-going personal preparation for situational sensitivity might offer to educators in the form of equitable and inclusive pedagogy, curriculum selection, and assessment strategies. I conclude this project of theory infused with narrative experiences with an attempt to follow the kites of other scholars whose work has been released to the skies throughout this text, but return to earth with possible educational applications of personal preparation for situational sensitivity.

Ally Kites

In light of seeking applications of theory, White educator Connie Titone's work offers a model of the (White) teacher as ally. Her contribution comes from a position of concern regarding White educators needing to educate themselves regarding racism and actively "combat pathological whiteness and eradicate racism accompanied by all of its negative academic effects."⁵⁶³ Aware of her positionality as a White southerner, Titone shares a similar story to my own. In fact I relate as a doubly southern White (South African residing in the southern United

⁵⁶¹ Sonia Nieto. *The Light in Their Eyes: Creating Multicultural Learning Communities* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2010), 155.

⁵⁶² H. Richard Milner, "Race, Culture, and Researcher Positionality: Working Through Dangers Seen, Unseen, and Unforeseen." *Educational Researcher* 36, no. 7 (2007): 395-397.

⁵⁶³ Connie Titone, "Educating the White Teacher as Ally" in *White Reign: Deploying Whiteness in America*, ed. Joe Kincheloe and Shirley Steinberg (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 159-160.

States) woman. Similar to my experience, Titone acknowledges an intrinsic awareness that racism was wrong, but had not forum to explore her feelings.⁵⁶⁴

Titone's stages of teacher identity are practically useful in assessing ones teaching practice.⁵⁶⁵ She initially saw her role as teacher of targeted youth/minority students as that of guide to assimilation ("The White Savior") and assumed "whiteness as rightness" while trying to "save" children from their inferior future.⁵⁶⁶ Later in graduate school, in a similar experience to mine, she encountered theories that began to inform her understanding of issues of diversity, power, and equity ("The Multicultural Intellectualist"). However, she felt that her intellectual engagements had not fostered the kind of "ethical responsibility to struggle to transform ourselves and to facilitate similar transformations in all white preservice teachers."⁵⁶⁷ Titone states that awareness is not enough to produce "an antiracist, white educator."⁵⁶⁸ Again, like me, she asserts that White educators need to "pay attention to how white students situate themselves in the study of race, culture, and education" and states that "at my school of education...the process within which material was presented did not provide a structured environment that encouraged us as white students to come to terms with ourselves."⁵⁶⁹ I argue that this is part of the work of addressing positionality that I have spoken about in Chapter III.

In Chapter III, and within this chapter, I mention the term *ally* multiple times. Titone suggests this is the model to strive for; it is a teaching role that is proactively working to combat inequity and positions the teacher as an antiracist (and anti-classist and -sexist) role model.⁵⁷⁰ I have adapted Titone's concept of ally to entail a teacher who is willing to be aware of their

⁵⁶⁴ Titone, 161.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., 162.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid., 163.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁹ Titone, 163.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid., 164.

positionality. S/he is willing to engage the subjects of race, class, and gender and is pedagogically mindful of the interplay of race, class, and gender. S/he encourages the exploration of positionality for enlightenment and emancipation in the lives of her/his students. An ally's dominant community power precludes being an insider within the marginalized community, but this power is offered as a resource if the marginalized community should choose to utilize it. *Ally* conjures wartime coalitions and combative connotations that might obscure its other iterations, such as unity, connection, relation, and alliance. Despite possible problems with the term, ally feels right for me. It conveys a sense of shared purpose but doesn't presume friendship. It allows for unequal power differentials, while making room for growing cohesions. It is my contention that an ally is named by the targeted group and such status cannot be presumed by the dominant community ally.. Titone shares multiple situations that reflect the negative consequences of not pursuing being allies and also suggests multiple ways to address the learning environment, student/teacher relationship, and knowledge base.⁵⁷¹ We can see that being an ally is nestled within the idea of being culturally competent I have discussed. We can also see that an exemplar of this sort of ally can be found in Thayer-Bacon and her work regarding nurturing a democratic community in the classroom.

Barbara Thayer-Bacon's efforts in an ally role seeking equity for targeted groups are demonstrated throughout her growing body of work, but are especially evident in her first book Philosophy Applied to Education. The text concludes with an inventive chapter that literally takes the reader into a fictitious composite⁵⁷² classroom to see her theories in action. Based on her idea that "people who are treated as valued members of a democratic community have

⁵⁷¹ For the complete account of these recommendations please see the full-text of Titone's chapter, "Educating the White Teacher as Ally."

⁵⁷² Thayer-Bacon draws on her own classroom experiences and those recorded by other well-known scholars.

greater chances of mastering curriculum and learning how they can contribute further to knowing,”⁵⁷³ Thayer-Bacon paints a picture of a classroom environment, curriculum, and pedagogical practice that unwaveringly adhere to the ideal of inclusion and care to foster educational attainment.

The nurturing of a democratic community is seen as vital, I remind the reader, because of the interface that occurs between the individual and community. Individual students and their contributions are valued as necessary for their own growth and that of the community in an environment that is overtly inclusive, interactive, and flexible. Students are given opportunities to become adept as knowers and make contributions to the “fabric of knowledge.”⁵⁷⁴ This is all done to foster students able to reason, care, and live together in a microcosm of an ideal democratic society. Thayer-Bacon describes the physical space that is inviting, even on a shoe-string budget. Some of her possible applications attend to issues of bilingual education, different communication patterns, multiple learning styles, differing “perceptions of involvement,”⁵⁷⁵ and building community through activities like sharing autobiographies. Difference and diversity permeate every corner of Thayer-Bacon’s imagined classroom community, but in each instance the reader can see strategies in play that foster the ultimate philosophical aim she is advocating. Student and teacher interactions are described as fostering care, honesty, and respect, such as encouraging an interactive style of communicating.⁵⁷⁶ Inter-student relationships are encouraged by teachers through things like establishing rules of conduct with the students for the classroom

⁵⁷³ Thayer-Bacon, Barbara J., with Charles S. Bacon. *Philosophy Applied to Education: Nurturing a Democratic Community in the Classroom* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Merrill, 1998), 169.

⁵⁷⁴ Thayer-Bacon, *Philosophy Applied to Education*, 170.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁵⁷⁶ Thayer-Bacon, *Philosophy Applied to Education*, 193.

that ensure an atmosphere of collegiality and friendliness.⁵⁷⁷ Teacher and family interactions are also suggested that prompt pluralism, inclusion, and attention to difference. Thayer-Bacon imagines a classroom where parents are welcome, cultural differences attended to, and parental goals for education are valued.⁵⁷⁸ As an ally, Thayer-Bacon knows that it “is not enough to show [students] you care, by being attentive, receptive, and empathetic to their situations. People need to work actively to improve situations, to put their theory into action” and act as a resource for students and their communities.⁵⁷⁹ As an educator, Thayer-Bacon is aware of the challenges to enact a democratic learning community when it comes to dealing with school administrations, teacher attrition rates, and the fact that students may not move on to a democratic learning community when they progress to the next grade/course/class. But Thayer-Bacon leaves the reader with a sense of possibilities. She reiterates, that despite these challenges, “[h]elping create caring, safe, reasonable, intuitive, imaginative, emotional environments is a positive thing to do.”⁵⁸⁰ I agree.

Kites that Decenter

During my year of research prior to writing this text I came across an exceptional book review by Rosa Hernandez Sheets. Her review of three books on/by White teachers was eclipsed by her insightful analysis of Whiteness in education. Upon re-reading her work for this final chapter I was taken aback by her stating almost verbatim what I am in the process of doing: “...some educators presume that the U.S. race dilemma can be solved in teacher preparation

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid., 196.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid., 200.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid., 202.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., 208.

foundation courses.”⁵⁸¹ She goes on to write “a purpose of this review is to explicitly address whether this discourse [racial awareness results in effective pedagogy] advances the field or promotes individuals speaking exclusively to White educators about teaching the ‘other.’”⁵⁸²

Just a paragraph later she writes,

This essay points out how the White movement affects the conceptualization of multicultural education, its subsequent translation to practice, and its vision of educating all children equitably. It asks the reader to consider if multicultural integrationist assumptions lead to pluralism or add to the perception of people of color as inherently inferior by promoting White liberal literature that often uses a subjective construction of knowledge and exposure of mental health issues to promote the psychological well-being of Whites.⁵⁸³

Well, crap, that’s about exactly what I’ve been doing; dancing on the razor blade hoping to land on the side of pluralism, but probably just making myself feel better. Sheets challenges my whole argument for situationally sensitive, philosophically positional, pedagogically praxis driven teachers as a means to address the “achievement gap,” questioning if such teachers will in fact be “skilled teachers who participate competently and responsibly in a reciprocal, complex teaching/learning process with our children?”⁵⁸⁴ Sheets knocked the wind out of my sails with statements regarding the lack of causal evidence to show that teacher’s racial awareness results in competency in culturally diverse or segregated classrooms.⁵⁸⁵ I also see that my project has been skewed towards issues of race, while attending to the implications and intersections of gender and class of educational attainment to a far lesser degree.

But my hope remains that I am not simply making this project about my Whiteness, although there is that strong possibility. I am hoping that I have demonstrated a more complex

⁵⁸¹ Rosa Hernandez Sheets, “Advancing the Field or Taking Center Stage: The White Movement in Multicultural Education,” *Educational Researcher* 29, no. 9 (December 2000): 15-21.

⁵⁸² Hernandez Sheets, 15.

⁵⁸³ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁸⁵ Hernandez Sheets, 16.

understanding of difference as couched within race, class, and gender, but I know that I have paid more attention to race. In an attempt to decenter myself as “White savior” and well-meaning helper, I must go beyond knowing myself. As Sheets astutely says, “this knowledge [of self] in and of itself, without cultural knowledge of other groups from their own perspective, relevant curricular content, and effect instruction strategies, might encourage narcissistic educational philosophies rather than advance inclusive multicultural positions.”⁵⁸⁶ So, I defer now to the recommendations of others in the hope of inclusion rather than narcissism. I intentionally do not draw connections between the work of myself or others to the sources that follow (although there are many), but let them stand unobscured to attempt to avoid co-option.

A kite of possibility can be found in Gloria Ladson-Billings reference to the idea of cultural relevance to counter-act the lack of representation of marginalized cultures in the dominant discourse curriculums⁵⁸⁷ and to advance culturally relevant pedagogy. Using narrative to express the out-workings of a culturally relevant teaching practice and to paint a picture of what such a practitioner might look like, Ladson-Billing provides a helpful model against which to assess our own pedagogy. To avoid an assimilationist approach to culture, Ladson-Billings advocates culturally relevant pedagogy as a means to empower “student intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to import knowledge, skills, and attitudes.”⁵⁸⁸ A teacher embodying this sort of pedagogy will have high expectations for their students and will believe in the potential of students to succeed.⁵⁸⁹ S/he must have a high self-

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid., 19.

⁵⁸⁷ Gloria Ladson-Billings. *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994), 16.

⁵⁸⁸ Ladson-Billings, *Dreamkeepers*, 17.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid., 25.

esteem and think highly of others.⁵⁹⁰ Teachers embracing a culturally relevant approach see their profession as an art and themselves as contributing members of a community.⁵⁹¹ They have an epistemological mindset that sees knowledge as co-constructed and constantly being renegotiated.⁵⁹² This sort of teacher draws on the experiences and knowledge of her students and assist students in making connections “between their community, national, and global identities.”⁵⁹³

Ladson-Billings suggests that when culturally relevant pedagogy is in use, social relations demonstrate a connectedness and she speaks of a “community of learners.”⁵⁹⁴ Relationships in this community are “fluid, humanely equitable” and are not limited to the realm of school. This is counter to an assimilationist view that sees relationships in a hierarchy in a classroom of individuals competing with one another in isolation.⁵⁹⁵ Teachers harnessing culturally relevant pedagogy encourage a critical stance, while demonstrating passion for the content, and encourage their students to hone their skills and achieve their best (understanding the complexity of achievement and factoring in diversity and individual variations).⁵⁹⁶ This is contrasted with an assimilationist view that sees knowledge as infallible and unchanging and conveyed by a neutral practitioner. The students are then expected to demonstrate comprehension of the knowledge within rigid parameters that fail to take into account diversity and difference in the

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid., 33.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid., 34.

⁵⁹² Ibid., 25.

⁵⁹³ Ibid., 34.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., 55.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁶ Ladson-Billings, *Dreamkeepers*, 81.

student body.⁵⁹⁷ Accordingly we can compare our practices and ask ourselves as I did in

Chapter IV:

- Am I apprenticing my students in a learning community rather than teaching them in an isolated and unrelated way?⁵⁹⁸
- Are my student's "real-life" experiences valued as part of the curriculum? Do I value my student's home cultures?⁵⁹⁹
- Do we perceive classroom literacy as both written and verbal?⁶⁰⁰
- Am I working with my students to challenge the status quo?⁶⁰¹
- Do I treat my students as though they were competent?⁶⁰²
- Am I scaffolding my student's knowledge, moving from what they know to what they need to know?⁶⁰³
- Is my classroom focused on instruction and extending student's thinking and abilities?⁶⁰⁴
- Do I know my material? Do I know my students?⁶⁰⁵

Another kite of possibility is a representation of the levels of multicultural education found in an offering from the body of Sonia Nieto's work. This again provides a template to throw into relief one's own practice. Monocultural education is juxtaposed with gradations of multicultural education. In a monocultural classroom racism is unacknowledged and

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid., 117.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid., 117, 138.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., 117.

⁶⁰¹ Ibid., 118.

⁶⁰² Ibid., 124.

⁶⁰³ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid., 124, 125.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid., 125.

discriminatory practices remain unchecked.⁶⁰⁶ The curriculum of a monocultural education assumes a static Eurowestern standard and does not take diversity into account. The status quo is upheld and education is “domesticating.”⁶⁰⁷ However, Nieto suggests that there is a continuum that progresses from tolerance, through acceptance, respect, and culminates with affirmation, solidarity, and critique. This final category is proactive about challenging racism and affirming diversity.⁶⁰⁸ Education is based on a multicultural curriculum that encourages second-languages and enriches all students with “a broad range of knowledge”⁶⁰⁹ that is content-rich and action driven. Multiculturalism and social justice are infused into the entire curriculum, pedagogy, and communication between teachers, students, and the community.⁶¹⁰ With these two poles and the variations between, teachers are able to assess their attention to diversity and inclusion.

Again, with just a single example of a scholar’s contributions, we see H. Richard Milner’s developmental typology of pre-service teachers. This typology shows the developmental interactions that made a critical impact on the pre-service teachers’ developing the “knowledge, skills, dispositions and attitudes necessary to teach in highly diverse and urban school contexts.”⁶¹¹ Milner’s typology is helpful for individual and institutional assessment of cultural and racial awareness and insight, critical reflection, and connecting theory and practice to increase the efficacy of teachers teaching in diverse contexts. Milner points to how many pre-service teachers do not see the need to study racial or cultural diversity. Thus, an effective teacher preparation course or personal inventory needs to help “teachers recognize the political

⁶⁰⁶ Nieto, *Affirming Diversity*, 280.

⁶⁰⁷ Nieto, *Affirming Diversity*, 280.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid., 281.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹¹ Milner, “Preservice Teachers Learning about Cultural and Racial Diversity,” 343.

and social realities of race, socioeconomic status, and culture in an urban context”⁶¹² and this is usually accomplished through intentional interaction with culture and race. Critical reflection allows pre-service teachers to think deeply about their positionality and its relational connection to the race, class, and gender of students.⁶¹³ Finally, the pre-service teachers need theoretical work regarding positionality, curriculum, and pedagogy to help them think through their practice. Milner suggests student teaching/practicum to test theoretical ideas and solidify them into practice.⁶¹⁴

Finally, Angelina Castagno and Bryan Brayboy’s kite offers numerous suggestions and possibilities in their review of culturally responsive schooling. Again, in terms of curricular and pedagogical strategies, practitioners and institutions can use these strategies as a means to gauge levels of sensitivity to diversity for equity and inclusion for equality. In terms of pedagogy, they note that teacher-centered instruction fails to meet the needs of indigenous students and encourage methods that are more congruent with students “cultural norms” citing improvements in academic attainment that accompany such moves.⁶¹⁵ Castagno and Brayboy point to how positionality determines how one learns and this often determines how one teaches based on the norm of our own learning patterns. However, when engaging different cultures, it is suggested that the learning styles of the students should be considered. Strategies such as cooperative, oral, hands-on, service, experiential, and visual learning are recommended for a teacher’s pedagogical

⁶¹² Milner, “Preservice Teachers,” 351.

⁶¹³ Ibid.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid.

⁶¹⁵ Angelina Castagno and Brian Brayboy, “Culturally Responsive Schooling for Indigenous Youth” A Review of the Literature,” *Review of Educational Research*, 78, no.4 (December 2008), 961.

repertoire.⁶¹⁶ Teachers are encouraged to be aware of proximity preferences, discussion styles, and being flexible with pacing if wanting to embrace a culturally responsive teaching style.⁶¹⁷

When it comes to curriculum Castagno and Brayboy's review of the literature on culturally responsive schooling shows leeriness to a Eurowestern focus and the current narrowing of the curriculum in the light of standardized testing constraints. The incorporation of indigenous language, art, music, and literature into the curriculum is encouraged, due to evidence showing improved academic performance for indigenous students when language and culture of the community is supported.⁶¹⁸ A culturally responsive curriculum is one that values student knowledge, culture, language, and context.⁶¹⁹

Positionality comes into play when teacher's attitudes, values, and knowledge are seen as factors in student success. Teacher temperament, disposition, tolerance, flexibility, high expectations, caring, and appreciation of communities and cultures, according to Castagno and Brayboy, are a vital element in school success for indigenous youth. Teachers need to be interested in their student's lives and authentically care for their students and expect the best from them. Time at community events, asking questions, inviting parents/elders into the learning space, and connecting with parents all foster this sense of being an authentic carer able to connect curriculum to the student's lives. This will lead to challenging the teacher to study different epistemologies, critical multicultural pedagogies, adapting curriculum, and critiquing

⁶¹⁶ Castagno and Brayboy, 962.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid., 963.

⁶¹⁸ Castagno and Brayboy, 965.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid.

White and Eurowestern normativity and structural inequity⁶²⁰ in a conscious move to engage students and bridge the “achievement gap.”

Conclusion

As educators we see, in the above models, continuums, imaginings, descriptions, and recommendations, pilgrimages on our metaphorical trial. We can compare where we are on our own journeys with theirs. As sojourners we hear the voice of one that has gone before us on the path of justice and equity. His voice calls out from beyond a bend in the road ahead. He says,

I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land! And so I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man! Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord!⁶²¹

I, too, am looking forward to a new way of being together that is full of what is right and good. Until that time comes I will look inward and outward with each new classroom community I engage, with sensitivity to all that is different, diverse, and seemingly the same. I will continue to seek to enlarge my gaze, include, care, question, and teach well. Aware of my own fallibility I will keep contemplating, critiquing, amending, and doing the work of a philosophically positional teacher, striving towards the mountain top of equity and equality through situational sensitivity and pedagogical praxis, as I hope others will too.

⁶²⁰ Castagno and Brayboy, 973.

⁶²¹ Martin Luther King Jr. "I've Been to the Mountaintop" (sermon, Mason Temple, Memphis, TN, April 3, 1968).

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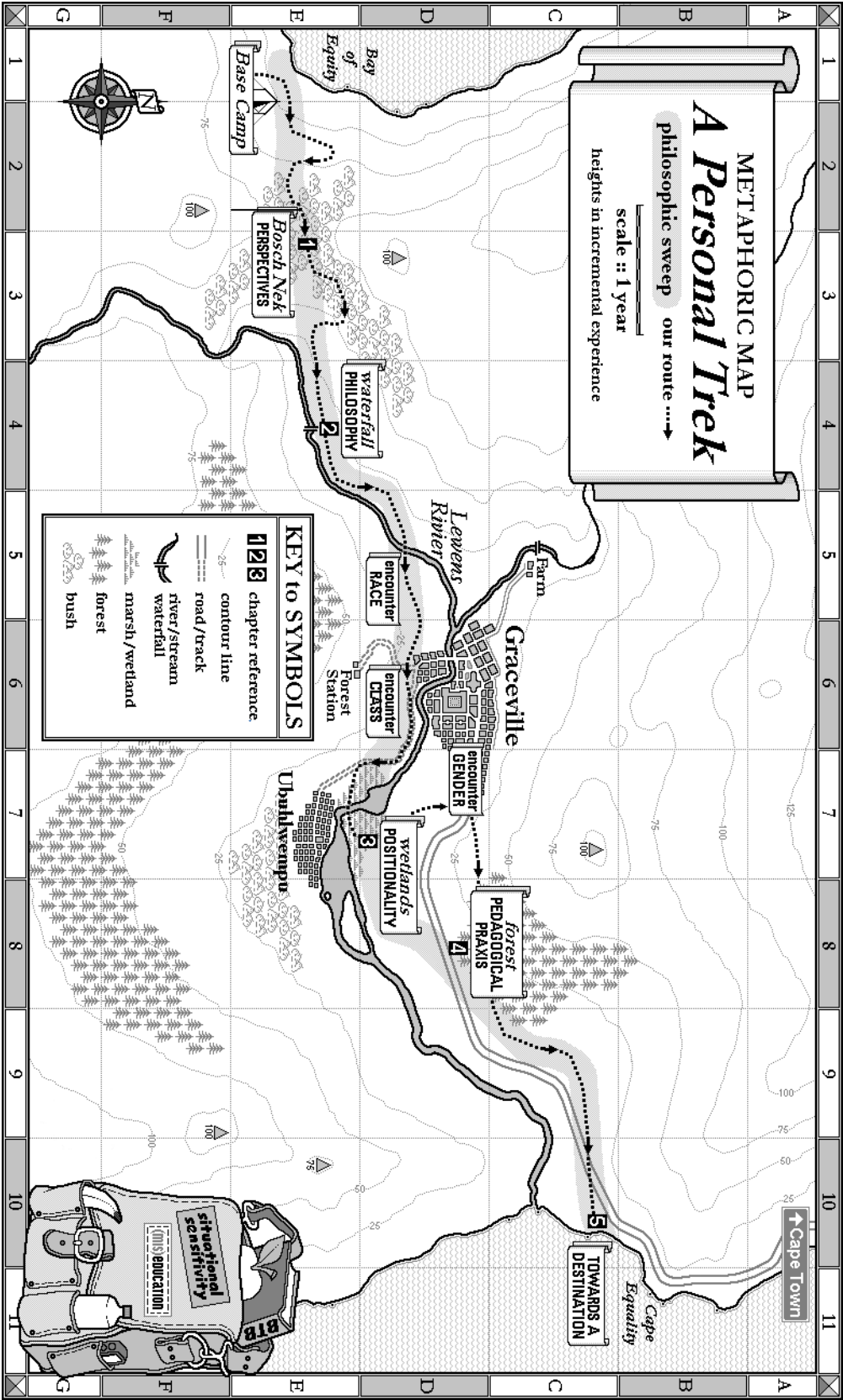
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APPENDIXES



Appendix 2

Teachers, School, and Society

Course Syllabus

Course Catalogue Description: Critical interdisciplinary examination of selected policies and assumptions about education in America. This course draws on history, sociology, and philosophy to examine the relationship between schooling and society, looking at issues of cultural and racial awareness, critical reflection, and the bridging of theory and practice.

Assigned Texts:

1. Thayer-Bacon, Barbara J., with Charles S. Bacon. *Philosophy applied to education: nurturing a democratic community in the classroom*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Merrill, 1998.
2. Spring, Joel. *American Education*. 14 ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010.

Optional Suggested Reading:

1. Gibbs, Jeanne. *Tribes: a new way of learning and being together*. Windsor, CA: Center Source Systems, 2001.
2. Johnson, Brian C., and Skyra C. Blanchard. *Reel diversity: a teacher's sourcebook*. New York: P. Lang, 2008.
3. Martin, Jane Roland. *Cultural miseducation: in search of a democratic solution*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2002.
4. Martin, Jane Roland. *Educational metamorphoses: philosophical reflections on identity and culture*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007.
5. Milner, H. Richard. *Start where you are, but don't stay there: understanding diversity, opportunity gaps, and teaching in today's classrooms*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Education Press, 2010.

Movie choices:

Tortilla Soup (2001)
Becoming Jane (2007)
Crash (2005)
Amazing Grace (2006)
Dangerous Minds (1995)
Freedom Writers (2007)
Guess Who (2005)
Remember the Titans (2000)
Swing Kids ((1993)
A Walk to Remember (2002)
Princess Kaulani (2010)
Blindside (2009)
My Fair Lady (1964)
I Buried My Heart at
Wounded Knee (2007)

Instruction Resource Articles:

1. Anyon, J. "Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work" (1987).
2. Baker, S. "Testing Equality: The National Teacher Examination and the NAACP's Legal Campaign to Equalize Teachers' Salaries in the South, 1936-1963," 1995.
3. McIntosh, Peggy. "White privilege: unpacking the invisible knapsack." *independent school* 49, no. 2 (1990): 31-36.
4. Milner IV, H. Richard. "Preservice Teachers' Learning about Cultural and Racial Diversity: Implications for Urban Education." *Urban Education* 41, no 4 (2006): 343-375.
5. Milner IV, H. Richard. "Race, Culture, and Researcher Positionality: Working Through Dangers Seen, Unseen, and Unforeseen." *Educational Researcher* 36, no. 7 (2007): 388-400.
6. Morgaine, C. A. "Enlightenment for emancipation: a critical theory of self-formation." *Family Relations* 1 (1994): 325- 350.
7. Rousmaniere, Kate. "Losing Patience and Staying Professional: Women Teachers and the Problem of Classroom Discipline in New York City Schools in the 1920s." *History of Education Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (1994): 49-68.
8. Sadker, David. "Gender Equity: Still Knocking at the Classroom Door." *Educational Leadership* 56, no. 7 (1999): 22-26.
9. Scheurich, James Joseph. "Toward a White Discourse on White Racism." *Educational Researcher* 22, no. 8 (1993): 5-10.
10. Van Gunten, D. M., and R.J. Martin. "Reflected identities: applying positionality and multicultural social reconstruction in teacher education." *Journal of Teacher Education* 53, no. 1 (2002): 44-54.

Course Lexicon

This list, as a nucleus for a shared common vocabulary to encourage dialogue, will start with definitions that appear in *Writing for Change: Raising Awareness of Difference, Power, and Discrimination*, a resource of the Southern Poverty Law Center, Teaching Tolerance project (www.teachingtolerance.org) and will be augmented based on class discussions and readings (Johnson, 2008).

Course Grading (Learner Evaluation):

1. 50% Reflective journal or blog entries x 10
2. 30% Preparedness and participation
3. 20% Final paper

Course Requirements (Learning Activities):

1. Each student will create a **reflective journal or blog to respond to their reading of *American Education* by Joel Spring**. Six entries will be required (maximum of 2 pages/1000 words per entry)

Each journal/blog entry should include the following:

- Connections to prior learning and/or experiences
- Connections professionally
- Connections personally
- Connections to course lexicon

2. Each student will **view four popular culture movies** and respond in their journal or blog. Four entries will be required (maximum of 2 pages/1000 words per entry). These are popular culture movies and are readily found at Netflix, most video stores, or libraries. Each journal/blog entry should include the following:
 - Connections to prior learning and/or experiences
 - Connections professionally
 - Connections personally
 - Connect to course lexicon
3. Each student will come prepared to **discuss and participate in activities based on their reading** of *Philosophy applied to education: nurturing a democratic community in the classroom* by Barbara Thayer-Bacon.
4. Each student will complete a **final paper** (8-10 pages) summarizing what they have discovered about their positionality (as it relates to race, class, gender, religion, etc.) and describing their philosophy of education (*theoretically*: their aim, role of teachers and students, curriculum and context, pedagogy, and epistemologically and *practically*: represent with written description or other media what their classroom will look like as it reflects their philosophy of education).

Course schedule*:

class	date	Readings	assignments
1	June 6	A.E. Ch 1, P.A.E. Ch 1	Create a lexicon (in class)
2	June 8	A.E. Ch 2, P.A.E. Ch 2	Start Journal/Blog, Start watching movies
3	June 13	A.E. Ch 3, P.A.E. Ch 3	
4	June 15	A.E. Ch 4, P.A.E. Ch 4	
5	June 20	A.E. Ch 5, P.A.E. Ch 5	Phase 1 Journal/blog entries due
6	June 22	A.E. Ch 6 & 7	
7	June 27	A.E. Ch 8	
8	June 29	A.E. Ch 9 & 10	Rest of Journal/blog entries due
9	July 4	NO CLASS	PUBLIC HOLIDAY
10	July 6	Be Prepared to Discuss the Movies you have viewed	Final paper due

*tentative

Appendix 3

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Perspective, Philosophy, Positionality, and Praxis: The exploration of personal discourses about race and identity as they affect teaching and learning in educational settings.

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a research study that aims to:

1. assess the *use of course materials* in a Social Foundations course
2. assess the *modeling of teaching strategies* by the instructor
3. assess the *process of coming to awareness about issues of race and identity* as they affect teaching and learning in educational settings

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

If you should chose to participate; your involvement will include the following:

1. Read and sign this Informed Consent Form.
2. Agree to allow the researcher to use your journals/blog entries and final papers/projects.
3. Agree to complete a brief online survey relating to the aims listed above at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/████████>.
4. Agree to the *option* of reviewing the research findings at a later date to member-check for fair representation of personal insights, class discussions and activities, and assessments of the textual materials.

NOTE: The researcher would like access to your already completed journals/blog entries and final papers, you will *not* be required to complete any additional tasks or contribute additional time other than the research project survey which can be completed on-line at your convenience and which should not take more than 30 minutes

RISKS

Participation or non-participation in this project will in no way affect your grades as all grades will have been final before you were approached to participate. The rights and welfare of the participants is of utmost importance to the researcher. You, the participants, risk sharing your personal insights, *but* your anonymity will be preserved by the researcher by the use of pseudonyms and you have the option to review the research findings at a later date to check for fair representation by the researcher.

_____ Participant's initials

BENEFITS

This study will help the researcher understand to a greater extent the effectiveness of the course materials and teaching strategies and how issues of race and identity affect the classroom.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information in the study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to the researcher conducting the study. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link participants to the study.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures you may contact the researcher, Yvette P. Franklin by phone at [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED]. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at [REDACTED].

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's signature _____ Date _____

Appendix 4

Perspective, Philosophy, Positionality, and Praxis Survey

Thank you for participating in this research study that aims to:

1. assess the use of course materials in a Social Foundations course
 2. assess the modeling of teaching strategies by the instructor
- with a view to understanding how personal discourses about race and identity affect teaching and learning in educational settings.

1. Highest degree earned?

- ☐ B.A./B.S.
- ☐ M.A./M.S.
- ☐ Ed.S
- ☐ PhD

2. What is your profession?

- ☐ Primary level educator (preK-8)
- ☐ Secondary level educator (9-12)
- ☐ Tertiary level educator (undergraduate/graduate)
- ☐ Other Education-related context
- ☐ Non-education related context

3. What socio-economic group do you self-identify with?

- ☐ working class
- ☐ middle class
- ☐ upper middle class
- ☐ upper class

4. What racial and/or ethnic group do you self-identify with?

5. Gender?

- ☐ female
- ☐ male

6. Were the textual materials used in CSE 504 helpful in informing you about the role of perspectives, philosophy, positionality, and praxis in education? Please briefly qualify your answer.

7. Did the instructor effectively model the pedagogical practices informed by the textual materials used in CSE 504? Please qualify your answer.

8. OPTIONAL: Any other comments regarding personal discourses about race and identity as they affect teaching and learning in educational settings or the CSE 504 course?

VITA

Yvette Prinsloo Franklin was born in Los Angeles, California on October 14, 1974 to South African parents, Ade Prinsloo and Anne Krummeck. Returning back to South Africa shortly after her birth, Yvette was raised and educated in Cape Town. She matriculated from Wynberg Girls High School in 1992 and proceeded to get her teaching qualification from Cape Town Teachers' Training College. After extensive traveling, she went to Maryville College, Tennessee on academic scholarship and graduated Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education in 1998. Yvette has received her masters degree and completed her doctoral requirements in Cultural Studies in Education from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. A mother of three young children, Yvette looks forward to pursuing education in all its iterations in the private and professional sectors.